

There's Your Sign

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[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles up this morning to the Gospel according to John. The Gospel according to John. We have made our way to chapter 2 this morning.

Several weeks in already in the Gospel of John, but that first chapter is so dense and so rich and so full, we took our time. And I will say, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, you've come at a good time.

We're only one chapter in. I hope you got one of those scripture journals on your way in. We encourage everybody to take notes as we listen to the sermons. It's a good way for you to follow along.

And Lord willing, by the end of this, we'll have a good understanding, a good grasp of the Gospel of John and what it has to say about our Savior, Jesus Christ. So if you would, John chapter 2, and we'll read from verses 1 through 11 this morning.

If you are using the Pew Bibles there in front of you, you can find this on page 834. If you didn't bring your own Bible, 834. Follow along with me as I read. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

[1 : 14] 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 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 the 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.

[2 : 33] This is God's holy, perfect word. Would you bow and pray with me once more? Lord, we thank you. We thank you for the beauty and the power of your word, and we pray now that as it goes forth, that it would go forth with your spirit.

Lord, that you would accomplish the purposes for which you sinned. We pray in Christ's name.

Amen. I think every married couple has a story or two to share from their own wedding day.

You finally come to this moment after months and months, sometimes even years of planning and preparing, and you want everything to just go exactly just right, but sometimes, no matter how much you prepare and how much you plan, something inevitably goes wrong.

Amanda and I, we made most of the arrangements for our wedding ourselves. It was very, very homemade, and so we went, we found a dance floor through a friend of a friend. We went and we picked it up in a borrowed truck.

We brought it back to the venue that we had selected. We laid it out ourselves. I got up. I climbed up in the trees. I hung up the lights around the dance floor.

[3 : 52] We borrowed chairs from our church. We set them all out. We met with the food vendors and the restaurants to determine what the menu would be. We had a friend serve as the DJ with a borrowed iPod and a playlist that we had put together.

We transformed a gazebo there on site into a photo booth. We did that ourselves. We had family bake pies instead of hiring a caterer to do a cake. And we even had our friends vote on where we

should take our honeymoon, which we planned ourselves.

It was all very homemade, and it was an adventure, and we loved it. But it was not without its flaws. The night was so busy that neither of us really got to enjoy the food that we had planned out and picked out, selected.

The gazebo had hundreds, if not thousands, of staples stuck in the wood that we later had to go and remove ourselves. Our friends to this day still give us grief over the fact that we left after the ceremony, and they remained to clean up and pick up the chairs and tables that we had borrowed. And to top it all off, the tree that I climbed into to hang the lights, little did I know, was covered in poison oak. I don't know if it is just the pressure of the moment.

[5 : 19] Maybe it's a result of poor preparation, poor planning. Whatever it is, it seems like weddings are just primed for a little bit of drama. Our story here in John chapter 2, as you know, is no exception.

In our passage here this morning, we see that Jesus has been invited to a wedding. He's there with his family and his disciples. No doubt, much planning and much preparation has gone into this event, this celebration.

But as we see, it is not without some drama. The wine was gone. This wedding had unintentionally become a dry wedding.

But thankfully, someone was smart enough to include Jesus on the guest list. What I want us to see this morning is that this wedding drama, this story, is more than just a story of water turning into wine.

This drama, John tells us, is a sign. It's the first of the signs that Jesus has done in Cana. It's a sign of who Jesus is and what Jesus brings.

[6 : 35] It shows us that Jesus has the power to transform. Not just water into wine, yes, that's part of it, but sorrow into joy.

And the question for us as we dig into this account, as we see this story is, has Jesus worked this miracle in our hearts?

Do we have the joy of knowing Jesus, the giver of true and lasting joy? Are our lives marked by the joy of knowing Jesus Christ?

We're going to see this unfold in two parts this morning. This is going to be our outline. If you're following along and taking notes, two parts here. We'll see how Jesus transforms from drought to delight.

From drought to delight. First, John presents us with a problem here. In verses 1 through 5, there was a drought.

[7 : 41] Look there with me. In verse 1, John lays out the scene for us. He says, 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. Now, a wedding in Jewish culture was one of, if not the most significant events in someone's life.

This was a major affair, a major celebration. The bride and the groom were treated like royalty. Often, they were even, they had crowns put on their heads.

And for that duration of the celebration, whatever they said went. They were in charge. The wedding feast in this culture, it was not a one or two or three hour event like it often is in hours.

It lasted for seven days. And it was the responsibility of the host, the bridegroom, to make sure that all of the guests were properly wined and dined for the duration of the feast.

[8 : 44] Well, I'm not sure if they planned poorly. Perhaps they were not wealthy enough to provide exactly as much as they needed to. Maybe more guests showed up than anticipated.

We don't know exactly why this problem happened. But verse 3 tells us the issue. The wine has run out. Now, to understand what John is telling us about this passage, we have to understand how the Bible talks about wine.

This is the issue here in this passage. We just kind of have to work through this whole alcohol thing for a minute before we can begin to understand what John is telling us in this passage.

Some of us, I know, may have a personal conviction that any alcohol consumption of any kind at all times is always sinful.

And so maybe you've never had an alcoholic beverage. Maybe you never plan to have an alcoholic beverage. Maybe you have a family history of abuse of alcohol, personal history of abuse with alcohol.

[9 : 54] And so you have chosen to stay away from it. And if that's you, I want you to hear me very clearly that if that is your personal conviction, then you are 100% right to stay away.

You are 100% right. Because your conscience is bound, then it would be sinful for you to drink it. But we need to acknowledge that this is a personal conviction and not a universal rule.

A personal conviction and not a biblical mandate for all people everywhere at all times. The Old Testament, the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, it actually speaks very positively about wine. In the Old Testament, wine is presented as a good gift from God. Now, of course, as with any good gift, it can be abused.

And the Bible is explicitly clear that drunkenness is always sinful. I'll say that again. The Bible is explicitly clear that drunkenness is always sinful.

[11 : 04] But it tells us that wine is a good gift that gladdens the heart of man, as we're told in Psalm 104, verse 15.

It's a good gift where an abundance of wine symbolizes God's blessing, as we're told in Proverbs 3, Genesis 27. And a lack of wine often is a sign of God's judgment, as we see in Isaiah 24, for example.

Now, this is significant for us as we seek to understand this text, this passage, because again, the central problem here at this wedding is that the wine is gone.

The wine has run out. So what does this mean? Well, the wine is gone. That means the joy is gone. The wine is gone. The celebration is over.

The wine is gone. The blessing is gone. This was a major issue to be dealt with. In fact, in this culture, they took this so seriously that if the host did not provide adequate wine for the guest, he could be liable for a lawsuit.

[12 : 14] No joke. So Mary, the mother of Jesus, realizes the issue, comes to Jesus, says to him, they have no wine. It's difficult, as you know, to interpret tone from written text.

That's often why we misunderstand text messages and emails. We have a hard time interpreting tone, but I'm almost certain that the tone here was one of urgent panic from Mary.

They have no wine. And as all eyes were beginning to turn to the bridegroom to fix the problem, to the bridegroom to restore the joy to the celebration, Mary, the mother of the Messiah, turned her eyes to Jesus.

Jesus. They have no wine. And again, we can't really read tone into the text, but I believe he responds with a term of endearment, not disrespect.

Endearment. As we see in verse 4, he says, Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.

[13 : 29] Can you sense the irony here? I wonder if you can see the bigger picture that Jesus sees in this story. See, to Mary, she's looking at the immediate issue.

This is just wine at a wedding. She had raised Jesus. She knew of his innocence, knew of his power. She knew how unique he was as a son of God. She knew the tension of that moment. And she knew that surely if anyone could fix this, Jesus could. But to Jesus, he had something much, much bigger on his mind.

As he looked on at this dilemma at the wedding, he saw the issue at hand, but in his mind he was looking ahead to a much bigger dilemma.

Do you see it? See, Jesus, Jesus knew better than anyone what this wedding represents. is a picture of Christ in the church.

[14 : 37] He knows better than anyone that one day the bride of Christ, all of the redeemed, will gather to celebrate the true wedding of the Lamb in glory, and he knows exactly what that meal will cost.

Jesus knows that the hour is coming soon when he will take a jar of wine and pour it into glass and spread it and share it with all of his disciples and tell them this cup is the new covenant in my blood. And then the hour will come when Christ, the true bridegroom, will manifest his glory in full and pour out blood from the vessel of his own body to purchase and cleanse and purify his bride.

That time is coming. That hour is approaching for Jesus. It is ever present, ever weighing on his mind, even right here at the very beginning of his ministry, but it's not yet here.

He tells Mary, I can't rush that moment. The time, the hour has not yet come. But we see he does manifest his glory in part.

[15:59] He does this miracle as a sign, we're told, as a pointer, again, of who he is and what he has come to do. You see, Jesus knows the state of our soul.

Jesus knows the state of our needy, dry, desperate soul apart from him. That apart from him we are spiritually parched.

We are without joy. We are without God's blessing. We are without hope. But that is exactly why he came.

See, in one sense, this story of water transforming into wine is a picture of our condition, of our life apart from Christ. You may be here and you think that you're fine apart from Christ.

You got everything you need, you're fine, you're fine just as you are. You may think this life is good, you don't need Christ at all, but hear me, this story tells us there is an end to every worldly joy, every worldly pleasure apart from Christ.

[17:11] Christ. There will come a time, it may be today, it may be tomorrow, we don't know when, there will come a time when the wine will run out. Then where will we turn?

Where do we turn when we're spiritually dry? Well, this story tells us we turn to the only one who can bring us from drought to delight.

delight. This is what we see in our second point this morning. We see the transformation here from drought to delight. Look there to verse 6 with me.

Verse 6 shows us this miracle. He says, 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 up to the brim and he said to them, Now draw some out, take it to the master of the feast and 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.

[18:33] This is a miracle. It's the first recorded miracle in the Gospel of John. It's the beginning here, the onset of Jesus' ministry, and of course as with any miracle in the Bible, skeptics and theologically liberal scholars, they twist and they turn and they work hard to find ways to explain this away.

And they say that while this is not scientifically possible, it doesn't happen. Water does not become wine and so therefore this must not be a legitimate story.

And so one way that they explain this occurrence away is that they say, well, there must have been just a little bit of wine there at the bottom of the jars and when they filled the jars with water, now it had mixed together and it had some of the wine taste in there.

Now we have the six jars of really watered down wine, but they were so drunk from the rest of the wine that everyone thought Jesus had performed a miracle. But that's not what John says, is it? What does he say? He says that the master of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and praised the bridegroom for saving the best wine for last.

[19:54] See, believe it or disbelieve it, that's your choice to make, but we have to deal with what John actually says here. We can't just change it into what we want it to say.

But see, skeptics have a hard time with miracles like this because they don't fit into their understanding of the world and how it works. It doesn't fit into their framework of how ordinary life is. But I want you to see that is exactly John's point. You see that? John is making a point.

He's showing us the identity of Jesus. He's telling us that Jesus is not ordinary. See, John's not going out of his way to tell us a story of a man who turned water into water.

That's not what he's doing. He's making a point that this man, Jesus, he is doing things that don't ordinarily happen. This man, Jesus, is doing things that cannot be done.

[20:53] I've never seen water turn into wine before, but this man, Jesus, has done it and it's a sign, therefore, of who he is. He's demonstrating a power and ability that's outside of our ordinary experience of normal life.

Science attempts to explain and describe what we see, what we observe. John says, I have seen and observed some special things. The only way I can describe this is that this is the Messiah.

This is the Son of God. So you may leave here and not believe what John is saying. Again, that's your choice to make, but we can't ignore the claim that he is making.

We have to do something here with it. John says in verse 11 that this was the first of his signs. that Jesus did in Cana at Galilee.

He manifested his glory and his disciples, they believed in him. The disciples saw what Jesus had done. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

[22 : 04] This act, this miracle was a sign. It's a sign that this was no ordinary man. We're going to see more of these signs throughout the Gospel of John.

This is the first of these signs. In fact, John has seven signs throughout the Gospel of John. Some have called the Gospel of John the Book of Signs. He's presenting to us this claim, this case.

He's showing us that Jesus is not ordinary. He is the Son of God. You may not accept what John is saying here, but let's consider for a minute what this means if this story is true.

this means that Jesus Christ has the unique power to transform. Jesus Christ has the unique power to transform.

I want us to see this in five ways here. First, Jesus has the unique power to transform material objects.

[23 : 12] water to water to water to water to water to water to water to water to water to water to water to water to wine.

Water to wine. Jesus has the unique ability, unique control over substances and materials in creation, which gives us a clue that he is distinct from creation.

He is the creator. And John's already shown us this, hasn't he? Chapter 1, verse 3, he says, all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.

The water was made through him, the grapes were made through him, the wine was made through him, and as the sovereign creator of everything, everywhere, he guides and controls all things even down to the smallest molecules in existence.

As Colossians tells us, he is before all things and in him all things hold together. All of it is from him, all of it is through him, all of it is for him.

[24 : 33] But the bigger picture, understanding of what's happening here, at a bigger level, we see, number two, Jesus has the unique power to transform the ages.

Jesus has the unique power to transform the ages. Where do I see that? Well, you have to probe a little bit here, you have to kind of understand the bigger picture here.

Look there with me again to verse 6. What was used for this transformation? Six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification.

I think what John is showing us here is that Jesus takes this Old Testament purifying practice, this water of cleansing and he transforms it into something new, into wine for celebrating and for rejoicing.

What's being said here? Well, I believe he's showing us that Jesus is doing away with the Old Testament, Old Covenant matter and means of relating to God and he is ushering forth, ushering in something entirely new.

[25 : 56] It's a transformation of the ages, a transformation from the Old Testament ways that people interacted with God through external washing, external cleansing, through the blood of bulls and goats that were temporary and external and he's ushering in the new covenant in his blood, spilled out from the purest, cleanest vessel, the vessel of his own body for the forgiveness of the sins of his own bride so that we're no longer purified and cleansed from the outside but his blood cleanses us from every sin.

His blood purifies us from all guilt. The better true wine has been saved for last. See, this is not just a transformation from water to wine.

This is a transformation from age to age. It's a transformation in how we relate to God, no longer through external cleansing, but through the very blood of Christ shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins, for our cleansing and for our joy, which is what we see in our third transformation.

We see number three, Jesus Christ has a unique power to transform sorrow into joy. joy. Jesus Christ has a unique power to transform sorrow into joy.

Could you imagine what the bridegroom was feeling here? Let's put yourself in his shoes for a minute. Imagine if you were the bridegroom here at this wedding.

[27 : 46] Perhaps he knows that he's run out of wine. Surely he does. Mary knows. the servant knows. Surely he feels the weight of embarrassment, of shame, of guilt, possibly, probably anxiety, worry, fear of what might happen, worry over what to do, and then all of a sudden you hear the

master of the feast call out your name in front of everyone.

You know that you're just about to be publicly humiliated, but instead he praises you. Everyone else saves the best wine, serves the best wine first, and then the poor wine when the people have drunk freely, but you, you have kept the good wine until now.

Could you imagine the relief that that man felt? His sorrow in that moment was transformed into joy, celebration, all of his worry, all of the weight of guilt, all of the shame is gone, and in its place is joy. This is what Jesus has come to do. I shared with some of you, I shared with our men's group this week that I had the privilege to disciple some men in North Myrtle Beach when we were living there, a couple of them in the group, they were old enough to be my grandfather, but they were my brothers and my friends.

I loved them. Over the past week, they were steadily growing weaker, growing older, growing sicker, and over the past week, we got news that they were not in good health, and last Tuesday, both of them, Tuesday evening, same night, both of them passed away.

[29 : 33] I couldn't believe it. But I had the chance to call and to speak with one of them a few days before he passed, knowing that he was hours, days away from death.

He laughed. He could hear the smile over the phone. He sounded good. He knew he was approaching death's door, but that man was full of joy in the Lord.

Let me tell you something. That is not something that is possible to be understood by the world around us apart from knowing Christ. Even the sorrow that we feel in saying goodbye to these men, we do it with joy, knowing that their suffering is done.

Their sorrow is done. They have nothing to look forward to but eternal joy in the presence of the Lord forever. I don't want to make light of suffering.

It's very real. Sorrow in this age, hardship, pain, evil, death, very, very real. But church, we suffer as Christians who have the joy of the Lord.

[30 : 53] And knowing Him transforms every ounce of temporary sorrow you will feel in this fading age. Jesus came to transform all sorrow into joy for all who know the Lord.

And not just a little bit of joy. Number four, we see that Jesus has a unique power to transform absence of joy to abundance of joy.

I'm not a math person at all. So check my work. Let's do the math here. There's six stone jars, each of them holding 20 to 30 gallons.

They're all filled up to the brim, by the way. And that means that Jesus has just created somewhere between 120 to 180 gallons of wine.

the best wine imaginable. This is an abundance of wine. And then go a little bit further. A typical serving of wine is about six ounces.

[32 : 07] There are 128 ounces in a gallon, which means you get about 21 or 22 glasses per gallon. Again, y'all check my math, but I think Jesus just whipped up about 3,960 glasses of wine.

And now for one thing, he just showed up every other person who brought a gift to this wedding. I don't know what the gifts were normally like in this culture, but I'm pretty certain that none of them outdid Jesus on that day.

This was a rich gift from Christ, but this is just how it is with Jesus. This is how Jesus gives.

We should realize that he is full of grace, full of truth, and there is no limit on the blessing that Jesus can and will give to all of his people.

Jesus Christ does not give begrudgingly or half-heartedly or reluctantly. He doesn't extend grace and joy with his hands gripped tight around it, just wishing he couldn't give it to you.

[33 : 20] Jesus gives in abundance grace, joy, happiness, satisfaction, forgiveness, the riches of the love of God poured out freely for the enjoyment of his people.

From his fullness we have all received grace. What? Grace upon grace, which tells me, number five, and here's where we close. Jesus Christ has the power to transform you and me.

Jesus Christ alone has the unique power to transform our dryness to delight. Would others describe you as full of joy?

joy? Are you growing deeper, deeper, deeper in your delight in the Lord?

Jesus Christ, this man that we're talking about this morning is a never-ending source, an inexhaustible fountain of true and lasting joy, which means Christians out of all people of the world ought to be marked by joy.

[34 : 52] Some of you here may be spiritually dry because you don't know the Lord. And if that's you, the call of God from this text to you this morning is to stop turning, stop relying, stop drinking from temporary pleasures that are here today and gone tomorrow.

Stop living for fading joy and turn to the fount of true everlasting joy.

joy. Turn to Christ. He is far more willing to provide abundant joy than we are to seek it in him. But some of us, I recognize some of us, many of us, may be here this morning and are spiritually dry as Christians.

And if you're not there right now, praise God, but there will likely come a time in your life when you will be. So we need to be reminded, time and time and time and time again that seeking joy in Christ is not a one-time thing at the beginning of our relationship with him.

This is something that we need to drink again and again and again and be satisfied with the goodness of Christ again and again and again.

[36 : 27] When is the last time you just shut everything else out and just spent time enjoying the Lord? this is one of our key values here at Seaweed Bay.

We exist to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We've got three ways that we do that. Number one, by enjoying the Lord.

So simple, yet so often overlooked. Are you enjoying him? Are you enjoying him?

Not just reading the Bible, but enjoying the Lord and the pages of his word. Are you enjoying him in prayer? Not just praying, but enjoying fellowship with Christ? Are you enjoying him with fellowship with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ here at your church family?

Not just coming to church, but enjoying the Lord together? Are you enjoying him? Christians, out of all people, ought to be marked by joy, because again, church, our joy is not drawn from the temporary pleasures of this world.

[37 : 45] Our joy is rooted and drawn from the overflowing fountain of true and lasting joy. We close our time a couple of weeks ago from Isaiah 25, and I just feel compelled to do that again, because future hope breeds present joy.

We look to the promises of God and remember what we have to look forward to, but the beauty is we don't have to wait until then to enjoy it. That joy has broken in to the present.

Christ has come to bring joy in full. What does he say? These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.

So we close once again with Isaiah 25. On this mountain, 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 morrow, of aged wine, well-refined. God, 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 the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

[39 : 20] It will be said on that day, behold, this is our God. We have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for him.

Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Let's pray. Father, your word tells us you make known to us the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Lord, lead us to delight in you.

Deepen our joy in the Lord. We ask that we would be marked by eternal joy. Help us to turn from things that are fading and worthless and set our mind on things above.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.