

**\* The Heights Baptist Church \* Series: Meeting Jesus \***

**\* Topic: The Promised Messiah (The Wedding at Cana) \* Scripture: John 2:1-11 \* 12/03/23 \***

**MAIN POINT**

The first recorded miracle performed by Jesus was turning water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. With this miracle, Jesus confirmed to his disciples that he is the promised Messiah.

**INTRODUCTION**

*Sermon series overview: December marks the start of our new sermon series at the Heights, titled, "Christmas: Meeting Jesus". Here is Pastor Hahn's introduction to the series:*

*"Christmas is a people time: family, friends and perhaps even new family and new friends. We go to gatherings, events, parties, to meet up with people or meet new people. With all this meeting at Christmas, wouldn't it be travesty if we didn't meet Jesus. If Christmas is about anything, it is about meeting God in Jesus. This Jesus out of whom is going to come some wonderful and awful things. Do we accept all this that comes from Him? It would certainly help to know who He is. Who is this Jesus who tells us:*

- *We can call God our Father, which is cool, but then He says . . .*
- *We are supposed to be happy if people mock and persecute us for following Him.*
- *That it's not just murder and adultery but hate and lust lands us in the same guilt.*
- *Who tells us to forgive, over and over.*
- *Who tells us to love our enemy.*
- *Who tells us not to worry.*

*Who is this guy? In Matthew's telling of the Christmas Story, we will meet Jesus as the Promised Messiah, the Savior of our Sins, the Son of God, the King. During this Christmas season we will explore each of these things and what they mean in our lives and in our Christmas."*

*Note to study leader: The sermon series will be focusing on a few verses each week from the Christmas story recorded in Matthew. With so few verses being covered each week, there would be a risk of the sermon and the lifegroup lessons being "a bit on top of each other". So rather than looking at these same specific verses in our lifegroup lessons, we will be looking at the same truths about Jesus through other events from his adult life as recorded in the book of John.*

**There are so many details involved in pulling off a wedding. With so many details, it is common for something to not go according to plan. What is the funniest or most bazaar thing that you've witnessed at a wedding, wedding reception, or honeymoon?**

In today's lesson, we will be looking at Jesus, the promised Messiah, as seen in his first recorded miracle in the Gospels at the wedding feast at Cana.

**UNDERSTANDING**

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 20:30-31**

**According to these verses, what was John's purpose for recording the miracles of Jesus in the book of John?**

These miracles were recorded so that we may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name. This closely matches the purpose of our Christmas series ☺

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 2:1-5

*Note to study leader: Jesus turns quite a bit of water into quite a bit of wine in his first recorded miracle. To help us understand why this was okay, consider the following. Jesus never sinned, and it is a sin to get drunk (Ephesians 5:18). So, Jesus is not encouraging people to get drunk. Jewish weddings were celebrations that took place over the course of a week, so all this wine was for the whole group for the remainder of the week, not the remainder of the day.*

**Why do you think Mary thought Jesus would be able to help the wedding hosts in their dilemma?**

It doesn't directly tell us why she seemed so certain Jesus could help. But she did know who he was. As an aside, it is thought that Mary's husband Joseph had died sometime between the time Jesus was 12 years old and the time of this wedding, since we read of Mary being here, but Joseph is not mentioned.

**Why do you think Jesus didn't perform the miracle in a more spectacular way?**

The miracles of Jesus recorded in the book of John were not just arbitrary bursts of divine power. They were performed with a purpose. And as he told Mary, his time was not yet.

**What do you think Jesus meant in his reply to Mary in verse 4?**

The Greek word translated as "woman" in this verse is not a disrespectful term. Jesus was respectfully clarifying to his mother Mary (maybe even respectfully rebuking her) that His life and mission—including the miracles he would perform—would be determined by His Heavenly Father, not by earthly inconveniences.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 2:6-11

**Jesus had just said it wasn't His hour, so why did He perform a miracle anyway?**

Jesus met the need that Mary brought to Him, and he performed the miracle in a way that didn't draw attention to himself. Only a limited number of people were aware he even performed the miracle. He also used the miracle as a teaching moment for his disciples, and for us.

**Considering the description of the effect of the miracle in verse 11, do you think Jesus' main concern was to satisfy the desires of the partygoers, protect the host from embarrassment, or something else?**

**What is meant by the word "sign" (v. 11) to describe this miracle? What effect did this incident have on Jesus' new disciples?**

He was demonstrating to his disciples that he is the Messiah (John 20:31).

OTHER LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS MIRACLE ABOUT THE MESSIAH AND THE NEW COVENANT HE WAS BRINGING

1. The New Covenant the Messiah was bringing was superior to the Old Covenant of the Law. This may be pictured in the difference in the quality of the wine Jesus provided compared to the wine that had run out.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ ROMANS 8:1-4, GALATIANS 3:10-11, GALATIANS 4:4-5, HEBREWS 8:5-7, AND HEBREWS 10:1

**What spiritual picture might there be in the fact the wine Jesus provided was superior to the wine that had been provided earlier at the wedding?**

The Old Testament Law was not able to save us. It is only through the blood of Christ that we can be saved.

2. The superiority of the new covenant the Messiah was bringing compared to the old covenant of the Law may be pictured in the fact Jesus performed his first public miracle at a wedding feast.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 7:20-21

**How does the first public miracle Jesus performed contrast with the first public miracle Moses performed as God was preparing Israel to receive the Covenant of the Law?**

What a big difference! The first public miracle leading up to the Law being given was water being turned to blood at a pagan ritual. What a contrast to Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding feast!

3. The new covenant Jesus was bringing was not just a patch on the old covenant. It was something completely new.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATTHEW 9:16-17 AND GALATIANS 3:2-3

**What spiritual picture do you see in the fact you can't put new wine in an old wineskin, or patch an old garment with a patch made of new material?**

The New Covenant the Messiah was bringing (salvation by grace through faith in Christ) is a new Covenant that is independent from the Covenant of the Law, not just a patch on it. Salvation by grace through faith in Christ can't be mixed with trying to obtain righteousness by obedience to the Old Testament Law.

4. The miracle at the wedding feast may have foreshadowed the fact that Jesus' ministry would be received more readily by the common people than by the religious elite.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATTHEW 9: 9-13 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-29

**Looking back at John 2:9, we see that the master of the banquet was not even aware of where the new wine came from, and probably was just glad that the party would be a success. Who were the people who were actually aware of the miracle Jesus performed?**

The servants, and Jesus' disciples.

**What aspect of Jesus' ministry might this be foreshadowing?**

Jesus' message would be received more readily by the common people than the religious elite.

APPLICATION

**Read John 2:11 again. How does Jesus want us to go beyond just enjoying the benefits of his miracles?**

**What are some ways this Christmas season we can more actively place our trust in Jesus?**

PRAYER

God help us see Jesus as our Messiah, Savior, and Lord who loves us and is able to meet our spiritual needs just as he met the physical needs of the people at the wedding feast at Cana. Help us put our trust in him rather than circumstances (good or bad) and become more like him. Help us not to get sidetracked by the many distractions of the Christmas season, so we can focus on Jesus and His great commission this Christmas season, and not on our own desires, pleasures, or concerns.

## COMMENTARY

### JOHN 2:1-11

2:1-5. John's Gospel says Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana. According to Bible scholars, a few towns in the Galilean area at that time might have been this Cana. It was probably the village fewer than 10 miles from Nazareth, Jesus' home town. Like the Nazarenes, the people of Cana weren't wealthy. Most of the residents probably were farmers or craftsmen.

The lack of money made things like weddings difficult to afford. The groom's family usually hosted the celebration, which could last as long as a week or more. They had to supply enough food and drink for their guests to enjoy themselves the whole time. This would have been very expensive. To make the situation more stressful, running out of food and drinks early was very embarrassing. Hospitality was very important to people in Jesus' time, and it brought tremendous pride to a host family. Not being able to provide for their guests would be shameful.

Jesus' mother, Mary, understood the shame her friends would feel if they ran out of wine. Apparently, she had come to the wedding to help the family with the details related to the celebration. When the news reached her that the wine was gone, she was very concerned because she loved her friends.

Of course, Mary didn't have any way of helping her friends, so she asked Jesus. No one else at the wedding feast knew Jesus like Mary did. The years after Jesus' birth had given her plenty of time to think about everything that had happened when He was born. Years earlier, the angel Gabriel visited her to tell her that she would bear God's Son (Luke 1:26-38). From that moment on, she must have watched Jesus very closely to see just who He would grow up to be.

Mary knew Jesus could help her friends, but she didn't seem to fully grasp his mission here on earth. As He reminded her, His work had to be done in a way that accomplished His mission. Therefore, He would only perform a miracle if it was accomplishing the mission the Father had for him. By performing this miracle in the manner he performed it, he was providing a sign to his disciples that he was the Messiah, and it helped his disciples choose to put their faith in him.

Jesus was talking about His mission by saying that His hour that had not yet come. Jesus would carry out his ministry at the perfect time, up to and including His death on the cross and rising again. In everything that Jesus said and did throughout His ministry, He never forgot that He would face the cross. That meant He would provide wine at a wedding only if it would help Him complete His mission.

As He reminded His mother of His mission, Jesus spoke to her with respect and kindness. In the original language, the term woman showed Jesus' love for His mother. He used the same word of love when He spoke to His mother from the cross.

With His response to Mary, Jesus shows us something important. We should think carefully about the needs we bring to Jesus. When we look at them in light of God's will and the need to bring glory to His Son, we are able to evaluate them properly. Like Mary, sometimes we forget our Savior's mission and our need to glorify Him in everything. Mary's response to Jesus shows us something important about her relationship with Him. She brought her need to Jesus, and then she trusted Him to take care of it in the right way. That's why she told the servants to do whatever Jesus told them.

2:6-10. Jesus didn't hesitate to meet the need Mary brought to Him. Once she shared it, He turned His attention to meeting it by telling the servants to fill six stone water jars. John pointed out that the water pots had been placed there for the purpose of ceremonial purification practices. For instance, one of the most common purification ceremonies using water was hand washing (Mark 7:3). Jewish people in that day considered water stored in clay pots as unclean and not good for ceremonial use (Lev. 11:33). However, water kept in stone pots was thought to be free from contamination, which made it fine to use in purification ceremonies.

After the servants filled the pots with water, Jesus performed a miracle. He turned the water into wine, and the chief servant had the first response. The chief servant must have been responsible for making sure the guests enjoyed themselves. Tasting the sample that had been given to him, he was surprised at how good it was and complimented the groom for providing it. He went on to say that usually the best wine was served first. As the banquet continued, the guests would usually be served older wine that didn't taste as good. But the groom and his family had done something special by waiting to serve the best wine. As a result of the happy surprise, the guests would enjoy the taste of the fresh wine. At the same time, the poor host family would enjoy the honor of having provided it for guests. Because of what Jesus did for Mary, we know that He is interested in our concerns and struggles. He could have ignored Mary's request for help if He thought it wasn't important, but that's not what happened at all. He addressed the need she brought to Him, which showed His concern for a family that might be embarrassed. Notice that Jesus took decisive action to fix the problem. Jesus is concerned about what concerns us. No issue or need in our lives is too small for Him.

Notice that during this time, Jesus didn't call attention to Himself. He kept silent when the chief servant talked about the quality of the wine. He wanted to remain in the shadows, unwilling to say anything about His miracle. Only the servants who filled up the water pots knew that something miraculous had happened. Perhaps Mary smiled in the quiet satisfaction that came with knowing Jesus had performed the miracle, but she didn't say anything either.

Jesus' silence makes the reason behind the miracle that much more difficult to understand. When Jesus performed a miracle, He had a definite purpose in mind. Apparently the purpose of the miracle at Cana wasn't to show everyone at the wedding celebration His miracle-working power. Otherwise He would have said something about it at the celebration. He had an excellent opportunity to make such a declaration, but He didn't. Yet, the miracle served a valuable purpose for people devoted to Jesus. It taught a life lesson that His disciples might not have grasped at the moment. But over the course of time, it would become clearer to them as well as to us.

Many Bible scholars agree that Jesus provided a symbol for the disciples when He turned the water into wine. The miracle symbolized the difference between the lifeless religion of the Jews and a growing relationship with Jesus. The banquet with no more wine represented the spiritual emptiness of the people of Israel during that time. By contrast, the wine Jesus provided symbolized the fresh joy and blessing that came with knowing and following Him. While the Old Testament provided glimpses of God to His people, Jesus Christ alone provided the perfect picture of Him. Devotion to Christ would turn someone in a dead religion into a person who can experience new life that's full of true joy and lasting fulfillment.

2:11. John referred to Jesus' first miracle as a sign. At the wedding celebration, He did more than merely turn water into wine. Like a sign on a road that pointed a traveler toward a city, Jesus' miracle pointed to the fact that He was God's Son—the Messiah that the people of Israel had been waiting for. Other signs would be given along the way to show that God had kept His promise and sent His Son who would provide the way of salvation.

Jesus revealed God's presence in Himself when He turned the water into wine. At that point, people could see that He was a man, but He was also God. Obviously, the miracle had made quite an impact on Jesus' disciples. They could see that the miracle signaled His identity as God's Son and displayed His glory as the Messiah. What they saw had a significant effect on them. John said that it caused them to believe in Him even more. Previously they had placed their trust in Him as the Messiah and devoted themselves to following Him. However, their faith in Him still needed to grow. The miracle they beheld helped strengthen their faith in Him as God's Son.