John 2:1-12

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Date: 07 July 2019

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[0:00] Again, the scripture text is John 2, 1-12, on page 983 of the White Bibles. Please remain standing for the reading of God's Word. On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine. And Jesus said to her, Woman, what does this have to do with me?
My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you. Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.
Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water. And they filled them to the brim. And he said to them, Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.
So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine.
[1:16] But you have kept the good wine until now. This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

After this, he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days. This is the word of God of the Lord. You may be seated.
Well, good morning, and welcome to Holy Trinity Church.
And I just want to bring my own word on the summer getaway to you. It will be a wonderful time if you're able to get away with us.
We'll leave on a Sunday afternoon, August 4th. And we break up Wednesday morning around 1030. So for many folks, it just requires a couple of days off.
[2:19] And we hope that you can make it August 4 to 7 as we bring our congregation together for the second year. Well, today we have a wedding story.

Everybody likes a good wedding story. And after about 32 years of pastoral ministry, believe me, I have my fair share of wedding stories.
The first wedding I ever officiated, though, was memorable. A crisis was averted.
The young pastor, I don't even think I was yet fully ordained, was officiating a wedding that was outside.
And it was set to begin at dusk. And long before I ran out of material, we ran out of sunlight. And to compound the problem, this was my younger sister's wedding.
[3:35] To make matters worse, she had us standing beneath a canopy, which was to symbolize God's covenantal blessing. But for me, it was a cloth of curse, which was hiding any moonlight or stars that would have brought illumination to the event.

Fortunately for us all, the bridesmaids had walked down with lit candles. And there was one candle still lighted that a bridesmaid was holding.
And I remember reaching over, grabbing her candle, young pastor, first time through the material, trying to get through the wedding language, which I was unfamiliar with, while at the same time speaking away from the light, lest I blow the candle out and leave us all in darkness.
We got through it. Everybody likes a good wedding story. John seems to present this unique wedding story right at the outset, as though to captivate us towards something.
Let me just have you keep that open and take a look at it. It's a wonderful story about Jesus. But, verse 11 is your center of gravity for this story.

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[5:19] It is followed by John's words concerning a sign. This, the first of his signs. In other words, you've got this early event, but in the life of Jesus, it gives way to a single line of interpretation by John.

You've got three conversations in the story, but only one idea that for John is there by way of communication.
Jesus may speak with his mother in one to five. He may converse with the servants in six through eight. The master of ceremonies may talk with the bridegroom in nine and ten.
But for John, it all comes down to verse 11. What's really amazing then is, besides this obvious attention to what the story means, is the rap in which John has placed it.
Let me see if I can explain. John opened his gospel with the echo of creation's account, Genesis 1, in mind.
[6:55] You can see it there. In the beginning, John 1, 1, in the beginning was the word, and then you have this voice, and you have light.

So, John opens his gospel as though he is doing a new beginning. And the wedding at Cana, it feels to me as though he is intentionally wanting the reader to see it as a cosmic, climactic moment of new creation.
Do you realize that he's framed this story to be the seventh day following those echoes of Genesis? You had this witness of John in 1, 1 to 18. But take a look structurally at these literary markers. Chapter 1, verse 29, the next day.
That would be day 2. Or verse 35, the next day. Day 3. Or verse 43, the next day.
[8:08] Day 4. And now, our scene on the third day, from 4, then to 5, to 6, and to 7. So, what John is doing with this seemingly ordinary story is almost exploding his gospel from the very beginning to some full expression of God's new covenantal blessing being the first sign that makes manifest or brings light under the canopy that we would see who is before us in this one Jesus.

So, the story is enjoyable. But I want to ask today in light of those things, what does this signify? The wedding as an event could be told with great humor.
But John is interested in the interpretation. The conversations are there. But what God has given to us through John is this communication.
This, verse 11, the first of his signs which manifested his glory and the disciples believed in him.
Let me ask five questions in of the text. What role do these signs have in John's gospel? Is something being anticipated here that will help us learn what he's trying to explain to us as we read through it in the coming year?
[9:51] And what role would signs have had for his first readers? I mean, obviously, the first readers were meant to anticipate something by way of expectation when we read this is the first of the signs completed.

Let me ask three more questions then. Why this emphasis on that it took place in Galilee? Why way up there in Galilee? Why wine?
And then why wedding? So, take a look at it. What role do signs have in John's gospel?
You need to know that verse 11 anticipates five further markers of miraculous moments that are meant to lead people to belief in his interpretive understanding of who is Jesus.
I don't even need to show them to you today. We will see them as they unfold. Signs are significant for John. Five times.
[11:09] miraculous moments meant to move people to a consideration and a decision on Jesus. Seventeen other times he will actually use this particular term.

And if you were here a few weeks ago you might have taken note of what Bing mentioned to us all the way at the end of the gospel.
And I'd like you to turn there again. this will be especially helpful to you if you have never actually read this gospel front to back for yourself.
While he opens in chapter 2 with the first of these signs in chapter 20 and verse 30 and 31 he closes his gospel on these words.
Let me read them to you. Chapter 20 verse 30 Now Jesus did many other signs. in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.
[12:25] So these signs these miraculous moments are for John significant. they are meant to help you make a decision on belief and therefore at the end of the day have life.

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Let me put it to you this way these are miraculous moments that authenticate John's messianic message.
They become proofs for his theses on Jesus. They become arguments for his oratory.
They become evidence. Let me put it to you this way. They are something visible which without them would have meant something remained hidden.
they are something seen that would have left something significant unseen. Jesus did something in the external world that for John gave credence to what he claimed Jesus could do for you in your internal spirit.
[13:55] it. That's what's happening with these signs. So we're not to just look at this as some just be fixated on the power of turning water into wine.

What John wants you to know is that there is some promise being fulfilled. Well what is the promise? Or put differently second question what would the early readers of John been thinking about with this reference to signs concerning Jesus?
In the first century signs were the language of common kingly expectation. Before there was the writing of the New Testament there are a series of books in Jewish literature that are already anticipating that when God brings new recreative power into the world through his king it will be attended by these signs.
Let me give you just a few of them. This one would have come at the end of the age and would have fulfilled all these promises.
The fourth book of Ezra says that when the end comes when God's kingdom arrives it will come in deed and in signs.
[15:36] That when God recreates it will be attended by signs. The Talmud gives us a brief exchange between a rabbi and his disciples in which they ask him when will the son of David come and at first the teacher says I'm not going to answer you when because I fear you will want a sign of me in other words you will want my word verified they press him and then he goes on and speaks only to the very end they say then what sign will you give or all of these questions then move toward when the Messiah comes when the created order is recreated when God's kingdom replaces a fallen kingdom when he restores ourselves in relationship to him signs are going to be part of the deal and so John is grabbing hold of common expectation because he wants his readers to be relevantly in play with what he has to say he's very different than the other gospel writers this way they down play signs so that so that

Christ's work and his words will be manifest John says let me give the people what they want signs and through that demonstrate them as proofs to what he claims he can do so on the third day there's a wedding the interpretive force it's going to come with a sign water to wine so what is John doing then not only in regard to what he does with signs or the people's expectations of sign but third question why frame this as taking place in Galilee did you notice that in the reading take a look at it with your own eyes verse one on the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee this little detail by way of intention that's repeated in verse 11 this the first of his signs
Jesus did you could have just had a period there but what John wants you to know that is it was at Cana in Galilee why wrap the wedding in Galilee when one considers the Old Testament there was every prophetic indication that when God came would come into the world to rescue his people he would take the same path that God's enemies took when they came in to destroy the people Babylon and Assyria would come as kingdoms from the north far above Jerusalem and they would enter from Galilee and down in and through the land in the conquering and the taking away of the people and the prophetic word of
Isaiah was that so too when God's king comes and reclaims his own he will come as the conquerors came all the way from Galilee so that when you look at Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 1 you read this kind of language there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish in the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali but in the latter time he has made glorious by the way of the sea the land beyond the Jordan Galilee of the nations there's Galilee the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness on them a light has shown and so the significance of Cana in
Galilee is that this is the place where the light comes forth and makes manifest just as verse 11 says that this sign makes manifest in Galilee the glory of the Messiah why a wedding why a wedding whenever God would reach down in the Old Testament scriptures for a metaphor that would capture the fullness of what he wanted at creation he reached for the language of intimate

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marriage so when you when you get to weddings you're getting to a human institution used by way of metaphor to express all of our ability to be in a perfect relationship with
[21:08] God so that in Ezekiel chapter 16 the prophet will indicate that God looks down on Israel and sees her in her blood and in a sense rescues her chooses her places his covenantal love upon her raises her feeds her provides for her dresses her adorns her marries her and so that Israel as a people were a tangible expression in the world that God was going to remarry all the families of the earth so a wedding is the perfect image of or the perfect moment if you were trying to make manifest that something new had just now begun and so you have the same thing say in the book of

Hosea this metaphor of marriage gone wrong to be emblematic of God's persistence to reunite himself to men and women who had left him you get the same thing in the New Testament material with somebody like Paul who uses again this same human institution to speak not of his preferential movement toward human marriage but rather he says I'm speaking about Christ and the church so here you have John now thinking about how do I open my gospel how do I let people know that there was creation but now there is new creation how do I let them know that God's blessing which attended the seventh day attends the ministry of
Jesus as he does things for us it all comes in Galilee at a wedding and notice with wine this is really the last of the important questions why wine take a look at verse six for yourself now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification each holding twenty or thirty gallons Jesus said to his servants fill the jars with water and they filled them up to the brim and he said to them now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast so they took it and when the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine and did not know where it came from though the servants had drawn the water new the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him everyone serves the good wine first and when people have drunk freely then the poor wine but you have kept the good wine until now now think of it six jars which
John wants you to know were there for purification now suddenly through this miraculous moment are six jars filled with the best of wine added up for people who brew their own he has just made miraculously between 120 and 180 gallons of wine for the party I don't know how many bottles that is but but in the ancient world a wedding would have been attended with days of celebration and what this is here to signify is simply that the old world wherein people related to
God by the washing of water externally doing something that would in a sense clean themselves has now been replaced with another world where you don't have to wash to be purified but you're actually seated at the celebratory supper!
[25:47] Already in communion and this too was pointed at in the Old Testament let me just give you a few indications here from Isaiah again chapter 25 and verse 6 here's a prophetic word from the Old Testament on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich foods a feast of well aged wine aged wine well refined so here's Isaiah writing that when the when the recreative kingdom comes it's going to be like being at a wedding reception with well aged wine now remember John has already given you John the Baptist witness who launches himself out of

Isaiah 40 that the time of consolation has come but now in this miraculous moment you not only have John's testimony you have all the fullness of Isaiah's prophecies becoming clear it's coming from Cana in Galilee it's coming in the form of a marriage which metaphorically is our relationship with God can be remade and it's coming with the sign of wine wherein that takes place think of think of the book of Joel Joel chapter 3 verse 17 and 18 so you shall know that I am the Lord God and in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine again metaphorically they're indicating that in the day when God can be known it will be like wine flowing forth from the mountains or
Isaiah chapter 55 come everyone who thirst come buy wine without money wine was the perfect symbol if you were trying to signify that God is here and ready to celebrate relationship with you in 20 minutes then I've worked my way through five questions that come up and out of the significance of verse 11 this is the first of his signs the first of the miraculous moments that authenticate the messianic message this is something you can see without which you might not have taken in this this is something by way of natural order suspended in the external world to indicate to you that perhaps
Jesus can do something for me internally this comes from Galilee just as God promised this picks up on the image of wedding just as God has always used this is attended with wine because relationship is now restored let me put it to you as clearly as I can by way of question do you believe

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will you believe would you consider!
believe verse 11 and his disciples believed in him didn't didn't

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