

The First Sign

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- [0 : 0 0] If you have your Bible with you, please open it up to the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John. If you're using the Pew Bible, it's about page 860. Well, we've been journeying through the Gospel of John.
- We've started the journey. We're still very much at the beginning. We've seen and read some wonderful things. John has begun by telling us just who Jesus is, that he's more than just a man.
- He is the Word who was God and was with God at the very beginning. Through him all things were made. He became flesh and he has come to live among us.
- We heard from John about how Jesus first began to be known by the public. We heard about John the Baptizer declaring out at the Jordan River, This is the one.
- Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We saw last Sunday how some of Jesus' first disciples began to follow him.
- [1 : 1 2] And what they very quickly began to say about who he was. And John has set some pretty high expectations for us as he has begun to tell us the story of Jesus.
- You'll remember that John said back in verse 14 of chapter 1, We saw his glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- And so it's right about now that we're starting to wonder, Well, when did the miracles start? When did the signs and wonders start happening?
- That's exactly what John is about to tell us this morning. We're going to look at the first of Jesus' signs, as John refers to them.
- And John makes it very clear right from the get-go. Not actually right from the get-go, but later on in his gospel. He makes it very clear as to why he's telling us this.
- [2 : 1 8] He's not just here to tell us the next thing that happened in Jesus' story. In John 20, verses 30 and 31, John writes this, Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.
- But these, the ones that I've written down here in my account, are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.
- And that by believing, you may have life in his name. So what is the first sign that Jesus did?
- And how did it all happen? We're reading from John chapter 2. John chapter 2, verse 1.
- On the third day, a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there.
- [3 : 2 6] And Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. So this takes place very quickly after Nathaniel's introduction to Jesus, which we heard about last Sunday.
- It's about two days from that day. And it takes place in Cana. A small town, a small village. This was the place where Nathaniel was from.
- And the occasion is a wedding. The celebration of a marriage. And probably the ceremony too. And who was there?

John tells us Jesus' mother was there. But not only her, Jesus himself and his disciples had also been invited to this wedding.

So there's a little bit of traveling that's going on here to come to Cana for this celebration. Now weddings in that culture and time were not quite the same as they are in our culture and time.

[4 : 31] Typically, they wouldn't just do a one-day thing, but they would do a whole week. It was a ceremony and then the rest of the week spent in celebration. In banquets and eating and drinking together.

It was a very joyous occasion. And the thing that sets this wedding apart, or begins to set it apart, there was a problem.

We read in verse 3, When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, They have no more wine.

So in the middle of their festivities, their celebration, We don't know exactly what day of the celebration it happened on. But at some point, they run out of the staple drink for the celebration.

They run out of wine. And if we read this story closely again and again, We probably see, the sense we get is that probably Mary was one of the first to know about it.

[5 : 41] The rest of the guests haven't yet heard that this has happened. And this is a big deal. And so, what does Mary do?

She comes to Jesus and she lets him know. They have no more wine. And we gather from Jesus' response right after this that Mary's not just making a statement.

She's kind of hoping or expecting that Jesus might do something here. We don't know for sure what she expected.

Did she expect Jesus to do a miracle? This was the first of his signs. So we don't even know if Jesus did a whole bunch of miracles before this. But probably Jesus had seen her and the family through a few interesting situations and had always been very reliable.

Just knew what to do. He had wisdom in those kinds of situations. And so, perhaps she was looking for Jesus to do something or to say something.

[6 : 57] They have no more wine. What is Jesus' response? He says, Woman, why do you involve me?

My hour has not yet come. Now, we have to be careful here that we don't read kind of the way that we would read this in our culture back into them.

There's a lot of discussion over, you know, what Jesus meant by these things. Especially the word woman. But one thing that we do know for sure is that Jesus meant no disrespect by addressing her that way.

In fact, he will address her again that way from the cross. In a moment where he is showing the utmost of care and concern for her well-being. So he doesn't mean this rudely or disrespectfully.

This is likely just a thing that's lost on us because of language and culture. But the question which follows, a lot of people are scratching their heads over this.

[8 : 01] Literally, it's, what to you and what to me and to you? And the verb isn't even in there. I mean, it's kind of left to us to just understand it.

But my Bible translates it as, why do you involve me? Some say, what is that to me and to you that they've run out of wine? You know, like that's not really our issue.

What exactly the sense is, I'm not sure. Some think that perhaps Jesus is rebuking Mary. You know, and the idea here is, you know, it's not really appropriate.

Or it's not really your place to, you know, try to direct me in this manner. Others think that maybe Jesus, this has to do with his role.

Both Mary and Jesus know who he is. But there's a sense, perhaps, in which, you know, I'm not here to just use supernatural power to fix every little problem.

[9 : 08] We're not sure exactly what Jesus meant. But it seems in one sense as though he's, you know, he's kind of distancing himself in this moment. You know, like, whose problem is this?

Is this something that I have, that I need to fix? Is it that Mary was expecting him to do something great? And Jesus is saying, you know, this isn't the right moment for this.

A lot of question over what Jesus means by my hour has not yet come. Again, we're not 100% sure. It seems that Jesus has some sort of sense of timing and how his days are about to unfold.

Perhaps he means something to the effect of, you know, to do something that would draw people's attention to myself here and now. It would be out of order.

It's not the right time. Like, he will do later great miracles and feed thousands. And everybody will see it. His mother's response is very interesting.

[10 : 20] Because, at least when I read what Jesus said, Why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come. I don't, I wouldn't take that as a yes. But it seems as though Mary's thinking, Well, he didn't say no.

He didn't say no. Servants, come here. Do whatever he tells you to do. You know, you get the sense that Mary almost just volunteers him in that moment.

That he's been voluntold by his mother. And I love the confidence that Mary expresses about Jesus.

It kind of comes out in the original. Whatever he tells you, do it. You know, it doesn't matter what it is. Just listen to him.

He's going to look after this. He's going to help us. It's going to be good. Jesus graciously decides to help. But before we get to that, let's just consider for a moment the gravity of this problem.

[11 : 27] I mean, this kind of the question here is, Whose problem is this? It's not Jesus' problem. It's not Mary's problem. It's the family's problem.

In this culture, it was the responsibility of the bridegroom and his family or his party to provide the food and drink for the guests, for the celebration.

And whatever happened, we don't know, but they've run short on the wine. So, just to help us think for a moment of what this might have felt like.

I mean, put yourself in their shoes a little bit. Think about you're having a big gathering, not a family gathering, a big gathering at your house. A whole bunch of people coming over for supper.

It's kind of an open invitation. You don't know who all is going to come or how many is going to be there. You're serving chicken. That's going to be kind of the main part on the plate and some other sides things, some salads and stuff like that.

[12 : 31] And at the last minute, a whole bunch more people than you expected or thought would come show up for supper.

And you're there kind of, you know, at the table watching as the people file through buffet style. They're, you know, they're each taking a piece of chicken onto their plate and you're watching as it gets lower and lower and lower.

And then all of a sudden, the last piece of chicken is gone and there's still five people standing in line. How are you feeling in that moment? I mean, here's five guests who are not even going to get a little bit or some of the main thing of the meal.

And they're kind of like eyeing the salads and like, I guess I'll just pile up a lot of that. And, you know, you would feel terrible. You'd be embarrassed.

Oh, if I'd only picked up a little bit more, cooked a little bit more. And that's just a gathering in the home. Think about how much more significant this is.

[13 : 36] This is a wedding. You have guests that have traveled from other towns and villages to be there. This is a big deal. This is a once-in-a-lifetime moment, a special occasion celebrating the marriage of this man and woman.

How embarrassing to have run out of wine before the celebrations are even over. Can you imagine having to get up in front of all this crowd of people and say, I'm sorry, but there is no more wine to drink.

We do have water. This would not have been a fun moment. It would have been a huge detractor from the joyful celebration, from the focus on honoring the bride and the groom.

And so Jesus' mother comes to him and says, they have no more wine. She volunteers him in a sense and he graciously decides to act, to do something to help in this moment of need.

Verse six. Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from 20 to 30 gallons.

[15 : 13] 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.

So they, you get the sense that as this conversation's happening between Jesus and his mother, maybe they're kind of back towards the kitchen area.

We don't know exactly. But there, standing there, are six stone jars of water. And I was going to bring up one of those garbage cans from downstairs, about that size in volume.

20 to 30 gallons, you know, could fit a couple big bags of garbage in them. But they were, they were, they were made of stone. So likely really heavy, not the kind of thing that you just pick up and carry around.

Probably something that would have involved multiple trips with smaller containers to the well and back, to the well and back to fill these things up.

[16 : 16] They were used for ceremonial washing. And there's six of them there. Jesus says, fill them with water. Now imagine what the servants are thinking in this moment as they're doing this.

So we've run out of wine and he wants us to fill up these six jars with water. Like, how is this going to work? They're thinking as they're going back and forth to the well, you know, they're filling it, they're kind of looking at him and like, is he going to mix some kind of cocktail or something here?

He's not throwing anything in here. Like, what is this? And they just keep filling and filling and filling until all six jars are full to the brim, it says.

Now it's in between verse seven and eight here. Right after they finish filling him, sometime between there and what happens next, that Jesus does something amazing.

He does a miracle. And if we look ahead, just cheat a little bit and go into verse nine, they're about to take a sample of this liquid from the jars to the master of the banquet for a taste test.

[17 : 43] And what does it say in verse nine? It says, the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. So if we kind of, you know, I think we assume that this kind of happens somewhere in between verses seven and eight.

The jars had been filled to the brim and before they had drawn some out to take it to the master of the banquet for this taste test, Jesus did something. The water was turned into wine.

I wish I could have been there to just see what did he do? How did it happen? What did the servants and the disciples notice?

Did they see the color change? of the water in the jar? Did they, did all of a sudden what they were smelling change? Did they, could they smell that it was wine?

We don't know. He did something though. And then it comes to this moment. Jesus says, now, now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet for a taste test.

[19 : 00] So, you know, we imagine here they are. They're, you know, they're, they're kind of looking at Jesus funny. They're, they're, they've got the ladle in there. They're filling up the cup and then their eyes are going wide as they're watching it pour into the cup.

Perhaps the color was different already. You know, they're kind of, you can just imagine them like, what is going on here? Like, it doesn't smell like water.

What was going through their minds as they're, as they take this to the master of the banquet? Like, this is weird. Can you imagine their faces in that moment as they offer it to him?

And he takes the cup out of their hands and they're kind of wondering like, well, what's going to happen here? What? He lifts it up to his lips for a drink and they're just watching, you know, what does it taste like?

What a moment. The master of the banquet tastes the water that had been turned into wine and the first thing it says in verse nine after he does, it says, he did not realize where it had come from.

[20 : 19] You know, the question is, where did that come from? I thought we were almost out. Where'd you guys get that from? I don't know what the servants said.

I don't know what Jesus told the servants to say. is there more? Yeah, there's about, you know, five to seven hundred liters more where that came from.

You know, they knew where it came from. It says in verse nine, so after he tastes this water, which had become wine, it says in verse nine, then he called the bridegroom aside and he said, everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink.

In other words, when they can't really tell the difference because they're inebriated. but you have saved the best till now.

He commends the bridegroom. In other words, he doesn't know where the wine came from. He still doesn't know. The servants didn't tell him.

[21 : 38] Maybe Jesus told them not to say or told them what to say. They didn't know. He didn't know where it came from. He thought the bridegroom had made some kind of arrangement or something to, you know, to pull the good stuff out at the end.

But I love what he says. There's so much wrapped up in this little comment that he makes to the bridegroom. You know, it's like the normal way of things would be to bring out the really good stuff at the beginning.

I thought that we were drinking that. But now, this stuff, this is way better. This is the good stuff.

Like, that stuff was good, but wow. Can you imagine what the bridegroom is thinking in that moment? Like, well, thank you.

We don't know. Not only does Jesus turn water into wine, but he turns water into better wine.

[22 : 49] than the good stuff that they had already been drinking. And 500 to about 700 liters of it in six different jars in an instant in front of the eyes of the servants and his disciples.

An amazing thing. There's no other explanation for it. It was a miracle of God. Only God could do this.

how does John summarize this whole story? In verse 11, this is what he says. 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.

So as we saw at the beginning back in John chapter 20, Jesus did lots of signs more than are recorded in this book.

These are written so that you may believe. And that's what happened in this moment. Jesus' disciples, they saw. they saw the sign, they saw the miracle and they took it as confirmation.

[24 : 04] Yes, he is the one. He is the Messiah. He is the King of Israel. He is the Son of God. How else could this happen?

John also says that it was through this sign, this is the first of them, but it was through this one and others that Jesus revealed his glory.

We saw his glory that day at the wedding in Cana. So what did they see of his glory?

What was so glorious about Jesus that day at the wedding? Well, I think the obvious answer is his divine power. They saw something of the power of God at work in that moment.

Amazing. But what else? What else did they see of his glory? If we think back to chapter 1, verse 14, where John says we saw his glory, glory, he describes or he kind of fills in what that looks like.

[25 : 29] He says we saw that he was full of grace and truth. grace or graciousness of Jesus here at the wedding?

God I think there's a number of ways. For starters, Jesus has the power of God to do this great miracle, but he does not act for his own sake, but for the sake of others.

He made the wine for the guests, for the bride, for the bridegroom. He didn't use that power for himself, for his own sake, but it was for others.

This is a gift. We see his grace in that. We also see his grace or his graciousness in how he goes above and beyond.

I mean, let's put this into perspective. Do we really need wine to celebrate at the wedding? Is it essential? No, it's not.

[26 : 48] Paul will go on to say in his letter to the church at Rome, the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

They didn't need the wine, but Jesus does it anyway. He gives them not just what they need, but something that would be nice to have that would be really special to mark the occasion so that they can continue drinking and celebrating the marriage of this couple.

We see his graciousness and how he goes above and beyond what they need. And I think this is an important moment because sometimes I wonder if we don't have the tendency to see Jesus in a skewed way, as kind of a killjoy, as the guy who's only asking us to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow him.

And following him, that's going to mean that I have to give up everything fun in life, all the good stuff that I really enjoy, that I really like. That's not the picture of Jesus that we get here.

we see that he is for joy, he is for celebration and the very thing that he does enables them to go on celebrating.

[28 : 17] He is for our joy. How else do we see that he is full of grace, the gloriousness of his grace?

We see it and grace means gift. It means to give. We see it in how he gives honor rather than taking honor for himself.

I mean, Jesus is worthy of all the attention in that room. Look who he is. He is the word who was God and made everything at the beginning.

He is deity here in human flesh. He deserves the spotlight. He deserves the honor.

And yet, in that moment at the wedding, he doesn't do anything to take honor, glory, attention for himself. Instead, he shows his graciousness, his giving nature by giving honor to the bridegroom.

[29 : 24] not only does he preserve his honor and save him from massive embarrassment, but he even gives him greater honor than he probably is due and deserves.

I mean, that wine is amazing. like, it's better than the good stuff that we were having. He doesn't use this wedding as a chance to point people to himself.

Rather, he's there and he wants people to be focused on the marriage, on the bridegroom, the bride. He gives honor.

These two things are beautiful. We see his divine power at work in how he turns the water into wine, an amazing miracle.

We see this gracious servanthood, this humble love at work in how he orchestrates this to kind of keep the focus on what's happening at the wedding, the honor focused on the bridegroom.

[30 : 32] But I think where we really see the glory of Jesus shine through is when we just consider how both of these kind of converge in this moment. We see the divine power and we see this humble, serving, loving heart come together in this moment.

I mean, as I just said, remember who this is. this is God. In him, the fullness of deity lives in bodily form.

And yet, where do we see him at this wedding as he exercises the power that's been, well, it's from the Holy Spirit. I believe that he did this, not just using his own divine power, but he uses the power of the Spirit that's been made available to him in this moment.

Where do we see, where do we see the focus? I mean, here Jesus is, he's, he's using the power of God, but he's doing it off in the back room by the kitchen where only the servants can see what he can really do.

from the shadows of that back room by the kitchen, he is blessing and honoring the guests and the bridegroom in the main room.

[32 : 03] This is amazing. Jesus is God, John has told us, but he has come into this world to live as a man, as a man among men.

which means that he, he lives as men ought to live. He doesn't exalt himself over others. He doesn't say, hey, look at me everyone.

He's not like the proud or the arrogant person. He does what we ought to do. He loves, he honors, he, he serves his neighbors.

He puts himself among the servants and he, he works this amazing miracle there. The sense we get is that the guests, they never even knew that the wine ran out.

The bridegroom never knew. It was just Jesus, his mother, the servants and the disciples. And this is the same kind of thing that I think we're going to see all through the gospel.

[33 : 13] this mixture, divine power, God, and yet humble servant here as a man in human flesh.

Not to lord it over people, not to get attention for himself, but to live as a man ought to, to point people to the Father, to glorify him.

it's a beautiful thing. And John tells us that this is just the first of the signs that he did, which revealed his glory.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you that you have given us a little window into what happened that day.

we believe. We see it as they saw it and we believe. You are the Messiah.

[34 : 21] You are the Son of God. And it's with joy that we give ourselves and our hearts to you again.

Have your way in us, we pray. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.