

John 2:1-12 “Taste and See”

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[0:00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

We are continuing our study of John's Gospel this morning in chapter 2, where we're going to read of one of those greater things that last week Jesus told his disciples they would see as they follow him.

This is, as Derek said, the story of Jesus turning the water into wine at a wedding reception. Before we read it, ask yourself if this is the way that you would have started Jesus' ministry if you were his PR consultant.

If you wanted to introduce Jesus with a big splash, I mean, don't you think for the first miracle, maybe like a resurrection would have been a good idea?

Something really big? One thing scholars have observed over the years is that this reality testifies to the historicity of this story, that it really happened, that it's not the way that someone else seeking to promote Jesus and make him into something he wasn't, that's not really the plan they would have come up with.

[1:19] John is telling us what really happened. And there's so many things to love about this miracle. We can't talk about them all this morning. It speaks to the blessing of marriage, to have Jesus' first miracle in that context.

It shows that Jesus provides for the smallest needs in your life. This first public miracle basically removes some embarrassment from a couple of unprepared teenagers.

What a kind, kind King Jesus is to all of us, right? But none of these are really at the heart of the story itself.

Let's read it together and think about the first taste we get of the one John has told us has come to bring life to the world. John chapter 2 at verse 1.

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. And when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine.

[2:32] 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 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. 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, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory.

And his disciples believed in him. Thus far, God's holy, inerrant, infallible word for which we give him thanks.

[3:46] Amen. I'm so thankful there's something more, he said. A Southwood man was recounting to me this week one of his best days, personally and professionally.

He got an award. He shared the celebration with people he really loves. And then as people returned to their home, and he was by himself, he felt a gnawing sense of the emptiness, of even the best days.

He had known, he'd anticipated this moment, that it wasn't completely going to satisfy him, and sure enough, in that moment of success, his thought was, I'm so thankful there's something more. Later that same day, another of our members said the very same thing to me. I'm so thankful there's something more. But she was feeling that, not on one of her best days, but on one of her worst days.

She was hurting. Grieving the loss of her husband. Not wanting to be dealing with the difficulties that she was facing that day. The pain felt fresh again, and the emptiness of life in a broken world was palpable.

[5 : 19] And her smile, through the tears, came from a hope, she said, for the future, a promise of reunion, evidence all around her of God's faithfulness, and experience that she was having of Jesus' presence with her on even the hardest and worst of days.

Whether it's on our best day, or our worst day, and most of us, most days are somewhere in between, we know what it's like to taste emptiness, don't we?

To feel something is missing, to long for something more. If you are honest, I think every single one of us, somewhere in our lives this morning, there's a hunger that we feel, and Jesus comes to meet you right there.

Wherever it is you're feeling that hunger, he promises to provide a fullness of life that is not found anywhere else. He gets the emptiness.

He comes to bring something entirely new that will truly satisfy you. That's what this story is about. This story is about that new fullness.

[6 : 37] You feel that hunger, that longing, you can begin to taste the sweetness of Jesus, and then over time you realize that Jesus fulfills you like nothing and no one else.

Jesus can be yours today and forevermore. Look at this story again. Jesus' first public miracle, changing water into wine.

Certainly that is an amazing act of power, right? I can't do that. But he's not merely putting his divine power on display randomly, like he just decided to pull a rabbit out of a hat and it would be the same thing.

No, the point of this story is not that if you have a wedding and you run out of wine, Jesus might be able to help. And thankfully, it's so much more than that.

No, John tells us at the end of this passage that this is a sign that points to Jesus' glory. We're gonna run into several of these in John's account of Jesus' life.

[7 : 46] signs, pointers that reveal to us something about who Jesus is, that validate his claims that he's making. They're signs to point us to Jesus.

And the result of this sign is that his disciples see Jesus and put their trust in him. Again, it's not a big splash in front of thousands of people.

In fact, some of the only people at the wedding who even know what Jesus does, that he's the one that's made this happen, are what? The servants. They remind me of the shepherds who hear the angelic announcement and get to rush to Bethlehem and see the baby in the manger.

The servants know where the wine comes from. Jesus' entrance onto the public stage, like his entrance into the world, brings the lowliest, the most marginalized people into the center of his kingdom.

Don't you love that? God is telling us this story so that even those of us who feel most distant from him this morning might follow the sign and believe, or believe again, in Jesus, in who he is and what he provides for us.

[9 : 05] So let's get to it. Let's see what is the sign, this new life, this fullness found nowhere else. How is that in Jesus? Maybe you hear that and you say, I've already rejected the notion that Jesus could bring that.

But I would ask you this morning, you're here, are you hungry enough to listen to what he promises to bring if you believe in him?

It may be different from what you expect. You may meet the real Jesus and find him not to be what you always thought. First, Jesus offers fullness of joy.

In the Bible, wine is a symbol of gladness. Yes, also at times, its bitterness is highlighted. Yes, there are certainly places where we're warned against its abuse.

We should take those warnings very seriously. But in this story, Jesus uses his miraculous power to provide about 150 gallons or so.

[10:12] That's a lot of excellent wine to keep a party going. Now listen, there is no question, if you read the life of Jesus, if you listen to his teachings, he will call us to suffering and self-denial because if we're following in his steps, that's a big part of what life with Jesus looks like.

But even those experiences come within the new life full of joy that Jesus brings. This kingdom I bring, Jesus announces here, is a feast to enjoy, not merely a job to do.

It's a relationship to cherish, not merely a set of beliefs to assent to. It's a celebration to bring you joy, not merely work to bring you a wage.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good, the psalmist says. Taste the wine I bring, Jesus says, that I give overflowing, filled to the brim, the best wine of the whole feast, and experience as you taste it, the lavish, gracious Lord of all creation who gives so many choice fruits to his creatures.

Every kind that he created for you to eat and drink and enjoy. See, he wants us to taste and see, not just think about.

[11:45] Jeremy's already made fun of intellectual Presbyterians, but there's some seriousness there, isn't there? It's more than thinking. That's why he often pictures his kingdom as a feast, an eternal banquet.

It's throughout the Bible. Isaiah 25 pictures the coming kingdom of Jesus this way. On this mountain where Jesus is gonna play out his kingdom, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well-refined.

And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. You wanna talk about joy?

No more tears. Death swallowed up in the victory of Jesus.

[12:59] And then in that context, a feast of the richest foods, the most delicious things you've eaten, the choice wine laid out for you for all peoples to gather together and enjoy with him.

That is a joy that Jesus is offering that no one and nothing else in this world can offer to you. And he's giving us a taste at the wedding in Cana that fullness of joy is found in him.

18th century preacher Jonathan Edwards famously described what I think Jesus is pointing to with this miracle of water to wine. Edwards says, it's the difference between believing that honey is sweet, have you heard that it is?

And actually tasting the sweetness of honey. Have you had honey before? Jesus has come so that we can actually taste fullness of joy, life to its fullest, the things we long to experience.

Is there a hunger somewhere in your heart today? Maybe you've tasted a lot of what the world has to offer. But there's this gnawing ache for something more than that.

[14:26] or maybe you've been sitting in church your whole life but you've just kind of started to realize that I've never tasted this myself.

I didn't know I was invited to the feast. You've just watched and listened to others talk about the feast and thought about whether you might like or whether you ever could be able to actually experience these things.

You hear other people talking about relationships with God walking with Jesus talking to him and you're thinking is that for me? Would you give Jesus a taste today?

See if he's not just sweet and delightful also fulfilling eventually deeply fulfilling as well. See I think the problem for many of us maybe for you is that you've been told Christianity is not honey it's not wine it's broccoli kids who wants broccoli for lunch hands up broccoli for lunch a big good some of you have good parents who have taught you to eat your vegetables vegetables most of us aren't excited about broccoli you've been told though that it's something you should eat but you don't really have to like it I mean it's good for you but you won't enjoy it

I've talked to enough of you to know that many of you grew up in church and experienced Christianity as a somber rule following restrictive don't smoke drink chew or go with girls who do that was what it meant to be a Christian you were told you needed it but you weren't expected to like it to be honest if that's your experience you may well have been offered that by someone who only knew Christianity in that way that that was the only thing they had experienced of it please hear me this morning that's not what Jesus offers I'm so thankful there is something more young people please don't think that the idea is

[17 : 10] I've got to get to college to go find real life out there somewhere and in the meantime I'm supposed to sit in church because I need to get into heaven because that's important eventually but I'm going to have to go searching somewhere else for real life and true joy that's a lie Jesus invites you to feast with him now a feast where you eat deeply and you're really satisfied he wants you actually to taste it to experience living with him because life in his kingdom in relationship with him is an adventure of pain that has a purpose it's a journey where you're never truly alone where you're always ultimately safe and where you're never without hope no matter what happens it's a celebration with joy that never ends and people don't have to leave and be gone and tears don't come back don't you want your friends to have that kind of joy on their best days and on their worst days you might need to share a taste of it how does that develop where do you get that fullness of joy let's notice the details of the sign that point to how

Jesus gives us that life there's this confusing interaction here between Jesus and his mother right it's hard to understand Mary comes and she highlights the need of the hour Jesus they have no wine problem and the best ways that we translate his response sound like and have always sounded to me like nope I will not help anybody else read it that way that's a misunderstanding okay let me show you we know that because Mary understands what Jesus say to mean that he will help just do whatever he tells you she says always a good posture toward Jesus right and we know it because Jesus immediately does help right he must not be saying the opposite so go back and look at what

Jesus is contemplating here he says my hour has not yet come we are going to read through the rest of John's gospel over the next several decades and what you're going to see is I love that y'all are excited about that me too when this word hour is used over and over it is referring to the hour of Jesus death Jesus is contemplating his death best I can tell what Jesus is saying is no wine that's not hard today no big deal because this is not yet the hard day when the wine needed will be my blood don't agree with me that's okay watch what happens it's going to get us there anyway we're told that these stone water jars were there for the Jewish rites of purification this is ritual washing that

God's people would do over and over often multiple times a day every time they entered the temple for example to make them clean for God's presence so that they are able to be in relationship with him that's what the jars are there for but those six jars are empty seven in fact is the complete number that system is incomplete not bad but incomplete Jesus comes to bring true cleansing that fully and finally once and for all brings peace with God that the repeated washings and sacrificings and law abidings could never fully and finally bring when Jesus produces wine what does he do he covers the shame of this groom and he gives him credit that he doesn't deserve isn't that awesome do you see the goodness and the grace of this sign what it's pointing to what

Jesus does for us now we know what Jesus was contemplating right he does all this through his death cleansing us from all our sins welcoming us into relationship with God making peace for us with God when we were God's enemies unable to come into his presence can you imagine living where you always needed to be cleansed again to be with God to talk to him in prayer to feel at home with him maybe you can maybe you're thinking gosh well that's that's the only way I imagine God and relating to him constantly my whole life it's it's been keep clean or keep your distance and I've gone back and forth trying to figure this God out

[23 : 01] I'm so thankful there's something more than that way of relating to God Jesus says fullness of life with me means trust me to have washed you once and for all and taste the grace of God fullness of peace with him in such a way that you're no longer ashamed can you imagine know God so closely that you come to trust his heart his sovereign wisdom tastes sweeter to you it makes your worry and control feel empty in comparison relate to God so personally that you bring your anxiety and your hurts and your confusion and even your anger to him and you pour it all out and at the same time know that you're at peace because the blood of

Jesus brings you to a God who has tasted your pain who has entered into it who hasn't left you alone there and who washes all your sins away so that you can be near to him so there's fullness of peace that you can never ever be separated from God actually taste the wine that brings you peace you can come to him today maybe you never have and you can drink with God in the midst of real life and honest emotions you can rest in him forever taste and see that close intimate relationship with God is the last piece of the full life I want us to see Jesus providing here I believe one of the reasons that Jesus introduces himself with this miracle is so that we will know he has not come

merely to be king or judge not merely the healer or the provider but truly our bridegroom who loves us more personally and more perpetually than we can even fathom look at verse 9 when the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine and did not know where it came from though the servants knew who had drawn the water they knew the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him you get the credit 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 the master of the feast didn't know the source of the good wine so credit goes to the bridegroom except we know

Jesus is the one who has really provided the best wine Jesus is the true bridegroom who at the end to complete what is needed is going to bring out the best wine listen this day at this wedding in Cana was not his hour it is not the full and finest wine he will provide but what would it take at his wedding as Jesus starts to contemplate this what would it take at his wedding for his bride to be there and be clean for him to have wine at his wedding feast we know now what Jesus knew then it would be his blood that would be the best wine he would say the cup of the covenant relationship it brings us clean into relationship with God Jesus is telling you with this miracle right up front from the outset that he loves you and he wants you to taste his love to drink deeply of its fullness in relationship with him he wants you to know that because we were empty unclean unworthy to drag ourselves to the altar for the wedding but

Jesus instead of running off to find a more beautiful bride Jesus came chasing after us at the cost of his own blood to make us clean to dress us in white to pledge himself to us forever to embrace us passionately and then to come to the reception and put the wine of gladness in our hands that reception is the wedding feast of the lamb it's what God's eternal kingdom is pictured as we read it earlier in revelation together we heard it promised in Isaiah the feast to end all feasts you don't want to miss this one our bridegroom swallows up death forever by dying and achieving victory over death rising from the grave so that even death itself will never separate us from him and his love forever amen love that perseveres in sickness and in health for better or worse in joy or sorrow it's the kind of love that we look desperately for in human marriage isn't it maybe you're feeling hunger right there maybe you're coming up empty there

Jesus offers fullness unmarried friends Jesus frees you up from looking to marriage the marriage that left a bad taste in your mouth or the marriage you've never tasted either way you're freed up from looking to marriage to fulfill you there is a fulfilling relationship with him that you can know now and that will never end because even death will not part you too it already tried that it didn't work married friends Jesus frees us up not to look to marriage to fulfill us and to enjoy the best moments of the best marriages as foretastes of love that sees you at your worst and yet embraces you that holds you tight and wipes away your tears that gives itself to you sacrificially for your joy and your flourishing and all of us in

[30 : 11] Christ will get to taste that love fully and forever married or unmarried here that's the kind of love that you'll get to experience I had known about Jesus for a long time before actually tasting the sweetness of that love it's not the sugary sweetness of Kool-Aid which I confess I really like both the drink itself and the quick shot of good feeling that you get the praise of man can do that quick shot worldly success can give you a quick shot of winning a football game winning an award professionally can we be honest how quickly that fades I'm so thankful that there's something more my friend

Dave helped me understand God's love is the rich sweetness of wine that can be savored that really lasts that truly fulfills it's not gone the next day the love of Jesus really is sweeter than the praise of man it really is more fulfilling than working hard to be successful to be wealthy to make yourself lovable it really is more joyful than a life where you're just trying your best to fly right and hope it all works out okay and that you're better than the next guy there's more joy than that I've tasted it when I least deserved it I've tasted it when I've gone months without drinking deeply of it I've tasted it when I felt most unlovable and Jesus has met me and put the cup of his love in my hand and said drink of this deeply if I love you now you know

I always will but I don't want you just to take that from me Jesus offers the cup to you he invites you with any pang of hunger you're feeling this morning any feeling of emptiness any sense of dissatisfaction to come not merely to rules not merely to beliefs but really and truly and personally to him to taste and see that he is good that in his presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore that nothing will ever separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus your Lord Jesus told his disciples of that love many many times but at that last supper especially he said to

them taste and see as they were eating

Jesus took bread and he broke it and gave it to his disciples as I'm ministering in his name give this bread to you he didn't he didn't say think even contemplate he said take and eat this is my body that's given for you do this in remembrance of me and then after supper he took the cup and he said drink of this cup this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins drink of this cup taste and see that I gave my blood for you because I tell you I'll not drink again of this fruit of the vine until I drink of it with you in my eternal kingdom if by faith

Jesus is the one who gives you fullness of joy peace with God and unbreakable and unstoppable love then come and eat and drink you're going to have a feast forever you're looking forward to that feast come now he eats with you to give you a foretaste of that and his body and blood given for you if that's not your story if you're not sure what to think about Jesus this morning I'd invite you not to this table that is a sign it's a foretaste that points to the real thing I have the privilege in Jesus name of extending an invitation to you to the real thing you can come and be there forever you know what you have to do trust him have his blood cover you it will have him be the one who fulfills the longings of your heart the deepest longings you have and let him do that he will don't come this morning to this table come pray with us sit talk with him would you consider the invitation he extends to you to sit at his table with him forever let's pray

[35 : 55] Jesus what a gift you have given us fullness of life and joy that we can't find for ourselves that we can't make happen that we can't earn but your body and blood reminds us again this morning that you have and that you offer it freely would you use these common elements for a sacred purpose in our hearts because we've looked for life in other places this week oh forgive us call us back to where full life is found do that by your spirit in this time we ask in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org in on