

SERIES: Gospel of John: Seeing is Believing?
 SERMON: *The Life of the Party*
 SCRIPTURE: John 2:1-11
 SPEAKER: Pastor Josh Black
 DATE: September 11, 2011

Turn in your Bibles to John chapter 2. Two weeks ago I titled my sermon “Come and See” because it is clear to me that as John the Evangelist describes the calling of the first disciples he is inviting us as readers to “come and see” Jesus in a deeper way. I’m excited to take John up on his challenge this week.

At the end of chapter 1 in verses 48-49 Jesus tells Nathanael he saw him under the fig tree and Nathanael is amazed and becomes convinced that Jesus is the Christ, “*the Son of God...the King of Israel.*” Then in verse 50, Jesus says, “*...because I said ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.*” This statement is an introduction to the seven signs in the book of John. And the first of those signs is found right here in chapter 2:1-11. I don’t want to give away the sermon, but let me just say, Jesus delivers on his promise. Let’s take a look at the greater things Jesus promises we will see.

John 2:1-11 (ESV)

¹*On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.*

²*Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.* ³*When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”* ⁴*And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”* ⁵*His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”*

⁶*Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.* ⁷*Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.* ⁸*And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it.* ⁹*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* ¹⁰*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.”* ¹¹*This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.*

All good stories have a crisis and a resolution. Our text this morning is no exception. The crisis is obvious – the wine is out at the wedding party. And the resolution is obvious – Jesus provides new wine at the wedding party. So, the crisis and resolution are obvious, right? Well, maybe not as obvious as we may think at first glance. Remember, the Gospel of John is an iceberg Gospel; there is more than meets the eye at every turn; there is more beneath the surface of the water.

Significance of Signs

I want to draw your attention to a very important word in our text this morning; actually I would say this is the most important word in our text this morning.¹ Look at verse 11. *This is the first of the signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed him.*

John uses the word “signs” to describe Jesus’ miracles, whereas the other Gospel writers simply use the word “miracle.” A sign points to something beyond itself.

A yellow ribbon is just a yellow ribbon, right? Well, on the surface, yes, but it points to something deeper, right? People don’t just put yellow ribbon magnets on the back of their car because they like the color yellow. What does the yellow ribbon represent? The yellow ribbon points to our troops who are deployed.

In a similar way, John wants us to see past the miracle to the significance of the miracle. The miracles are symbol laden; the greater things that Jesus wants us to see are beneath the surface. The miracles do reveal the power Jesus has over nature, as the creator of all things (cf. 1:3); but they also reveal to us something about whom he is and what we need to believe about him in order to have life in his name (cf. 20:30-31).

So, what is the significance of this first sign – turning water into wine? What do we need to see beneath the surface? What do we need to believe about Jesus here in order to have life in his name? I’ll give you part of the answer now; we’ll discover the rest as we go along. This sign shows us that Jesus introduces something new. The old has gone; the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).

We will look briefly at the crisis of the wine running out. Then we’ll spend more time considering how the crisis is resolved by Jesus when he provides new wine.

CRISIS: THE WINE IS OUT

I want to spend most of our time on the significance of the signs, not the details in the narrative. To do that I will explore four phrases in this passage that draw out the meaning of the passage, the significance of the sign. We’ll look at one of those phrases now and three more when we turn to the resolution of the crisis.

1. The wine ran out. The first phrase is “when the wine ran out” (v. 3). This is the surface level crisis in the narrative.

Maggie and I were married here at First Free, on August 16, 1997. On that day we too had a crisis. The air conditioning went out in the chapel. It was 108° that day, if I remember right (actually it was 95°, but it felt like 108°). I was sweating bullets long before the air went out. But when the air went out everybody was sweating. It was a bit of a crisis and somewhat of an embarrassment, but the wedding only lasted 45 minutes.

¹ Mike Bullmore. “Something New Has Come.”

In Jewish culture weddings lasted seven days. And it would have been a serious *faux pas* to run out of wine at a wedding. The host was expected to provide the guests with wine for all seven days.² So, running out of wine would have been a huge embarrassment, especially in a shame-based culture.³

If running out of wine is the crisis at the surface level, then what is the crisis beneath the surface? Well, to understand the crisis beneath the surface we first have to understand the significance wine had in Jewish thought and culture. In Jewish thought wine was the symbol of joy and celebration.⁴ It represented abundance and blessing.⁵ And a lack of wine indicated barrenness or mourning.⁶

When the prophets spoke of the coming Messiah (the Christ), they often associated that as a time when the wine would flow freely just like it would at a feast or celebration. Consider a few verses from the prophets which speak of the Messianic age:

Jeremiah 31:12-14 (ESV)

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil...I will turn their mourning into joy...

Amos 9:13-14 (ESV)

Behold the days are coming declares the LORD, when...the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine...

Isaiah 25:6 (ESV)

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

I'm convinced that John wants us to see beyond the fact that the wine had *literally* run out at this wedding; he wants us to see that the wine had *symbolically* run out in Israel. The old system of Judaism was barren⁷ and Israel was mourning; they were in need of the new wine that only the Messiah could bring.

We too live in a time that is marked by barrenness and mourning. We live in a time when the wine has run out. Today is the tenth anniversary of that tragic day when terrorists attacked NYC and the Pentagon, killing thousands. Although there has been some progress in the war on terror since September 11, 2001, we are still living in the wake of this horrendous tragedy. And we are reminded today that we live in a world of terror and injustice. The wine has run out.

² Andreas Köstenberger. *John*.

³ Don Carson. *John*.

⁴ Andreas Köstenberger. "John" in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.

⁵ Mike Bullmore. "Something New Has Come."

⁶ It is hard for us to completely grasp this because we live today in a culture that has abused alcohol so badly (Bullmore).

⁷ Andreas Köstenberger. *John*.

I was made aware of a man that took his own life this week, leaving a wife and two young children. We live in a world of grief, hopelessness, and despair. The wine has run out. Our prayer page each week lists the deaths of loved ones, illness and cancer. It is an opportunity to pray, but it is also an indication that we live in a world of sickness and death. The wine has run out.

9/11 is a day on the calendar we will never forget. But there is another day that has more drastically impacted our lives. In fact, the day I speak of explains the tragedy of 9/11, suicide, sickness, death, despair, and darkness. That was the day Adam and Eve rebelled against God. They sinned. Then they were cursed to death and all creation with them. And their sin and curse has been transferred to each of us (Rom 5:12).

We are all sinners by nature and by choice.⁸ We don't have to look to the newspapers to see the effects of the fall. Our own hearts, actions and thoughts, testify against us. We each deserve the wrath of God; we each deserve eternal death. In our sin, we have no reason to celebrate or have joy. The wine has run out. We are in desperate need of new wine.

We know that Jesus turned the literal water into literal wine at the wedding in this passage and this is amazing. But how does Jesus resolve the spiritual crisis that Israel was in and that we're in today? What is the significance of the sign of new wine? Let's look now at the resolution Jesus provides.

RESOLUTION: JESUS PROVIDES NEW WINE

We'll look at three more phrases in this passage to determine the resolution.

2. My hour has not yet come. The second phrase I want to draw your attention to is "my hour has not yet come" (v. 4), but before I do that we need to look at the phrase that comes just before it. Notice what Jesus says to his mother in verse 4. "*Woman, what does this have to do with me?*" Many people are troubled by the fact that Jesus uses the word "woman" to address his mother, but let me assure you that Jesus is not disrespecting his mother. Granted, this is not an endearing term, but it is courteous.⁹

What he is doing is redefining the relationship, or maybe clarifying the relationship.¹⁰ He's saying, "Whatever is about to happen here, you need to know that it has nothing to do with the fact that you are my mother."¹¹ I liked the way Pastor Dick described it to the staff earlier this week. He said Jesus is establishing his "sovereign sense of independence." Throughout the book of John, Jesus continually reminds people that he only does what the Father wants him to do, when he wants him to do it (he submits to his Father's requests).¹² This is essentially what he's saying to his mother when he says, "*Woman, what does this [request] have to do with me.*" My conclusion is based on what Jesus says next.

⁸ EFCA Statement of Faith, Article 3.

⁹ Don Carson. *John*.

¹⁰ Mike Bullmore. "Something New Has Come."

¹¹ Sinclair Ferguson. "Now That's Better."

¹² NB. In the next verse Mary says, "Do whatever he tells you." Mary is in a sense submitting to Jesus' will at this point.

“*My hour has not yet come.*” The word “hour” is used in a few different ways in John, but it mainly refers to Jesus’ death.¹³ Please allow me to show you this by taking you on a brief tour of the Book of John.

John 7:30 (ESV)

...they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

John 12:23-24 (ESV)

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:27 (ESV)

Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name...

John 17:1 (ESV)

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...

The hour when Jesus would be truly glorified, had not yet come; that hour was the hour he was lifted up on the cross and died for our sins, as our substitute. ***Jesus’ purpose was to die so that we might have life.*** But that is not to say that the rest of Jesus’ life is insignificant. No, in fact everything Jesus did up until that hour informs the significance of that hour.¹⁴ The miracle of changing the water into wine is a glorious sign that points to the glorious cross and gives the cross meaning.

That brings me to the third phrase.

3. There were six stone water jars. Look at verse 6. “*Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification...*”

Everything in the text is significant. So why does John mention these six jars in his account of this miracle? What is the significance of the sign? First of all, let me draw your attention to the fact that there are *six* stone jars. In the book of John, seven is an important number; it represents perfection. There are seven signs in the book of John, seven “I am” statements from the lips of Jesus, and seven witnesses that testify that Jesus is the Christ.¹⁵ John is building the perfect case that Jesus is the Christ by using seven in the way that he does. But there are only six stone water jars for purification. Could it be that John wants to show us that the Jewish rites of purification were incomplete, insufficient for getting the job done? I think so.¹⁶

The jars and water represent the old covenant. ***The new wine represents the new covenant*** and the dawning of the new Messianic age. The old has gone; the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17). Jesus

¹³ 2:4; 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1

¹⁴ Mike Bullmore. “Something New Has Come.”

¹⁵ NB. This miracle also takes place on the seventh day since Jesus began his public ministry (cf. 1:29, 35, 43; 2:1) (so Carson).

¹⁶ Andreas Köstenberger. *John*. Contra Carson who says this observation may be strained. Regardless of the number six, I am confident John wants to use the jars to show us that Jesus brings something new, better, and complete.

is the Messiah; the one the prophets spoke of, who brings new wine with him. Jesus brings something new, but that is not all; he brings something fuller and he brings something better. Notice in verse 6, John tells us *there were six stone water jars...each holding twenty or thirty gallons*. That's between 120 and 180 gallons. Also, notice in verse 7 it says that he had the servants fill the empty jars up to *the brim*. That's a picture of abundance; he brings something fuller. But the real climax in the narrative is in verses 9-10. "*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.'*"

The new covenant is not only quantitatively better than the old; it is qualitatively better. Or to put it another way, the wine Jesus provides is "more-better;" it is *more* abundant than the old wine and it is *better* than the old wine. The old covenant wasn't a cosmic mistake; God doesn't make mistakes.¹⁷ It was preparing the way for the new; it was looking forward to Jesus. The old covenant made some provision for purification, but with Jesus there is now a possibility of being perfectly and completely clean, through faith.¹⁸

Look back in your Bible to John 1:16-17. As I read, remember these verses are speaking about Jesus. "*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon [instead of a] grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*"

Or put another way, *you have kept the good wine until now* (2:10). What the master of the feast says about the new wine (2:10), John says about Jesus (1:16-17); Jesus is the new and better wine; Jesus brings the new covenant; this is a grace instead of a grace.

And this new covenant is a covenant in his blood. ***The new wine represents the new covenant in his blood.*** In the New Testament wine represents the blood of Jesus. The most obvious picture of this is the Lord's Supper, which we celebrate every month in this church.

1 Corinthians 11:25 (ESV)

In the same way also he took the cup [the wine], after supper saying, "This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

John 6:53-56 goes so far as to say that we *must* drink this wine in order to experience purification, the forgiveness of sins, "*unless you...drink his blood, you have no life in you. whoever...drinks my blood has eternal life...whoever...drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.*"

Now, as Evangelicals, we don't believe that we eat the actual flesh of Jesus and drink his actual blood, when we take communion. So, why does John say this? As Evangelicals, we believe that in order to have eternal life, we must believe the gospel. ***To have eternal life, we must believe that Christ died for our sins*** (1 Cor. 15:3). He died so that we wouldn't have to. We have to believe this; we have to take it in; or put another way, we have to drink this cup if we're to have

¹⁷ Mike Bullmore. "Something New Has Come."

¹⁸ Cf. Sinclair Ferguson. "Now That's Better."

eternal life. So, when we take communion we do so in celebration and joy believing that Christ died for our sins and that his blood is represented in the cup.

The Life of the Party

That is why I have titled this sermon “The Life of the Party.” Jesus gives eternal life to all who believe that the new wine in his blood provides forgiveness of sin. And eternal life is not just quantitative; it is also qualitative. It’s “more-better.” Eternal life is not just going to heaven when you die – more life. Eternal life is an abundant life of joy and celebration, even now – better life (Jn. 10:10).

Jesus’ miracle of turning the water into wine provided a means of celebration at that wedding party, but it was also a sign that pointed beyond that wedding to the abundant and eternal life available to all through his blood. He ushers in the new age where the wine flows freely. In our sin, the wine has run out and the only appropriate response is mourning. In Christ the new wine has come and the only appropriate response is joyful celebration and worship.

You may be thinking it doesn’t seem like we live in an age where the new wine is flowing; it doesn’t seem like there is much cause for joyful celebration. Well, let me just say, I understand. There is still evidence of barrenness and emptiness in this world. And the reason for this reality is the fact that the new wine Jesus brings is an “already/not yet” wine.

Jesus has *already* brought the new wine of the new covenant, when he shed his blood on the cross; he has *already* inaugurated a new age. But that new age has *not yet* reached its climax and completion. We look forward to the day when Jesus will return and eradicate sin and the effects of sin completely. We look forward to that day when there will be no more sickness and death, no more war or terror.

John describes that day in the book of Revelation as another wedding feast. It is found in Revelation 19. Leave your finger in the book of John and turn to Revelation 19. In John 2 the master of the feast calls the bridegroom and says, “...*you have kept the good wine until now.*” In Revelation 19 we learn that the true bridegroom is actually Jesus himself. And those who believe in him are his bride, the Church. And when Jesus returns, his Church will join together for a wedding feast that is full of rejoicing and exultation.

Revelation 19:7-9 (ESV)

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure...And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding feast in John 2 (v. 2). Who will be invited to this grand wedding feast in Revelation 19? The saints who have placed their faith in Jesus are

invited to this wedding feast. But what will happen to those who are not invited to this wedding feast, those who have not placed their faith in Jesus?¹⁹

I said earlier that wine represents the blood of Christ in the New Testament, but that is not all it represents. It also represents the blood of those who reject Christ; it represents the wrath of God. Those who reject Christ will not be at the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19:15 (ESV)

*He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*²⁰

We all deserve the wrath of God. In our sin, the wine of celebration, joy, and abundance has run out; we are empty and we are thirsty. And the only wine we deserve to drink is the bitter wine of God's wrath and judgment. But the good news of the gospel tells us Jesus drank the bitter wine of God's wrath for us (cf. Mt. 26:39, 42, 44) when he died on the cross, so that we could have our thirst quenched by the sweet new wine of eternal life. Turn back to the book of John, chapter 19. Here we find Jesus on the cross, right before he died. Look at what happened. Pay close attention to the wording as I read.

John 19:28-30 (ESV)

... Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "it is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

This is amazing grace. We don't have to drink the cup of wrath we all deserve because he drank it for us when his hour came. Friends, let me say, there is no promise of protection in this life for any of us. The façade of safety in this country was unmasked on September 11, 2001. But there is protection from the wrath of God on the last day for all who believe. If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, who died for our sins we will have life in his name; we will have an invitation to the great wedding feast and what a day of rejoicing it will be.

That brings me to the fourth phrase I said we would consider.

4. His disciples believed in him. Look at 2:11 again. *"This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him."*

Who at this wedding party had an opportunity to believe; who else saw the sign? Well we know the servants saw the miracle (v. 9). But the text is conspicuously silent regarding their response. Maybe John wants us to put ourselves in their shoes. They were given a behind the scenes look at this miracle. And I have attempted to give *us* a behind the scenes look at this miracle so we can understand the significance of the sign. How will we respond?

¹⁹ Revelation 19 goes on to tell us that there will be another supper for those who reject Jesus. But they will be the ones eaten at that supper (Rev. 19:17, 21).

²⁰ This is a reference to Isaiah 63:3. NB. the parallelism. We're either covered in the blood of Jesus, the robe of righteousness, or our blood will be on his robe when he comes in judgment.

Believing the miracle took place is not enough. We must see beneath the surface and believe the significance of the sign. This sign shows us that Jesus is the Christ who brought something new.

Sermon in a Sentence: Jesus is the new wine who gives new life to all who believe.

Do you believe? I'd like to summarize my sermon and summarize what we need to believe about Christ by reiterating the three ways the metaphor of wine is used in John. 1) *Wine refers to the wrath of God.* Because of our sin, the wine has run out. We are barren and are without hope. We deserve to drink the bitter wine of God's judgment. 2) *Wine refers to the blood of Christ.* He drank the bitter cup for us. Jesus brings the new wine of the new covenant through his blood shed on the cross. He became the Lamb of God who was slain. And this blood can cleanse us from our sin if we believe that Christ died for us. 3) *Wine refers to joy and celebration.* All of those who believe the gospel have eternal life now and can look forward with great anticipation to that great day when we will join Christ at the great wedding supper of the Lamb.

This is what it means that Jesus is the new wine and that we can have new life if we believe. Do you see the significance of the sign? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ?

[Prayer]

The disciples not only saw the significance of the sign; they saw his glory. They saw the grace and the glory in the sign. In view of God's glory and grace I think it is appropriate that we worship. Let me read again Revelation 19:9-10.

Revelation 19:9-10 (ESV)

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."

[Worthy is the Lamb]

Benediction:

We have worshiped in song and sung of the glory and grace of God. I want to challenge you now to worship with your life as you go.

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers [and sisters], by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

In view of God's glory and grace, I pray that as you go from this place you would live your life for his glory and through his grace. AMEN.

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