

Jesus turns water into wine - what can we learn?

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[0:01] I find one of the most encouraging parts of scripture actually for me as somebody who speaks is the fact that God speaks through a donkey in the Old Testament.! I want us to have a fresh perspective on it.

I want God to say something fresh to it. And I hope he will do that. Well, I pray he will do that. And I believe he can do that. So that's okay, isn't it? So we're going to start with the scripture that we're choosing today.

It's talking about Jesus turning the water into wine. Which is something he did at a wedding feast. So let's read from John 2 verse 1 to 6 to start with.

And then we'll do through to verse 12. So on the third day, a wedding took place in Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. And Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, They have no more wine. Woman, why do you involve me? Jesus replied.

[1:23] My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you. Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing.

Each holding from 20 to 30 gallons. 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. They did so. And the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.

He did not realize where it had come from. Though the servants who had drawn the water knew. They must have been in trembling, actually. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink.

But you have saved the best till now. What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory.

[2:35] And the disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There he stayed for a few days.

God bless his word to our hearts this morning. Well, the last time I spoke about this event, we established a few things. So I'm going to whip through those things, hopefully as quickly as possible.

Because I've got too many pages here in front of me. So I've got to get through it quick. So keep up with me and I'll try and push myself on. Because I'm a bit of a rattler, as you can already tell. I'm doing it now. Right. Okay. On the third day in verse 1 of the scripture, it doesn't necessarily mean it was the third day of the wedding. People make that mistake. It actually means the third day after the events of John's account unfurled.

In terms of the third day after the encounter with Philip, Nathaniel and Jesus. Which John spoke about last week. I'm not going to say any more about that. Because of more than one reference to Jesus' family being there in verse 1 and 2.

[3:44] Not only his mothers, but it's suggested really, because Jesus went down to Capernaum from there, that his brothers may well have been there as well. So it's like a bit of a family event really.

So that tells me that this wedding was most likely someone Jesus knew, knew well, was personally connected to, and was most likely emotionally invested in.

So there you go. Another thing about this miracle is we often think of it as being sort of like a minor miracle really. A start-up miracle really.

You know, there's Jesus waiting to limber up. Limbering up to do his first miracle. It's not like that at all. I don't think that that's like that at all. I think in some ways this miracle is one of the most significant ones he does.

Because it doesn't involve a person as such. It involves an object. But what he does with that object is quite incredible really. So this miracle met a real need.

[4:46] And it's worth remembering that it wasn't an insignificant favour for the person involved as well, the bridegroom. This miracle was not a cheap party trick. You saw me replicate the idea of changing water into wine during the summer when I took some chemicals and mixed them together very cleverly, I thought.

And what appeared to be water suddenly became wine. But I wouldn't have drunk it, I'll tell you that. You wouldn't have lasted very well if you drunk that chemicals. And thank you once again to the bursar of Whitby College for allowing us to use some chemicals.

Yes. So that was good. But it was just a trick. You see, the thing was it was important because the bridegroom's responsibility was to provide financially for the wedding.

That was his job. Okay, his family's job. Failing to provide would be seriously embarrassing. And could even result in a lawsuit from the bride's family. That's how important it was.

Okay. Which is something in our culture that seems a bit strange, doesn't it? Quite apart from the fact that you'd failed your really first big test, hadn't you, in your marriage to provide financially for your bride.

[5:57] Okay. Running out of wine meant that there was nothing to mix with the water as well. Because in those days they mixed the wine with the water, you know, because of the impurities in the water.

So it was supposed to help the water go down, if you like. So it was to make sure the water was safe to drink. And it was a common practice, not something just reserved for weddings, that. It was, in other words, you know, it was something that they would do automatically. So there was nothing to drink, really. Water was usually mixed in wine in proportions about ten to one or three to one.

So three parts water, one part wine at the strongest. Not only to purify the water supply, but to ensure that the wine wasn't too intoxicating because of the fermentation process was speeded up in such a warm climate.

You'd expect. Not that I make wine or anything. Next thing that really popped out for me was that God doesn't do miracles to order.

[6:59] We often ask for miracles to order, but God often doesn't do that. So, contrary to what we believed before, this wasn't a favour for mother.

Okay? It wasn't a favour for... I love that word that they use in the Hebrew. Is it ima? Ima for mother. It's a lovely, lovely sounding word, isn't it? And Jesus might have seemed a bit abrupt as he sort of spoke to his mother.

He says, woman, why do you involve me? But that word woman was actually more a term of respect, but sort of distant respect. It was almost like, with respect, you're my mother, but I am stepping away at this point.

I am not your son in this situation. So it was respectful, although it seems a little bit harsh. So, woman, why do you involve me? Okay?

You know, we have to remember that Jesus only works on the authority of the Father.

[8:04] He says quite clearly in John 6, verse 38, For I have not come down from heaven to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me.

And that's what God requires of us. It's not to do our own will. It's to do his will. Isn't it? And that's why in the Lord's Prayer it says, So this and subsequent miracles that Jesus performed had to be at the bidding of the Father and have a distinct purpose in God's plan.

Here it's hinted at in verse 11 that it was, this miracle was to reveal Jesus' glory and his identity to his disciples so that they may believe.

Next slide, Josh. Slide five, I think we're on, aren't we? Yeah. Now, at this point, if I was Mary, I would be a bit tempted to say, Oh, please yourself, thank God. You'll get on with it. Walk away. But Mary doesn't do that. She doesn't take a bat and ball home. Okay? Persist in expectation is the message to us here from Mary.

[9:26] Persist in expectation. I'm pretty sure that the response Jesus gave Mary in the first instance was not what she was hoping for. Pretty sure of that. But she doesn't shelve her request.

She doesn't assume she's got it wrong. She doesn't take a bat and ball home and sulk with Jesus. She persists in the expectation that Jesus knows, Jesus can, and Jesus will make a difference in this situation.

For anyone facing a difficult situation or wanting a miracle, I just want to say this morning, persist in expectation.

Persist in expectation that Jesus knows, Jesus can, and Jesus will make a difference in your situation.

And if you want to be part of the miracle, by the way, do whatever He tells you. Do whatever He tells you.

[10:34] The important thing is, we don't know how our prayers are being answered by God. We don't know how He's doing it.

But we do know that He has a nature which is declared by Jesus Himself in Matthew 7, verse 7 to 11. Ask and it will be given to you.

It will be given. Seek and you will find. There's no maybes about this. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone, everyone, everyone who asks, receives.

And he who seeks, finds. And to him who knocks, it will be opened. Or what man is there among you? Who? If his son asks for bread, will give him a stone.

Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent. If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask for him?

[11:46] And I'm just believing for more and more for Martin now. More and more for that man. That he would truly come to know all the goodness, all the riches of God.

You know what? We want the miraculous and the quick quite often in our lives, but God wants to do things of eternal consequence. That's the important thing. God wants to do things of eternal consequence.

But we don't know what that looks like. Does that mean we're super spiritual? No, because what we just have to do is we just need to realise. As Peter exclaimed in John 6 verse 66 to 68, after Jesus' hard teaching caused a lot of his followers to turn around and say, no, it's too much for me, this. What we have to say, and I'll read it to you, it says, from this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. And Jesus turns to his disciples and says, you don't want to leave, do you?

And they didn't say, maybe, I'm not sure. Maybe they were thinking that, some of them. But then Peter exclaims, Peter exclaims, Lord, to whom shall we go?

[13:14] You have the words of eternal life. We've come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. You know, life is full of hard situations and becoming a Christian will not stop hard situations coming into your life.

But I tell you something, there's nothing, nowhere, or no one in this world except Jesus who offers us the words of eternal life in any situation.

You will not find it anywhere else. You can look high and low, but true meaning of eternal consequence lies only in Jesus. As a highlighter before, there's no record of Jesus having touched the water jars, which is an encouraging thing really, which sounds a bit strange, doesn't it?

There's no record. The fact remains that the servants carried out his instructions and the result was that a miracle occurred. Whatever way God chooses to answer, be assured, it is his best.

best. We have to believe in whatever way God chooses to answer, be assured, it's his best. God's character as a loving Father assures us of this.

[14:43] this is what the Bible is talking about when it talks about faith. You know, do we really, church, do we really want to be involved in what God is doing at this time?

Then do whatever he says. You can only do that if you're listening to what he's saying and are willing to do it. I'm not really sure what the man who drew out the sample of water and took it to the master of the banquet would have thought.

He knew that logically speaking he was taking water to him. He hadn't seen Jesus touch it. He hadn't seen anything like that. Sometimes, God might ask us to do what isn't logical. Yeah?

Be aware of that. In faith, we have to work that although we've seen it, God has worked miracles in the unseen world, the unseen part of the situation.

just like Martin. You know, I didn't know God was working on him particularly at this time in his life but it obviously is. Faith is being sure of what we hope for, a full assurance.

[15:50] Yeah? And certain of what we do not see. That's paraphrase of Hebrews 11 verse 1 but you know what I mean. Even more of a challenge, Hebrews 11 verse 6 says this, you know, if we think, oh, I'm not sure about doing something that's not very logical.

Hebrews 11 verse 6 says, and I can still remember it because it used to be an Ishmael song, yeah, from the kids. Hebrews 11 verse 6, without faith it's impossible to please God.

I still remember it all these years off. And it's true. We can't please God unless we live in that realm where we hear the word of God, God says go, we look at the situation around us and we say, hang on a minute, this ain't right.

And God says, no, I'm saying go and we go. That's what really pleases God. Faith works beyond what we see. You know, so often we work on what we see around us.

Oh, everything's going wrong, God. Everything's going wrong again. God has purpose in our lives. God wants to use our lives. God wants to use the circumstances and situations in our lives, whether they be good, bad, or indifferent.

[17:00] You know, I wonder how many opportunities I've passed up in my life to be involved in the miraculous and to please God just because I've not been enough, brave enough, to do whatever he says because it seems too risky.

You know, and I can't see it happening. I don't know how many opportunities I've missed, but God forgive me and help me to be brave. God forgive us all and make us brave, yeah? Yeah? The miracle, just remember, is the wrapping paper to the greatest gift.

I did an analogy before. I don't need to repeat it. 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.

It was nothing about really, although it was quite nice add-on bonus and God does that, doesn't he? Meets people's needs, but actually he's got a greater purpose behind it all, on top. Isn't that wonderful? Yeah?

And the disciples believed in him. So there was purpose there, real purpose. It's probably worth remembering that this was a very private miracle though, very different to a lot of miracles, because it didn't involve an audience really, where everyone could see what had happened.

[18:14] Not even the master of the ceremonies knew what was happening. It appears that only the servants and the disciples themselves were aware of what Jesus had instructed and of what Jesus had done.

But that was all we needed to know at that point. So, a miracle in whatever form is just the means by which the Holy Spirit himself decides to glorify Jesus, to bring us into relationship with the Father, to life with him through the power and the working of the Holy Spirit.

That is the ultimate gift of God. That's the real miracle. physical miracles are great, but if you think about it, when you're gone, they don't really have much significance, do they?

What's of eternal consequence is our walk with God. That determines where we spend eternity.

That's important. That's really, really important. And by no means am I putting down physical healings and God meeting our needs physically because sometimes he needs to do that in order for us to do what I've said, the greater purpose.

Okay? Slide six, Josh, I think. Let's turn our attention to a couple of points we didn't look at in much detail last time. Firstly, in verse four, this phrase, it's often bugged me because it's like Jesus, is

Jesus changing his mind?

[19:43] As I say, is he limbering up to do his first miracle? Is he a bit nervous? No, my hour's not come yet. No, no, I'm not, yeah. Oh, hang on, I've got enough, I have got enough confidence.

No, it's not like that at all. I don't believe it's like that at all. Use the words, Jesus follows up the words, woman, why do you involve me with a statement, my hour has not yet come.

I used to believe that this was Jesus just putting his mum off, biding a bit of time saying, hang on a minute, I'm not sure if my ministry is ready to, am I ready to go father? Yes, you are son, okay, right. I had that kind of idea in my mind at one point. But really, what I've come to believe is that the statement is meant to foreshadow the role of Jesus as the bridegroom in the marriage supper of the lamb.

Mary was in effect telling Jesus to act as the bridegroom, to produce the wine for the wedding. He was taking on the role of bridegroom there in supplying the wine for the wedding.

[20:52] However, Jesus knew that his time to take this role would only come once his work as the Messiah was completed. The use of the words my or his hour, whichever way you say it, as we continue looking through the gospel of John, the phrase comes up again and again.

in John 7 verse 30 it says, they tried to grab him but his hour has not yet come. And again similarly in 8 verse 20, very, very similar.

And then in John 12 verse 23, Jesus replied, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The hour has come. Very truly, I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant will also be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

[22:07] And now my soul is troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No. It was for this reason I came to this hour.

Father, glorify your name. I think I'm convinced that when Jesus said at the wedding, his hour had not yet come, it was referring about himself dying, referring to himself dying on the cross, being, it says elsewhere, being poured out like a drink offering.

And then his resurrection, that would prove that the price was paid for our sins. When he would be revealed as Messiah and his kingdom would be ushered in.

Next slide. The phrase 13 verse 1, the hour had come, again, crops up there in 17, 1, Jesus prayed, Father, the hour has come.

The symbolism in this event just goes on and on really. I think I'm totally convinced to that. Let's think about another aspect. In verse 11 it says that this was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory and his disciples believed.

[23:20] And I made quite a nice discovery that I'd not seen before because I'm not as well-educated in theology as, say, John is. I came up with something really clever this morning.

I thought John would be really impressed for your audience and he knew it. Gosh. Now what I discovered was this. The Greek word for signs is simeon.

And it's a different word used to describe Jesus' miracles than in the other Gospels. While the other Gospels use the word dynamis, which means power, John uses the word simeon, which describes the miracles having a deeper meaning.

They were signs that pointed to a bigger message Jesus was teaching. And then I found this lovely definition of simeon. A sign typically miraculous, given especially to confirm, corroborate, or authenticate.

Simeon, sign. That emphasizes the end purpose, exalts the one giving it, authenticates the Lord and his eternal purpose by doing what mere man cannot replicate or take credit for.

[24:48] What a beautiful definition of what Jesus does right through John's Gospel. What a beautiful picture. slide A.

In verse 6, let's think about the stone water jars for a moment, because I think they have some significance that we've not really looked at yet. The six stone water jars, we're told, were there for

ceremonial washing or religious purification, if you like.

They would have been made from six solid pieces of stone, carved out, not pots made from clay, as it was thought that the stone was more impervious to uncleanness and would keep what was inside clean.

They would have been between altogether holding 120 to 180 gallons we think of water, enough for all the guests to have washed and become ceremonially clean before eating.

Do you know what? I think Jesus' choice of these vessels is absolutely remarkable. And I think this because these vessels were not for drinking from.

[26:03] He could have gone and he could have used the original containers that the wine was in before. Couldn't he? But he doesn't. He chooses these vessels. Yeah?

And these vessels were not for drinking from. They were for getting spiritually cleaned up with. So why did he use them? The first thing that really came to me is because Jesus wanted to provide an abundance of wine.

He always provides an abundance you see in our lives. The containers used before didn't hold enough. They ran out. Your resources in your life will run out.

I guarantee it. No matter how good, intelligent, motivated, hardworking you are, your resources will run out.

But when Jesus comes, he provides an abundance for our lives. He didn't want to fill the old containers because it would have just run out again.

[27:06] The Old Testament prophets referred to a time after the Messiah was revealed as the time when wine provision would flow freely. And that's Jesus all over.

In Jeremiah 31 verse 12 it says about God's people streaming to the Lord for wheat, new wine and oil.

In Hosea 14 verse 5 they will grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. In Amos 9 verse 13 the mountains shall drip with sweet wine.

the Jewish wedding symbolized in many cases the Messiah the Messiah the kingdom of the Messiah that's easier to say.

And the wine symbolized joy and blessings of that kingdom. Jesus also got the servants to fill their jars to the brim.

[28:10] No holding back right to the brim. It's likely as they were filling them. Imagine the water just spilling out onto the floor. Yeah? Filled to the brim.

No more space. No more space for anything. They were likely have overflowed. So that's like Jesus providing more than we can ask or imagine.

The second point by using the vessels that symbolized and stood for ritual cleaning Jesus was pointing to himself his calling as the true means of spiritual cleansing.

The shedding of his blood on the cross to pay the price for our sin. Jesus takes an object of the law and fulfills it physically.

Fulfills it physically and metaphorically with its true meaning and purpose. And that's what God does with us.

[29:18] You can think of the jars as being us people set apart consecrated for God yet just filling our lives with the basic elements the water which will never satisfy us.

all God standard for purification but then Jesus comes. Then Jesus comes and provides all that we need for life and life to the full and eternal purification.

This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins drink it in remembrance of me.

This wedding also foreshadows the wedding of the feast of the lamb as I've said when Jesus will be the bridegroom and his church the people who know him love him and have come into his kingdom will be his bride.

Matthew 9 verse 15 says John's disciples came to Jesus and asked him how is it that we and the Pharisees fast often but your disciples do not fast.

[30:41] These were John's disciples and Jesus answered how can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he's still with them? Time will come when the bridegroom has been taken from them then they will fast.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment for the patch will pull away and the garment from the garment making the tear worse.

Those routines that you had that thought you'd done enough to make you clean whatever you thought that was yes I'm going to tell you right now only Jesus touching you on the inside washing you with his blood can do that only Jesus can do it only Jesus can do it talks about in Matthew 22 verse 2 the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son once again that analogy of Jesus as the bridegroom I'm just going to read from oh I've lost it on my notes yeah revelation 19 I'm going to read a little bit from there I've got part of it on the screen but I'm going to read from the start here it says this is a picture that John was given and a vision of Jesus in heaven the end times and it says this after this I heard the sound what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting hallelujah salvation and glory and power belong to our God for true and just are his judgments he has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries that doesn't necessarily mean sexual sin it means it's got a broader meaning than that don't worry about that he has avenged on her the blood of his servants and again they shouted hallelujah the smoke from her goes up forever and ever the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped

God who was seated on the throne and they prayed amen hallelujah then a voice came from the throne saying praise our God all you his servants you who fear him both great and small and then I heard what sounded like a great multitude like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder shouting hallelujah for our Lord God almighty reigns let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory for the wedding of the lamb has come and his bride pay attention here and his bride has made herself ready fine linen bright and clean was given to her to wear fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people then the angel said to me write this blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the lamb and he added these are the true words of God next slide

[34:48] Josh I'm coming to the end now but I'm going to I'm just going to add a little bit here I'm not going to ask you if you've been invited to this wedding because I'm going to tell you right now whatever your name is wherever you come from we're all invited but we must RSVP I'm terrible at that Sue has to do it for us but with God we have to RSVP we must respond to that invitation and we must be ready to go to the wedding to go to this wedding as we are without allowing Jesus to change us to go in our own filthy rags it won't wash we need

Jesus to change us like the water into wine to be our means of spiritual purification to clean us up by asking him to cleanse us from our sin by taking the blood of Jesus repenting taking that blood on the cross as our sacrifice for everything that we've ever done wrong knowingly and unknowingly for what we will do wrong in the future as well because we can only stand by his provision by choosing to be one of his making ourselves ready dressed in fine linen bright and clean was given to her to her to her to you to me to us as a body by Jesus these are not righteous acts that come from our own strength no no they come from

God's Holy Spirit working to glorify Jesus just as it said in that Simeon working to glorify Jesus in us as stone pots turning our water into wine that overflows and you know what what good God does in your life it tastes so so so good it's the best so whatever God's telling you to do do it be persistent in the belief that when even when the wine's gone and Jesus looks and so he hasn't got his hands on the situation Jesus can he knows he can and he will still work as we bring our situations to him and this morning if you need cleaning up don't try empty religion don't try to be good become a disciple of Jesus let him change you from the inside out let him bring you into real relationship with God and seal you as one of his own for eternity the bible says taste and see that the lord is good

I challenge you this morning sorry if that comes across as aggressive but I challenge you this morning to taste and see that the lord is good because it has eternal consequence I'm going to finish with one phrase from revelation I Jesus have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright morning star the spirit and the bride us say come and let the one who hears say come let the one who is thirsty let the one who wishes to take the free gift of the water of life let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life

living water going to end there just like to pray before

I do father I thank you that you are good father I thank you that your nature is forgiving I thank you that this morning you see our hearts you see our pride sometimes and our indifference and I'm talking about myself Lord you know you see all that is in us and you want to take that water in our lives this morning and I believe and you want to change it into the finest wine that will satisfy the needs of a hungry world and Lord I pray that if people have heard this word this morning that need you that don't know you

[41:06] I pray Lord that they will pray a prayer to you that basically says Lord I know I've messed up I know I've made mistakes but I want you to come into my life and fill me with your Holy Spirit I want you to take my life on and change me from the inside out so that I'm like that wine and that I can meet the needs of a hungry and thirsty world Lord have you away this morning and I just want to encourage you if you feel God's been speaking to you this morning come and pray with somebody at the front come and pray with John come and pray with the other elders that are here and anybody around the front who you might feel comfortable with come and pray with them Amen Amen