

THE WEDDING FEAST AT CANA

John 2:1-11

Key Verse: 2:11

“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

This passage is the account of Jesus' first miraculous sign at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. Jesus performed his first miracle at the wedding. This figuratively tells us that God wants to bless all mankind as he blesses people through the blessedness of a wedding. Jesus came to this world to bless all mankind. May the Lord help me to accept one word from this passage!

First, marriage is God's blessing. It was the first week of Jesus' ministry. At this important beginning stage of his earthly Messianic ministry, what did Jesus do? Jesus went to a wedding ceremony. On the third day, a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Mary the mother of Jesus was there (1). Probably the people holding the wedding feast were either some of her relatives or friends. Not only Mary but also Jesus and his disciples were invited. The disciples were excited about going to the wedding ceremony. Why? They were always interested in eating opportunities. In the gospels there are so many scenes of them eating. The disciples had vigorous appetites. They were always hungry, because they did not have enough food or time to eat, as they were constantly on the move. We can imagine how their mouths became watery, thinking about eating delicious food at the wedding feast. Andrew might have thought about how to take some of the leftover food home to put in his refrigerator so that his brother Peter might eat it later. Philip might have calculated the cost of the feast and worried about the bridegroom's bank account. Most of all, the disciples could not contain their joy at the thought of eating to their fill.

To the Jews, a wedding was regarded as a most blessed event in life. Customarily, the festivities began on a Wednesday, and normally lasted 7 days. (Gen.29:27a) It is interesting to know that people first ate, and then blessed the wedding ceremony. According to Jewish customs, the bridegroom and bride were dressed in wedding robes and crowns, and were treated like a king and queen. They opened their house for a week to welcome wedding guests, both to entertain them, and to be celebrated. A wedding was always a joyful occasion for the whole community in a country where life was hard and full of toil and struggle. It was a bright spot in an otherwise drab and hard life.

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 teach us that God created the heavens and the earth for his own glory. After the creation, God planted the Garden of Eden, that is, Paradise. There God established and ordained the first marriage between Adam and Eve. From God's point of view, marriage is God's expression of utmost blessing for mankind. Each person must know that marriage was established by God, and was ordained and sanctified by God. Many people think that if they marry they would be happy by themselves. But it is not true. If they want to be happy, each family must accept Jesus

Christ as the Lord of the family. When they do so, God blesses the family both spiritually and materially. Otherwise marriage would turn out to be a burden, and heartbreaking to their precious children.

Second, Jesus' time schedule. The blessedness of the wedding at Cana in Galilee was joyful. When the wedding mood was at its height, the wine ran out. This was a serious problem at the wedding. Wine was essential to a wedding feast, for it made the wedding guests delightful. And in the East, offering good hospitality was traditionally very important. It was embarrassing for the bridegroom and bride if the wine ran out at their wedding. It was a breach of hospitality.

Jesus' mother saw the situation. She went to Jesus and said, "They have no more wine." Jesus replied, "Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come" (3,4). Humanly speaking, Jesus' reply to his mother sounded rude, but it was not. Jesus used the same words, "Dear woman," when he spoke to her as she was beneath the cross, crying (19:26). When he said "Dear woman" he was speaking to her as the Messiah, not as her human son. Thus, Jesus declared to her that now he began his messianic ministry. And what he was about to do was God's work, not just a human favor. Jesus also said, "My time has not yet come." What does this mean? It meant that Jesus was living and acting on God's time schedule. All the gospel writers speak about Jesus' time schedule. But the author of John's gospel repeatedly refers to "Jesus' time" or "his hour." (7:6,8; 12:23; 17:1) "My time" is one of the themes of John's gospel. Jesus was always conscious of God's time schedule for himself. John 12:23 says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Here the word "glorified" meant that Jesus would reveal God's divine love through his glorious death on the cross. "My time" or "my hour" refers ultimately to his death on the cross as the Lamb of God.

The life of Jesus can be compared to a heavenly symphony. John the Baptist said in 1:29, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" His words sound like the prelude of this gospel. The repetition of "my time" seems to be the progression and development of the theme of the heavenly symphony of John's gospel. When Jesus lays down his life on the cross as the Lamb of God, it seems that the first movement of the symphony ends and the second movement begins flowing quietly and sorrowfully. When Jesus was raised from the dead, it sounds like the climax of the third movement of the symphony of John's gospel. God had his definite plan and time schedule for Jesus. In light of this, we learn that God has his time schedule for each of us. We do not just exist. We are in God's definite time schedule.

Third, Mary's prayer. Mary brought the problem to Jesus. She knew that running out of wine at the wedding was no small problem for the family. But she could do nothing with her own ability. Still, she felt that the problem was her own. Mary came to Jesus with the problem. Her coming to Jesus seems to be a small matter. But from God's point of view, her coming to Jesus with the problem was the first step of her prayer. From time to time when we confront an adverse situation, we only worry about the situation.

We despair when things appear to be too hard to handle. We sometimes go to a human friend or someone who may be able to help us. But we learn from Mary that we must first come to Jesus with the problem. There are many men and woman of faith in the Bible who came to God when they had a problem. For example, when Rebekah had a morning-sickness problem, she came to God in prayer first, instead of going to a gynecologist. May God help us to learn prayer from Mary!

When Mary came to Jesus in prayer, Jesus said to her, “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Mary, the mother of Jesus, could have been embarrassed by her sons’ response. But she was not upset, despite the seeming refusal. She was calm, believing that Jesus would deal with the problem in his own way. This was the second step of her prayer. We call this “the faith of waiting on the Lord.” But it is not easy at all to have this waiting-on-the-Lord faith.

Let’s see what Mary did next. Mary did what she could. She quietly stepped out to where the servants were. What did Mary say to the servants? Out of exasperation did she say, “Go and see if any liquor is store open”? Or did she rebuke the family for not preparing enough wine? No! She said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” (5). She helped the servants to have obedient hearts toward Jesus’ words. This one quiet act reveals that she was worthy to be the greatest woman in the world: She made an environment in which Jesus could work. This was the third step of her prayer. We can see that Mary was a woman of prayer, and a beautiful woman of environment-making.

Fourth, the servants’ beautiful obedience. When his time came, Jesus spoke to the servants. Look at verse 7. “Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim.” When Jesus first told them, “Fill the jars with water,” they obeyed him without a word of complaint. We can imagine this must have been very difficult task for them to obey. Servants in a wedding feast are very busy. They have to move fast to take care of all the menial work and run errands. When the command to fill the jars with water came from Jesus, who was not even their master, they could have objected, saying, “Don’t you see that we are very busy?” Above all, what good was it to fill the jar with water when the problem was wine? They could not understand Jesus’ command. Besides, filling the jars with water was no small task. Without the benefit of today’s tap water, they had to draw water from the well and carried it from a distance. And the six stone jars held about 120-180 gallons of water for the purpose of ceremonial washing of hands and feet. This required a good deal of their effort and time. But verse 7b says, “so they filled them to the brim.” The servants obeyed Jesus’ word and filled the jars to the brim. Here the phrase “to the brim” tells us that their obedience was not half-hearted. They obeyed wholeheartedly and with great willingness. They obeyed, not 70%, but 100%. The servants teach us what it means to obey God’s word.

How could the servants obey Jesus’ word wholeheartedly when they could not even understand the meaning of the command? Usually servants have a servant’s mentality: They work hard before the eyes of the master. But they stop working as soon

as the master goes away. But the servants in this event obeyed Jesus' command 100 percent. This tells us that Mary helped them to obey Jesus' word absolutely. May God help me to obey God's word absolutely!

Look at verse 8. "Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.'" They had obeyed Jesus' word when he gave them the task of filling the jars. But now Jesus was asking them to take the dirty "wash water" to the master of the banquet to serve the guests. This was even harder to obey. They knew what kind of water it was. They knew it was not even clean water. What would they do if the guests got furiously mad after drinking the dirty wash water? Jesus' command sounded very ridiculous. But they again simply obeyed. Then what happened? When they obeyed, a miracle happened. Jesus changed the water into first-class wine! Here we learn a very important spiritual lesson. When we obey God's word, we can experience the power of faith: We can see many miracles with our own eyes. In 1985 we began to pray for Russian campus mission in order to obey Jesus' world mission command. This was when the Iron Curtain was still shut tight. Bringing a Bible into the country was still illegal at that time. One could go to jail for that. But God did not ignore our prayers for the Russian young souls. We now see a miracle. God opened the door of Russia. God used our Russian missionaries to raise up Russian students to be Bible teachers and shepherds for many wandering young souls.

Look at verses 9 and 10. The guests really enjoyed the wine Jesus made. The master of the banquet 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." Wow! Isn't that wonderful! The banquet master did not know what had happened. He only knew that the wine was the best quality wine. Jesus could perform the first miraculous sign when the servants obeyed his words. Because of the servants' obedience, the wedding guests could enjoy the joy of the blessed wedding to the full. May God bless this nation to be a priestly nation when we obey his words 100%.

Obedying God's word, however, is not easy. Especially, today's young people want to do what they want and when they want. They scoff at the word "obedience." The obedience problem was a serious problem from the beginning. Romans 5:19a says, "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners..." The servants' obedience is a shadow of our Lord's obedience. Our Lord Jesus came into this world to show how to obey God. Obedience doesn't come naturally. Obedience must be learned. Even Jesus learned obedience. Hebrews 5:8 says, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered..." Sinful human beings cannot obey naturally. We must learn how to obey the will of God; we must do our best to learn how to obey the truth; then, God changes us from useless men, like wash water, to useful men.

Fifth, the meaning of the first miraculous sign. Let's read verse 11. "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him." This first miraculous sign shows us that Jesus

came to bless mankind. Mankind lost God's blessing of the Garden of Eden since sin came into the world. But in this passage Jesus demonstrates that he came to this world to bless all mankind, just as he blessed the wedding at Cana in Galilee. Many people think the Christian life is serious, with no fun. But that's not the case. Christians are like really joyful people who enjoy the joy of a wedding all the time. Christian couples are all still in a honeymoon mood. The wedding feast symbolizes a character of the Kingdom of God.

Through this first miraculous sign Jesus also manifests that he came to this world to change useless people into useful people. As Jesus changed water into wine, so Jesus transforms those who come to him. We can fix an old machine and use it, but we can't fix a person. However, we can become new creations when we believe in Jesus (2Co 5:17). Jesus revealed his transforming power when he changed water into wine. Each person must be changed in Jesus. Otherwise he cannot see Jesus. He cannot see the kingdom of God. May God help us to come to Jesus and be changed into useful servants by the transforming power of Jesus!