

Behold, Believe, and Live

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[0:00] To make it real easy, the text for this morning is on the back of your bulletin. So if you can read that fairly small print or turn in your Bibles, you can take a look at that. We're going to be looking at what happened in John chapter 2.

All right, here's the text. 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 that 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 20 or 30 gallons. Jesus said to the 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.

[1:10] 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. But you have kept the good wine until now. This is 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.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for this text. Thank you for the opportunity to look at it together. May we see the glory of Jesus in this text.

And then may we also see what your glory, being beheld by us, does to us.

[2:24] We pray in your name. Amen. Well, of all of the miracles in the gospel accounts, this may be the most difficult to understand.

Not because it's hard to understand what Jesus did, but why he did it at all. I mean, of all the things Jesus could have done, why did he choose to do the first miracle at a small-town wedding?

And why did it have to involve wine? And not just a little. Further, the wedding was a human celebration with little or no obvious spiritual connotation or application.

Many preachers of the Bible and Bible teachers go to an effort to try to make this text into some kind of allegorical story about our joy in Christ, which gets better through time.

But I'm not convinced that was the purpose of the text. It's important to know what John is doing and why he includes this as he does. He began with a thesis statement.

[3:31] You've heard Pastor Mike say this a number of times from John 1, verses 1 to 18, declaring that Jesus is God in human flesh. And then the last, toward the end of John's gospel, really the theme of the gospel, really the purpose for which he wrote the gospel, in chapter 20, verse 30 and 31, say this.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his 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.

That's why he wrote the book. And that's why he included a number of signs in the book to bring us to that conclusion. So this first miraculous sign must have been designated to make us know who Jesus is by seeing something of his glory and to respond to his salvation by faith.

So does this account do that? That's the question. This account is about a real wedding in a real place with real people. John specifically picked this miraculous sign over many others. Jesus did many, many miracles. If you read the other gospels, you'll see many, many more. Why did John pick this one and the ones he picked?

[5:05] Well, this would build the framework of John's conclusion concerning Jesus as the Messiah and the Savior. But a bit of background before we continue.

The seven signs that John recorded, which were done in the presence of his disciples, were actually all leading up to showing us something about who Jesus is, that he is the Christ, and that by believing in him, we might have life through his name.

So with some help from a commentator by the name of Merrill Tenney, in an old commentary back many, many years ago, he was writing and he was saying that this first sign actually demonstrated Jesus as the master of quality, accomplishing instantaneously what would have taken months to be accomplished.

And it showed Jesus as the Lord of glory. The second sign in John chapter 4, healing of the noble man's son, that's an interesting one because Jesus healed him, but he was 20 miles away from him when it happened.

Well, that demonstrated that Jesus is the master of space and distance. And Jesus healed him with his word. And so the first miracle told us something about the glory of God.

[6:29] The second miracle told us something about the true and living word of God. The third sign in John chapter 5, the healing of the impotent man who had been waiting for 38 years to be put into the water, into the fountain there, into the pool, demonstrated Jesus as the master of time.

And it showed us that he was Lord over the Sabbath. The fourth sign was the feeding of the 5,000. Showed us mastery, the master of quantity.

Remember, Jesus took one little boy's snack and turned it into enough to feed 5,000 men plus women and children. What did it tell us about that?

Well, Jesus actually preached a message in the context of that miracle. He's the bread of life. The fifth sign, walking on water, said something about Jesus being the master of natural forces.

Remember, Jesus was in the boat. He was asleep. Storm, don't you care that we perish? Says his disciples. He speaks. The waters go flat.

[7:36] Peace. Jesus is the God of peace. The sixth sign, the healing of a man born blind, answered the question why this man was afflicted.

Did he sin or was it because of his parents? Well, this demonstrated Jesus as the master of misfortune. But showed us that Jesus is the light of the world.

The seventh sign, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, demonstrated that Jesus is master of death or over death. He is the resurrection and the life. So these seven signs together were chosen that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name.

So let's find out what there is about this first sign that will lead us to that conclusion. Unlike some miracles, such as the feeding of the 5,000, this one has no supporting dialogue or discourse to help us zero in on the meaning of the miracle.

Does this miracle declare Jesus to be the Lord of glory, drawing us to believe that he is the Christ? Is that what this does?

[8:53] I suggest that this miracle establishes the base, the groundwork, on which we are going to build the case of who Jesus is, that of his glory.

This case is built on a human connection, it's built on the miracle itself, and then the revelation of the Lord following the miracle. So that's where we're headed.

Alright, let's start with the human connection. So here we are at a wedding, Jesus and a wedding. This first sign that Jesus performs is not in a synagogue, it's not in the temple, it's not at a funeral raising the dead, it's not in an infirmary healing the sick, it's at a wedding in a small town not far from the town where Jesus grew up.

It was in a place where everyone knew everyone else. It involved refreshment and the sparing of family embarrassment. We'll get to that in a bit. Perhaps our first reaction is to assign some more spiritual application, but maybe we ought to resist that temptation and read more into this text, not to read more into this text than it's there, but to read the text and actually see what is there, what is in front of us.

So this was a real wedding and Jesus, his mother, his disciples, and himself all were there to attend and then to do such a miraculous sign actually removes a picture of Jesus that some might think like some kind of a cloistered rabbi or something, but it wasn't Jesus.

[10:35] In fact, it may have added to the rumored reputation of Jesus being a white bibber and a glutton, said some of his enemies. Anyway, Jesus' attendance affirms his approval of the institution of marriage.

Well, that's a needed issue throughout times, even today. It reminds us that Jesus was fully human in every way, even attending parties and family celebrations.

I should make some observations about first century Middle Eastern weddings. It was a celebration. Now, we have weddings today.

We go to weddings and after the ceremony, after the exchange of vows and so forth, then usually there is some kind of a party. There is a reception. There is a time where there is laughter and joy and sometimes dancing and there's all kinds of things happening.

Food, refreshment, all kinds of things. And how long does that last? A few hours maybe and then we go home. Middle Eastern weddings were not quite that way.

[11:44] They could last even up to a week. Can you imagine that? And then also at these weddings, wine was considered to be a necessity on those occasions.

To run out of wine was a serious issue. It was a social embarrassment. And this is interesting. It can also become a legal matter because if the wine ran out, relatives of the bride might, in fact, sue their daughter's their daughter's husband's family for running out of wine.

See, the groom bore the financial responsibility for the wedding. Now, if you have daughters, you would probably love to have that one reinstated. But anyway, the groom was responsible for the payment of this grand party.

whatever else we can say about this, Jesus was absolutely in normal human life. Now, let's talk a little bit about Jesus and Mary.

Recorded here is a conversation and then some action. So, what do we make of this? Jesus asked, or Mary asked and Jesus kindly, though nevertheless pointedly, rebukes her, reminding her that something had changed.

[13:12] In verse 4, when he says woman, that's not necessarily an endearing term, though neither is it necessarily a derogatory term.

Like, woman? I doubt that he said that, that way. But Jesus uses the term in another place in the Bible. You remember when Jesus was hanging on the cross?

And as he's hanging there, he talks to John, his disciple, and he also speaks to Mary. And he says, woman, behold your son.

He wasn't talking about himself. He was talking about John. He was leaving the care of his earthly mother in the hands of his disciple.

So, it wasn't derogatory necessarily, but at any rate, it might seem a bit odd for Jesus to say that, say this to his earthly mother.

[14:16] By the way, the apostle John does not name Mary in his gospel. He also does not name himself in his gospel. Perhaps that was done so as not to, for Mary, so as not to confuse her, the mother of Jesus, with several other people named Mary.

If you ever spend any time reading the New Testament, you probably come to the conclusion that every other woman in the New Testament's name was Mary, but there's a lot of them, but so he doesn't mention her name, but anyway, what we have here, and this is important, it's a reminder by Jesus that his ministry shall ever be free of any kind of human advice, agenda, or manipulation. His purpose, and he made clear many times his purpose was to do his Father's will, the Heavenly Father. That's an important point. Though Mary had precious responsibility during Jesus' earthly life, she could no longer view him in the same way that she may have earlier.

There were no prerogatives of motherhood in relation to Jesus. In fact, everywhere she appears, Jesus puts distance between himself and his earthly family.

See, Mary, like every other person, would have to come to him as a sinner. She would have to recognize him as the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[15:51] Neither she nor anyone else could claim any kind of inside track to Jesus. When Mary approached Jesus as his mother, she was reproached.

After a mild rebuke, she shook it off and told the servants to do whatever he said. In other words, when she responded to Jesus as a believer, her faith was honored.

And then Jesus said, my hour has not yet come. That referred to Jesus' death on the cross and his exaltation bound up with that. In fact, there are a number of places where he mentions that term.

If you move forward in the gospel, in chapter 7, the scripture says, they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

Chapter 8, verse 20, in John's gospel. These words he spoke in the treasury as he taught in the temple, but no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come.

[16:57] Chapter 12, verse 23, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Same chapter. Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?

Father, save me from this hour, but for this purpose I have come to this hour. Chapter 13, verse 1, this is the time when Jesus is with his disciples in the upper room.

Now before the feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of the world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

And then in that prayer that Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17, verse 1, it says, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.

So Jesus was saying that what was to come was his focus. This wasn't that. The fact that he ran out of wine wasn't that, that wasn't his hour.

[18:01] That's not the point. But there was a request and there was a miracle. And so what is all this about? So let's look at the supernatural demonstration here.

Let's start with what the miracle was. Whatever else we do with this account, Jesus does do a miracle. Now there was an Old Testament connection between weddings and wine and the coming of Messiah, believe it or not, in the Messianic age.

You could find a little bit of that in Jeremiah chapter 31, a little bit in Hosea chapter 14. There's also some interesting connections with this in Amos chapter 9. I'm going to read a few verses from there. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes, he who sows the seed. The mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

[19:09] I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord your God. In other words, Jesus makes it clear that his time had not yet come, but this is a solid statement regarding the identity of him coming ultimately as the Messiah to establish his kingdom.

His glory is about to show up. So the narrative is fairly easy to understand. Again, it's a wedding, the wine is gone, and the host is about to be greatly embarrassed.

Mary speaks to Jesus. Why did Mary go to Jesus? Was she expecting him to do a miracle? Keep in mind, what does the scripture say in this text about this miracle?

It was the first one. Jesus hadn't done any miracles yet. So it's probably not that.

Perhaps whenever there was a problem at home, she may have turned to him for help or counsel or advice. We don't know. But certainly Jesus always gave good counsel and he was always compassionate toward others.

[20:28] Mary simply said they have no wine. Jesus reminded her of her place and his place and then he gave the servants the assignment.

Fill six stone water pots. And they do that. Now think about that. These big pots, 20 to 30 gallons, and six of those are filled.

That's pretty interesting. And the servants know that they put water in the pots, right? Okay. So they do it. So he gives the second assignment. Draw some out for the master of the banquet.

I wonder what they were thinking right about then. Oh, this is not going to be good. They do. And the water is now wine. But not just any wine.

The best wine. So what's the miracle point to? Well, again, resisting the temptation to go beyond the text. I think we can say with some confidence that there may be some symbolism here.

[21:26] The water pots were to hold water for ceremonial washings or cleansings. What Jesus did was to replace that situation, those ceremonial cleansings, with something new and something better.

In chapter 1, verses 16 and 17 of the Gospel of John, Mike mentioned this a number of times. For from his fullness we have received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. In other words, something new, something better.

So there's coming a day when Jesus shall supply all that's needed at a great banquet at a Messianic, as the best Messianic bridegroom.

Though the time has not yet come, come it will. Certainly this is true, but does this miracle have anything to do with that? Well, some would also suggest that just the sheer quantity of wine might speak of the lavish provision of the age to come, perhaps.

[22:38] But whatever else we can make of this event, this is the beginning of the unveiling of God. That is, God who is now veiled in human flesh.

And this leads to the final point, the divine revelation. Jesus, the Messiah. Remember that John had said about these signs and the design for them.

These signs would give ample proof that Jesus was the Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah. The miracle was more than just a great demonstration of Jesus' power.

This was a revelation of his deity. Keep in mind that this is the bridge between Jesus' private life and his public ministry. See, people knew him, but they didn't really know him.

Actually, this was only a semi-public because only a few people knew what happened. Most had no idea. They just thought the wedding host had saved the best wine for last.

[23:47] And then there's Jesus the glory. John declares this to be the first of Jesus' miraculous signs. What does first mean? I got first in the race.

That never happened, really, but I got first in the race. That would be chronological. First one across the line. But first can also mean primary.

That is, most important. Perhaps John was saying that this miracle was of primary importance because it pointed to something altogether new.

You see, something new was happening here of great importance. And so what we're doing is we're building the foundation of showing the glory of God as Jesus presents himself.

What John said in chapter 1 verse 14, we have seen his glory full of grace and truth is here inaugurated. By this first sign, Jesus revealed something of his glory.

[24:49] Though his glory would be revealed in greater measure in his cross work and the resurrection and his exaltation, every step along the way shows us this course of his ministry is marked by glory.

Particularly the disciples and we who read the gospel accounts are given an unfolding picture of the revelation of his glory.

It basically begins here. So the servants, when they saw the sign that happened, they saw that, but they didn't see the glory.

The disciples perceived Jesus' glory behind the sign and they put their faith in him. It was early and there would be many more signs, but this is the beginning of the revelation of his glory.

That's why John includes this story of the miraculous wedding wine. Do you see something of his glory? Jesus is starting to show who he is. Now remember these things were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that by believing we might have life in his name.

[26:06] That was the effect of this miracle and the others that John recorded on the lives of his disciples. It's not the miracles per se that caused people to believe.

Miracles do not in themselves produce faith. But the miracles revealed the person of Christ Christ. And when the disciples saw who he was they saw him for who he was.

They saw his glory and they continued to place their trust in him. Throughout Jesus' ministry he manifested his glory. Some saw it and believed.

Others were present but did they see it? They know some of them even called for his death.

Today through the pages of scripture and in the proclamation of the word we can see his glory.

Some believe some turn away.

[27:05] But whatever our response to the glory of God is it is glory and he is God. Reject him and you've rejected the God of glory.

Receive him and you have received the God of glory. glory. So who could wondrously save you and bring you all the way home to his glorious presence?

This glorious God. And all along the way if we are paying attention we can see his glory and there's more. This I find interesting.

Paul picks up this theme and he says this. Just listen to what he said to the Corinthians in the second letter in chapter 3. And we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

It's not just seeing the glory of God. When we see it God is changing us to make us more like him.

And so as Paul said we are being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to another.

[28:25] The commentator that I mentioned at the beginning of this message had this to say about these miracles. These seven miracles then are preeminently signs because they point to those aspects of Jesus' ministry in which he demonstrated his transcendent control over the factors of life with which man is unable to cope.

Quality, space, time, quantity, natural law, misfortune, and death circumscribe humanity's world. Daily existence is a struggle against these limitations.

Christ's superiority over them as revealed in these events called signs was proof of his deity and a clue to understanding what the writer desired to say about him.

So back to where we started, these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name.

These things were recorded so you would see Jesus for who he is. And that we would believe and that our faith would be strengthened as we are transformed by the glory of God.

[29:43] God. So when the Bible speaks of life through his name, it's not just mere existence, it is life defined by Jesus himself.

In John chapter 17 verse 3 in his high priestly prayer if you will, to the Father right before his arrest and crucifixion, he said, and this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Do you know him? And the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen what? His glory. Glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Is he the object of your trust? Are you seeing his glory? And as Pastor Mike works our way through the gospel of John, you'll begin to see glory after glory after glory stacked on top of glory of who Jesus is.

And when you start to see him for who he is and you embrace him for who he is and you trust him for who he is and you worship him, he begins to do something in you that changes you into, this is amazing, into an image like unto himself.

[31:12] We're just getting started, but that's the picture. Do you know him? Have you trusted him? Have you seen his glory? Are you worshiping him?

That's the question. Let's pray. Father, thank you for this text. Thank you for everyone here today that has opportunity to read from your word these accounts of the life of the Lord Jesus and to see one event on top of another showing, demonstrating, declaring your glory.

May we not only see it, but may we embrace it and bask in it, be overwhelmed by it.

May you cause us to bow before you, worship you with our whole heart because we see who you are. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your grace and your mercy.

Thank you for the salvation that you bring. And if there are some here who do not know you, Father, I pray that you would quicken their hearts to believe the gospel.

[32:34] That you would give them new life in you. Thank you for our time together. May you be glorified in all that we say and do for the glory of your name we pray.

Amen.