

John Ch2v1-25 - Signs To Jesus

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[0 : 00] Nice to see you again today. Let's turn in our Bibles, please, to John's Gospel, Chapter 2. Thanks to Ralph for leading and the musicians. It's good to sing.

As we've started this term, we've been making our way through John's Gospel. And today we're going to look at two events, two accounts in Chapter 2. We're going to read it, then we're going to pray, and then we're going to listen and hear what God has to say. So we're going to read John Chapter 2, verses 1 to 22. 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've no more wine.

[1 : 24] Woman, why do you involve me? Jesus replied. My hour 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 80 to 120 litres.

Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water, so they may be filled 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.

[2 : 34] But you have saved the best till now. What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which Jesus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

After this, Jesus went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts, he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

So Jesus made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle. He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

To those who sold doves, he said, Get these out of here. Stop turning my father's house into a market. His disciples remembered that it is written, Zeal for your house will consume me.

[3 : 54] The Jews then responded to him, What sign can you give to prove your authority to do all this? Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.

Well, they replied, It has taken 46 years to build this temple and you're going to raise it in three days? But the temple Jesus had spoken of was his body.

And after he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scriptures and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Well, let's keep our Bibles open there and we'll pray. Our Father God, help each one of us here today to see Jesus more clearly, to understand all he has come to do and that we would be ready to meet him.

Amen. Signposts. We were thinking about this in our home groups during the week.

[5 : 25] Imagine, it's a beautiful, hot, sunny day, so you really do have to imagine. We're going off to Muckras House in Killarney for a picnic.

And as you drive along, you see this huge, big brown sign. Muckras House, 350 metres, next right. In excitement of seeing the sign, you stop the car and underneath the sign, you get out your picnic rug and your sandwiches and your drinks and you sit down there at the busy road and you say,

well, isn't this just great?

No. Signs are not an end in themselves. Signs are significant because they point beyond themselves to something else.

Well, in chapter 2 of John's Gospel, we have two sign stories. The first is a wedding. The second is at the temple.

One is full of noisy people, happy and laughing. The other is full of noisy animals, pooping and mooing. At the wedding, Jesus provides for the people.

[6 : 46] And in the temple, Jesus drives out the people. On the one hand, we have a party Jesus and then we have an angry Jesus.

But these aren't just stories for entertainment. These are signs telling us who Jesus is. Have a look at verse 11.

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him.

Or down at verse 18, when Jesus was at the temple, the Jews responded to him, what sign can you show us to prove your authority to do this?

And in verse 23, now while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

[7 : 53] You see, the signs are not the destination. They point beyond themselves to something better, someone who is greater.

So let's take these two sign stories in turn and see what they teach us about Jesus. The first story is the wedding.

Are we ready for the wedding celebration? Are we ready for the wedding celebration? The story at one level is really quite simple.

Jesus is at a wedding with friends, they run out of wine, and Jesus does a miracle. Now the message is not, if you come to Jesus, he's going to fill your wine cellar.

No, through the sign of changing water into wine, Jesus is saying, come to me and I will clean you for the wedding celebration.

[8 : 59] Believe me, trust me, and I will clean you for the wedding celebration. Well, that's a big statement.

Let's see how that's true. First, Jesus claims to be the bridegroom. The wedding is going very well. Everyone's having a great time, but then, disaster! Look at verse 3, the end of verse 3. There's no more wine. It's like us being invited to a wedding, and after the ceremony in the church, there's an announcement.

Sorry, folks, the hotel has run out of food, and the bar is closed. But don't worry, there's plenty of water on the table. I mean, who wants to go to that kind of wedding?

Well, there was only one person to blame, and that was the bridegroom. It's his responsibility at the wedding to provide the wine.

[10 : 03] His first job as a husband, make sure there's enough wine. Oh! Well, thankfully, he sorts it out.

At least, that's what the master of the banquet thought. Look at the end of verse 9. The master of the banquet 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. Well, of course, it was a case of mistaken identity. It wasn't the bridegroom at all who had provided the best wine.

It had been Jesus. Now, can you see what's going on here at the wedding? In a way, Jesus has taken the place of the bridegroom at the wedding.

Jesus does the job of the bridegroom. He takes his place. Jesus is saying, I am the true bridegroom.

[11 : 19] You see, through the Bible as we read the scriptures of the Old Testament, the image, the main big picture that describes God's relationship to his people is a marriage.

God is the husband and the people are the bride. God is pictured as loving us, pursuing us, longing to be in relationship with us.

He is the faithful, loyal, steadfast husband. And so at this wedding here in Cana, we have but a picture of God coming to us.

Jesus is the bridegroom, pursuing us, loving us, so that we could be his bride. Well, if you are the bride of a wedding, you need to be ready, don't you?

You need to be looking the best. You need to be clean. And that's what Jesus does. There's a cleansing that takes place.

[12 : 31] Did you notice at the wedding this odd, strange reference to the water jars? Look at verse 6. Nearby stood six stone water jars, so tall, about as tall as this, and they were used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from 80 to 120 litres of water.

That's a lot of water. You see, under Jewish religious tradition, the problem was that you could become unclean. You could become unclean if you ate the wrong food, if you touched the wrong person, or if you wore the wrong clothes.

There was all kinds of rules that if you touched or did, you would become unclean. And when you became ritually unclean, well, you had to go to these ceremonial jars, and you do your ritual washing, and you would be clean again.

But what was meant to remind you for a need of a much deeper internal spiritual cleansing? Well, it just became an external physical cleansing.

It just became an outward show, a pretense. Whereas Jesus comes along, and he says, I'm offering you a complete cleansing.

[13 : 56] You see, Jesus could have used any water from any trough, but he deliberately chose the ceremonial jars for washing, and he commands the servants to fill them to the brim, and he turns it into wine, because Jesus was replacing the old way with now a new way.

Jesus was putting an end to the external show, and he was offering an internal cleansing of our sinful hearts. Jesus has come to make us clean.

Later on in John's Gospel, we find Jesus with his disciples. Just have a look forward to John chapter 13. John chapter 13.

Peter says, you may remember this account where Jesus begins to wash or clean his disciples' feet, and he begins to make his way around the disciples.

We'll pick it up in verse 8, John chapter 13, verse 8. And Jesus comes to Peter to wash his feet. And what does Peter say?

[15 : 22] No, you shall never wash my feet. And Jesus answered, unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

Then, Lord, Simon Peter replied, not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well. Well, Jesus answered, those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet.

Their whole body is clean. And you are clean. Though not every one of you, for he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said, not everyone was clean.

Let's go back to John chapter 2. Did you hear what Jesus said to Peter? Unless I wash you, unless I clean you, you can have no part of me.

He wasn't talking about a physical bath or a shower with soap and shampoo. He was talking about a spiritual cleansing. And the only way that we can be clean inside is that Jesus would die on the cross for our sins.

[16 : 40] A cleansing so deep and full that it will clean us internally and completely and fully. No matter your guilt or your shame or your sin, Jesus says, I am the one who has come to clean you.

I will make you pure and beautiful like a bride ready for the bridegroom. so Jesus does the cleansing work.

So, they are ready to celebrate. But why wine? Why is there so much reference to wine?

Why change water into wine? Surely Jesus could have changed it into sparkling water. Probably been easier maybe. Or what about orange juice?

Why did he change the water into wine? Well, wine itself was symbolic. Notice the wine that Jesus made at the end of verse 10. Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink.

[17 : 59] But you have saved the best till now. Not cheap old plonk, but well-aged, the finest and the best.

You see, the wine was a picture of joy and happiness. The wine was provided at the wedding to celebrate and feast at the wedding.

And this is the picture we see through the scriptures as God looks forward to a marriage to his people. You can follow with me on screen.

In Isaiah 62, God speaks of his relationship to his people as a marriage. And this is what he says. No longer will they call you deserted or abandoned or forgotten, but you will be called Hevespa, which means my delight is in her.

As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. It goes on.

[19 : 14] The Lord has sworn by his mighty arm, never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled, but those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.

glory. What a wonderful, beautiful picture. On intimacy on the one hand and security on the other, a joyful celebration as God the bridegroom marries his bride the people.

well, what God had promised to do, Jesus has turned that into a reality for us.

You see, if we stop at the sign, we miss the point of what the story is all about. Jesus is saying, come to me, all of you, whoever you are, whatever your background, whatever your guilt or sin, come to me, and I will make you clean.

I will wash you for the ultimate wedding celebration. So that's story one. Let's move now to story two.

[20 : 36] Removed from the father's house, the location changes from the wedding to the temple, the imagery and the symbolism also change.

But at one level, this story is also very simple. We find Jesus at the temple, they've turned it into a marketplace, and so Jesus comes along and gets rid of all the sellers.

Now, again, this is not a message that Jesus is on a crusade to free all the animals. No, through the act of clearing the courts, Jesus is saying, if you refuse me, I will remove you from my father's house.

Refuse me, and I will remove you from my father's house. Well, let's see how this is true. First, Jesus makes the extraordinary claim of being the temple.

temple. The temple, of course, was the place where you went to meet with God. You went there to pray to God, to thank God. It was the physical sign, center place in Jerusalem, the capital, where God's presence was among the people.

[21 : 59] So, if there was no temple, there was no access to God. Get rid of the temple, no way of meeting God. now, when Jesus arrived to the temple, he says something extraordinary.

Do you see it in verse 16? He calls it, my father's house. Jesus is claiming an ownership and an authority over the temple.

In fact, Jesus goes even further, verse 19. He says to them, destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.

Huh? Could you imagine the reaction? Well, we have it in verse 20. It's taken 46 years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days?

How are you possibly, how could you rebuild a temple if it was all flattened? It's nonsense talk.

You're talking stupid. And besides, how will we ever get close to God without a temple?

[23 : 12] Verse 21. But the temple Jesus was speaking about was his body. You see, Jesus was making this extraordinary claim.

He's saying, see that building over there? Look at me. I am the true temple. I am the one who will give you access to the Father.

Come to me and you will experience God's presence personally and intimately. Well, they'd all missed the point completely, hadn't they?

It would take a lot longer before they realized what Jesus was coming to do. Verse 22. after Jesus was raised from the dead, so he died three days later, he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled, they remembered back to the event in the temple, they believed the scriptures and the words that Jesus had spoken.

It suddenly dawned on them that yes, it is through Jesus, through his death and through his resurrection, that we could have access to God.

[24 : 34] Now, that meant that anything that hindered access to God needed to be removed. A cleansing had to take place.

And that's what Jesus was demonstrating earlier on when he arrived at the temple. A cleansing was taking place. Look at when these events took place.

Verse 13. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now, Passover was this great big annual event when they remembered their liberation, God setting his people free from Egypt hundreds of years before. And so this one time every year, hundreds,

thousands of people all left and went on a big pilgrimage and all travelled up to Jerusalem. It was like all-Ireland final day in Croke Park when every county was in the final. I mean, everybody went.

[25 : 44] They came to meet with God. people were coming from all barriers and obstacles.

People were coming from all kinds of places and were pulling out their wallet ready to pay money for some animal for a sacrifice. Oh, well, you've got the wrong currency. Let me exchange it and well, I'll just take a bit for myself.

And then they were haggling over the price of a cow. How much is that sheep? No, too much. What about the dove? Maybe that's cheaper. You see, those who were selling animals and exchanging currency had turned the temple into a place of making money rather than meeting God.

Rather than a place to worship God, it had become a place to increase your wealth. And Jesus was angry, verse 15, so he made a whip out of cords, drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle, and he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

Have you ever known Jesus to be angry? Well, let's not mistake things here. Jesus hasn't lost his temper. No, it was a righteous anger.

[27 : 07] Jesus was passionate for his father's glory. Verse 16, to those who were selling, he said, get them out of here. Stop turning my father's house into a market.

You see, Jesus longed that people would be able to come and give honour and praise and worship to the father, for that is why God had made us.

It's the purpose in which God had created us, that we would live for him, that we would worship him. So anyone that obstructed access to God was to be removed.

It was an act of cleansing. Jesus cleaned it all up by clearing people out. You see, it comes as a warning to us that if we put obstacles in the way of people coming to God, if we put up barriers to stop access to the father, if we become those who obstruct the way, well, there will be a cleansing, a clearing out of all who are opposed to him.

You see, this was a cleansing that God had always been concerned for. There was a cleansing which led to a removal in judgment.

[28 : 46] Years before, the prophet Jeremiah had confronted God's people about the way they were behaving and living. And God said to Jeremiah, you can read it there on the screen, God said to Jeremiah, stand at the gate of the Lord's house, stand at the entrance to the temple and say to the people, reform your ways and your actions and I will let you live.

You see, they were turning up and doing all the worshipy religious stuff and that was fine. The rest of the time they were carrying on and doing whatever they pleased. God says, no, you've got to reform your ways.

But you did not listen. I called but you didn't answer. I will now do to the house that bears my name, the temple you trust in, I will thrust you from my presence.

Well, God's word was clear, wasn't it? God says, I am going to remove you. I am going to cleanse my house from all who do not repent and all who do not listen to me.

And so when Jesus arrived at the temple to his father's house, he cleansed it. He enacted God's judgment upon the people.

[30 : 14] Well, you say, that sounds a bit harsh. Jesus being so angry, removing people. Well, remember, Jesus wants a people who will worship God, who will live for him and serve him.

And all who oppose him and all who reject him will be removed. And Jesus is making this very simple statement that if we turn against him, he will remove us.

We will be removed from his presence forever. forever. You see, if we look at this story as all about Jesus freeing animals, well, we've missed the point completely.

Jesus says, refuse me, ignore me, turn against me, and I will remove you from my father's house.

so two signed stories pointing us to Jesus. At the wedding, we see the welcome of the bridegroom.

[31 : 27] Come to me, says Jesus, and I will clean you of all your sin. No longer do you have to put on a pretense or put on a show.

You can come as you are. I will forgive you. I will give you my purity. I will give you my righteousness. I will make you as a beautiful bride.

And I will be your loyal, faithful, and steadfast husband. And as we come to Jesus, so in a sense we enter into a marriage relationship with God that is safe and secure and will never be broken.

A wedding feast where we will eat and drink and be happy and be glad and there will be no more death. It will last forever.

But at the temple we see the warning of a judge. And Jesus is saying, I am the way to the Father. And I have come that you may have access to him.

[32 : 34] But if you hinder the way, if we do not reform our ways and turn back to him, Jesus says, well there will come a day when I will come again.

And it will be in judgment. And I will cleanse this place from all who do not trust me. Which Jesus are we going to meet?

The party Jesus? The welcome of the bridegroom? The bridegroom? The bridegroom? Or the righteous angered Jesus? Who will remove us from his presence because we have ignored him? Two signs, two stories. What Jesus are we ready to meet? Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for your word.

[33 : 54] thank you for its simplicity, its clarity. Thank you that it points us to Jesus. And Father, we pray that each one of us here would turn to you, that we would come to you for that cleansing, that we would know life with you, a relationship with you forever and ever.

feasting and joy forevermore. Father, we pray that we would always be those who are continually changing our ways, confessing our sin, and seeking to live a life that pleases you.

Father, help us, help us to trust Jesus, and help us to walk in his way. And it's in his name we pray. Amen.

We're going to sing together. What is our hope in life and death? Christ alone, Christ alone. He is our only hope.

He is the one who welcomes us today. Let's stand to sing, if you're able to. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.