

WHY WATER TO WINE? – JOHN 2:1-11

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On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

"Do you believe in miracles?" This is what sports announcer Al Michaels said after the US Olympic hockey team beat the heavily favored Soviet team in the 1980 Winter Olympics. It certainly seemed like a miracle at the time – a bunch of college hockey players competing against one of the greatest teams of all-time. And that might be one of the ways that we throw the word "miracle" around today. It is something that seems highly improbable – the 'miracle' of life for example. But that really isn't the definition of a miracle – not as a primary definition in Webster's dictionary, nor how the Bible uses the word. Instead a miracle, by its very definition, is something that is contrary to nature, a time when a supernatural God suspends the laws of nature to allow something to happen.

This is what happened on at least 35 occasions during the life of Jesus. That's how many miracles we have recorded for us in the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Of those 35, the gospel writer John only records eight. I think if we were to take a minute and think of all the miracles Jesus performed, we could come up with many of them – Jesus healed a blind man, he calmed a stormy sea, he fed thousands with not very much, he raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. But then you have this miracle, seemingly so different than the rest. Jesus isn't confronted by a crowd of hungry people, blindness, or death. Sure, a lack of wine at a wedding banquet might have been a little embarrassing, but it wasn't like it was life or death.

So why did John see fit to record this miracle of Jesus? WHY WATER TO WINE? Was it because this happened to be Jesus' first miracle, so John wanted a record of it, similar to a business framing the first dollar it ever made. Even if that is one of the reasons, it certainly is not the primary reason that John records this miracle. In fact, John doesn't even call this a miracle here. He says it is a *miraculous* sign. And just like the road signs you see as you drive somewhere, this sign is pointing to something. So when we ask "WHY WATER TO WINE?" we can also answer:

1. It revealed his compassion
2. It revealed his power but especially
3. It revealed his glory

(1)

Weddings were a little bit different in Jesus' day than they are today. Today, just about anything goes – from the type of venue, ceremony styles, reception styles, length of engagement, to the length of the bridesmaid's dresses. It was a little bit more formalized in ancient Israel, and in some ways that might have been relieving. The would-be husband would ask the father of the bride for her hand in marriage. After accepting the proposal there was a time of separation for the couple while the husband prepared a place for his bride to live – this was similar to our engagement today. Similar, not the same, because breaking this engagement was the equivalent of divorce. (See Joseph's quandary when he found out Mary was pregnant, **"He had in mind to divorce her quietly."**)

When the wedding date came, there was a grand procession of the bride to the home her husband had built for her. After the ceremony there would be a week-long celebration for the couple. This would be filled with fun and revelry. It was to a wedding like this that Jesus, his mother Mary, and a few of his disciples were invited to. Jesus was invited as a guest to this wedding, so it might have surprised him that his mother approached him with a request, **"They have no more wine."** Now, we aren't told why Mary brought this to Jesus attention, nor should we scold her for such a frivolous request. Was Mary thinking back to the words of the angel when she was pregnant with him, the time when Jesus was 12 years old at the temple, or was she looking back to the time he was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan? She knew Jesus was someone special, and she knew in her mind Jesus could help.

But we see Jesus' answer to the question, **"Dear woman, why do you involve me?"** More literally, "What is it to you or me?" **"My time has not yet come."** Sure not having enough wine would have been embarrassing to the bride and groom, but not much more than that. Jesus had not been sent to this earth so that we could all have our fill of wine. But then, WHY THE WATER TO WINE? Notice that Jesus did not say "no" to Mary's request, merely **"My time has not yet come."** This is different than the response he gave to Mary as a boy in the temple. He went and followed his parents back to Nazareth. Now the relationship dynamic was changing. Yes, Jesus would always be Mary's son, but Jesus was also Mary's Savior. But even with his answer, Mary told the servants to listen to what he said.

And Jesus did respond to Mary's request, he did provide the couple with 120-150 gallons of extra wine. As we look at this situation, it would be easy for us to conclude, Jesus did not have to do this miracle. This miracle would really serve no "higher" purpose. WHY TURN WATER INTO WINE? To respond to the needs of people. We see how it revealed Jesus' compassion. This was not a life or death situation, but Jesus still cared about it. How much we can learn from this miracle if this were the only lesson. For how often have we thought that our problems are too insignificant to bring before God. And yet God does not set a threshold we must reach before we bring our cares to him. **"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything...present your requests to God."**

WHY TURN WATER TO WINE? Because it reveals Jesus' compassion. He showed his compassion in listening to his mother's request. He showed his compassion in letting the bride and groom avoid an embarrassing situation. He shows compassion to us every day. No problem is too small or insignificant.

But compassion isn't always enough to meet our needs. We could have compassion for someone, but have no ability to help with the problem. Not so with Jesus. WHY TURN WATER TO WINE? Also to reveal Jesus' power.

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When Jesus' time had come, he told the servants to fill six giant water jars. These were jars that the Jews used in their ceremonial washing, they were made out of stone because stone did not 'contract' any uncleanness. Because of the wedding, the couple would have gotten the best jars available for their guests. Each jar held between 20-30 gallons of water. **"So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.'**" They did this and had the master of the banquet taste the water which had been turned into wine. Somewhere in that time, Jesus circumvented the entire grape harvesting process and changed simple well water into wine. And it wasn't just any wine, it was the best wine.

WHY TURN WATER TO WINE? Because it reveals his power. That Jesus is not only compassionate to help, but that he has the power to help. **"This [was] the first of his miraculous signs."** The start of his ministry, the first miracle, and Jesus did what no other person could do, he TURNED WATER TO WINE. He did it to reveal his power. But not in the powerful way that we would think. Jesus could have publicized this miracle at the wedding, made himself the center of attention, and would have probably gained a number of curiosity seekers. Instead, the only ones who knew about it were the servants and Jesus' disciples.

This is reflected in the way that John describes this miracle. I don't know if you knew this, but there are a couple of different ways the Bible describes miracles. This particular way doesn't emphasize the power so much, but as a sign. The miracle wasn't the end, it was pointing to something. Who was it pointing to? Jesus. Why was it pointing to Jesus? John explains that in the last chapter of his gospel, **"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."**

Because Jesus' power was not just limited to TURNING WATER TO WINE, it was not limited to enabling a blind man to see, or calming a stormy sea. All of these were signs pointing to the real power that Jesus had. Jesus came as the Son of God, and he had one purpose, to save us. WHY TURN WATER TO WINE? Because it also revealed his glory.

(3)

"This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him." Now what does it mean that Jesus revealed his glory? In the opening chapter of his gospel John writes, **"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. And we have seen his *glory*, the *glory* of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** The glory that we're talking about is the glory of God. In each of his miracles, Jesus would pull back the curtain on his deity, revealing a glimpse of who he is. It is this glory that the disciples put their faith in.

But that curtain was not always pulled back, and sometimes the disciples slipped into forgetting about that glory. When they questioned where they would get enough food to feed 5,000, when they were afraid on a stormy sea, when they ran and hid in Gethsemane. This is something that is not totally foreign to us as well. We can look at the deadly shootings that have taken place over the past few months, we can look at the economy, we can look at friends moving away and get sad. We can become so focused on that, that we forget what is behind the curtain. God doesn't give us an answer for why specific things happen in our life, but he does ask us to trust him. To trust in his glory that he revealed for us.

For that glory did more than just TURN WATER TO WINE, he did more than heal a few diseases, he did more than calm the stormy seas, that glory died on a cross. He was put there by evil men, but he was also put there by the will of God to atone for, to pay for the sins of the world. That is what his glory is about! A glory that is beyond understanding, a glory that is undeserving. A glory that covers over mistakes and wipes them away. God's glory to us and for us is complete, there is nothing more you need to do.

For this glimpse at his glory is why Jesus TURNED WATER TO WINE. The disciples saw this miracle as a sign, a sign of who Jesus was. They trusted him, **"they put their faith in him."** It was not a decision they had to make, but a simple trust. We have the whole Bible to look to see God's Son reveal his glory. And you want to know what the real miracle is? That we do believe. Believe in his compassion, in his power, and most especially in his glory! Amen.