

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to dumb idols.

3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,

10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

John 2:1-11

1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,

2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'

4 'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.'

5 His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from eighty to a hundred and twenty litres.

7 Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim.

8 Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.' They did so,

9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.

He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside

10 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.'

11 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.

The wedding at Cana

John 2:1-11

This is John's account of the wedding at Cana, Jesus's first miracle.

One thing you need to keep in mind about John's gospel is that it's very different to the other three. John seems to have assumed that we've all read the other three because there is no introduction at all to the life of Jesus, no birth story, and a very limited account of the calling of the disciples. John's focus is on Jesus, so much so here that even Mary doesn't get identified by name, just as 'Jesus mother', and only appears once more, at the crucifixion in chapter 19, where again she's just described as 'his mother'.

It's an indication that John has a very different agenda to Matthew, Mark and Luke. They could all be called reportage.

John's gospel is very big on the meaning of Jesus life and death and resurrection, and it's chock full of symbolism. The disciples appear almost as incidental characters throughout, and the key events in most cases centre around encounters between Jesus and one other person: Nicodemus; the woman at the well; the royal official; the paralysed man at the pool; the adulterous woman. All, even the disciples, are characterised by their personal testimony to who Jesus is.

The wedding at Cana is very significant, because it's identified (v11) as 'the first *sign* through which Jesus revealed his glory'. There are six others in John, none of which are specifically identified as this one is.

The exchange between Jesus and his mother is unusual because of the way John presents it in such a detached way. Jesus doesn't even call her mother, and he seems a bit annoyed: *Woman, why do you involve me?* You have to understand that running out of wine was the ultimate social *faux pas* for a bridegroom in that place and time; weddings could go on for days and so there was a real panic on as to what to do, because amazingly it wasn't unusual for lawsuits to follow such an etiquette fail.

Mary just seems to fade out of the picture, in order to highlight the person of Jesus, who John has already identified as the *the one and only Son, who is himself God*. We might wonder what's happened to the Mary in the birth accounts, the one who is so revered by many Christians, especially Catholics. Here she appears in stark contrast to Jesus, and as soon as she's obediently instructed the servants 'do whatever he tells you' she promptly disappears from John's account almost completely. D.A. Carson in his commentary says that in this passage:

'Mary approaches Jesus as his mother, and is reproached;...she responds as a believer, and her faith is honoured'.

The point Jesus makes by the miracle of water into wine is to declare that from this point on, everything changes.

John 1:17 says this: *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

What does this mean? Well it means that Judaism as a religion of the law has done its job.

The law was a gift of God, but powerless to change lives. If we want to know God, we have to follow Jesus who, as he said himself, had come to fulfil the law.

And so this miracle is firstly about the water symbolising the law of Moses, the law which is unable to save us because we will never succeed in keeping all of the law.

Secondly it's about the water being transformed into the new wine of the kingdom, symbolic of the fact that through Jesus we're set free and forgiven. John's whole gospel is the announcement of that seismic change, it's a revelation of Jesus, who will transform all of our lives. Water into wine is the image of how we are transformed when we surrender our lives to Christ. Remember this miracle is a *sign* to the world of *who Jesus is and what he does*.

The water in the stone jars at the wedding was water for washing before meals which was a purity ritual, one of many Jewish rituals which were designed to make people clean, or forgiven, in the sight of God. And you had to keep doing it. Now this is no longer necessary. Now we're washed with the water of baptism, not because that achieves anything in itself, it doesn't, but it symbolises the fact that religious ritual is no longer necessary if we follow Christ. We're washed clean and saved by our faith alone. The new wine could also be the wine of the communion, symbolic of Jesus' blood. The physical observances of religion have been thrown out for ever and replaced by the spiritual reality which is that we are *only* saved by our faith in Christ.

The law which we keep as a result of our faith is our response to God's grace and not an effort to qualify for heaven.

At this point I'm looking for the climax of the story, the takeaway, and up to here it's been about the contrast between water and wine. But the deeper you get into this miracle the more layers of meaning there are.

John's final point is that the best wine is saved until last. Many scholars have claimed that the 6 water jars here are symbolic, that 6 is one less than 7, meaning that the imperfect law has been replaced by the perfection of grace which is symbolised by 7.

But there is no seventh jar. Because as I already pointed out, the law, symbolised by the water, is a gift from God and so the law is perfect, because it's the means by which God has brought us to an understanding of our sinfulness. Which explains why Jesus said he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it. The perfect law of God has been surpassed and completed by the glory of his Son. Jesus is the best wine saved until last.

Weddings are the start of something new, an adventure together, a new kind of life, a celebration of love. I think I would probably describe the kingdom of God in the same way. A celebration of God's love. We're no longer under the law, no longer controlled by the rules, but we're set free by the overflowing and generous and unending love of God. Amen.