

Father, may these spoken words be faithful to your written word and lead us to the living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The story of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, contains one of the most powerful messages in Scripture. But it seems that sometimes, people focus on the details and end up missing the joy of the message.

The first stumbling block tends to be issues surrounding alcohol. Alcohol is often a destructive force in today's world as anyone who has lived with an alcoholic or has faced that addiction themselves can tell you. Don't get stuck there. This is not a story about moral teaching.

The second hang up is the way that Jesus talks to his mother. Most people feel that Jesus is at least a little bit rude to his mother. So they go off on tangents about obedience. Those discussions can be helpful, but they are probably not the reason John put the story in his Gospel.

Which brings us to the third stumbling block, which is the Gospel of John itself. If you have ever read the four Gospels and read them one after another, you will notice that John is VERY different from the other three. The other Gospels--Matthew, Mark, and Luke--all focus on telling the story of Jesus in a pretty straightforward manner. Each one was designed for a different audience, so each one includes and explains slightly different things. But all three of them want to make sure that their readers get the facts of the story. This is what happened to Jesus, this is who we believe Jesus is, this is what Jesus taught.

But John is different. John was not written to get the facts out there. John was written with the assumption that people already knew the facts about Jesus' life. John isn't trying to tell his readers what happened in Jesus' life. John wants to tell his readers what the life of Jesus means...what the core message is really all about.

John is highly selective about the material that he includes, but because people don't realize that John is talking in symbols and philosophy and metaphor, they allow themselves to get caught up in details...like was it really wine or how dare Jesus talk to his mother that way. At best they end up saying that this is a story about empathy. Jesus sees people who are embarrassed because they can't provide for their guests, Jesus feels their pain and helps out. The only way to get at John is to start out with the assumption that the message John wants to convey is beneath the surface and the details of the story are just a means to that end.

So, let's look at the story with that in mind. Let's assume that this is not primarily a story about a wedding, about drinking, or about who scurried around to do what for whom. It's in John, so it must be something more than that. The first thing to notice is that John doesn't call it a miracle. In fact, John doesn't call anything a miracle in his Gospel. Instead, he calls them signs. He records seven "signs" in his Gospel and changing the water into wine is the first. We can assume that all that is intentional. This was a sign for people, something that would inform people about what they might expect from this Nazarene, something that would point them toward a deeper meaning.

None of the other Gospel writers saw the miracle at Cana as anything worth recording. They were much more impressed with the healings and exorcisms. But John remembered Cana. John saw in the miracle at Cana a sign that served to define the very purpose for which Christ had come into the world. The servants at the wedding saw water turned into the finest wine. John saw a man who in this first sign declared himself as an agent of transformation.

Remember, it is only in the Gospel of John that Jesus is recorded as saying, "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." This statement is what the miracle at Cana is about. Water, a basic necessity of life, is changed into wine--the symbol not just of life, but of abundant, joyous, and celebrative life. If you read this thinking wine is evil, you miss the point completely. Wine in Scripture is a symbol of joy and warmth and celebration and abundance. In changing the water into wine and allowing the wedding celebration to continue, Jesus is pointing people to his mission. Jesus has come to transform the world.

The message that Jesus gave to the Jews at Cana he also gives to us. The transformation at Cana is the promise for those with faith in God, who treat their neighbour with respect and mercy, who live a life of basic moderation, gentleness and self-control. This is the message for those whose life is like water--good, nourishing, and life-sustaining.

And the message is, I think, "lighten up." It is not God's desire that we live our lives with only a sense of duty and resignation. It is good that we obey the commandments, but there's more to life with Christ than obedience. "I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." Not just life, but abundant life...joyous life...life lived in freedom. It means, that when the water of our lives becomes wine through the touch of Christ, that even the worst

circumstances that life can offer have a richness and depth that they never had before.

There is a part of the Gospel that is about divine extravagance. Not in terms of material possessions or getting our way all the time. Christian joy doesn't spring from the same source as the happiness of the world. Christian joy springs from realizing that once we have made the decision to drink of the living water of Christ, that water becomes wine as it touches our lips. That we serve a God whose name is not duty but Love. It brings not just life but abundant life. Joy, freedom, celebration. Not just water, but wine.

What do people see when they look at our lives? Do they see that we have access to living water; that it is so good, that those who are thirsty will be drawn to the source of that water? Is there any indication in our lives that we serve a God who turns water into wine? And if you remember the story, it's not just cheap wine, it's the good stuff. Do people see our faith as something that turns water into wine or does it look more like turning wine into water?

Do our lives reflect the miracle at Cana? What would our lives look like...what would our church look like, if we let Jesus turn our water into wine? In Jesus' name. Amen.