

John 2:1-11

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.

Water into wine John 2:1-11

This miracle was pretty much the first thing Jesus did after the calling of his disciples. John puts it in the first week after his baptism, at what was probably the wedding of a relative, because we're told that Jesus' mother was also there. John bases his whole gospel around a series of 7 miracles of Jesus, which John calls signs, and he starts with this one. Several times Jesus called out the crowds following him when they asked him for a sign, saying that because they were an evil generation they would not be given one. And the sign which was the very life of Jesus has largely been rejected today. Instead we look to science to provide answers because we're obsessed with measuring everything and trying to find security in it, rather than seeing a much bigger, more extraordinary and hopeful picture.

This particular miracle is quite hard to discredit because there must have been a large number of witnesses. Jewish weddings were a big community event and often went on for days. John always fills his accounts with small but significant details. The fact that there are 6 water jars, one less than the perfect number 7, (v6) shows that we're moving from the old to the new, that Old Testament cleansing rituals and legalism and tradition are passing away. The water changes to wine, which symbolises the kingdom of God, and the beginning of a new understanding of just about everything.

As Barclay says in his commentary, *whenever Jesus comes into a [person's] life, there comes a new quality which is like turning water into wine*. Life ceases being drab and starts to be exciting and full of possibility because we can have a direct connection with God. Although sceptics suggest this is all a fiction, John is also factually accurate, unlike one opinion of this story I saw this week describing it as "a heavily redacted and edited book of propaganda from the bronze age (spot the error)". Stone water jars were very common at the time because they didn't rapidly become unclean like ceramic ones. In 2017 archaeologists discovered a 2000 year old stone quarry and workshop between Cana and Nazareth where these jars were hand made. John also tells us about a healing at the pool of Bethesda which he describes as having five porticos. This was thought unlikely for many years because there was no evidence outside the bible that the pool even existed, until the 19th century, when it was excavated, and was found to be exactly as John described. So you can see that John is someone of integrity who not only reports events accurately but simultaneously draws out a deeper meaning. As Jesus' first public miracle, this wedding was very significant. What has always fascinated me about it is the exchange between Mary and Jesus, which at first seems a bit odd.

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.'

It was a very serious thing at the time for the host to run out of wine, resulting in serious repercussions for your reputation, and sometimes even lawsuits. The host would appear to have been the bridegroom, because the steward congratulates him on the wine.

Although Mary herself must have been a bit panicked by the situation, the custom at the time would have forbidden her as a woman to make any demands of her adult son. So she simply makes the statement to him, *they have no more wine*.

Which of course rang alarm bells. What she actually means is Jesus, just do something!

Jesus reply first seems to be putting distance between them, calling her 'woman' as opposed presumably to 'Mother'! But then what he says translates pretty much as 'what's it got to do with me?'. But sidestepping the question like a politician she just turns to the servants and says *'Do what he tells you'*.

I think this reveals that she doesn't really understand what the significance of all this is, but just wants the problem to go away. Carson in his commentary I think explains this change in the very nature of their relationship beautifully, when he says this: *Mary approaches Jesus as his mother, and is reproached ... she responds as a believer, and is honoured*.

And so this moment, whether or not she realised, signalled a massive change for her and her family.

From now onwards Jesus stops just being her son, the carpenter.

She has to let go of him. But despite that, her trust in Him is complete, because she knows - she's always known, who He is. Do what he tells you. No further discussion.

To return to the main theme though, it's interesting that when Jesus tells the servants to fill the jars with water, they fill them to the brim. No room for doubt, the water is right up to the top, and then at some point in the next few seconds before they scoop some out, it's become wine, brimming to the very edge of the jar. This is the point at which science goes out of the window and faith, imagination and the grace of God comes in. And the challenge. Do we believe that this is a sign that God himself became one of us, or do we think it's just a fiction? Because no proof can ever be produced that it happened. No peer reviewed research. And this is not just any old wine, the significant thing is that unlike the normal practice of saving the cheap wine for when everyone is a bit drunk and won't notice, this wine is *really* good.

Also when you work it out the wine produced amounted to about 680 litres! That's about 5,400 glasses. Way more than was needed. Now if you remember that this is John writing you know that this has a much deeper meaning than making sure the wedding guests are all very happy. This image of generosity is what I think we need to take away, especially today.

It's no secret that the planet's resources provide enough for all. It's also no secret that those resources are not fairly shared.

But what Jesus is showing us is that we have an incredibly generous God, and a God whose love overflows, brims over and is unendingly and freely given. The issue is whether we're willing to receive what He offers. Whether we choose light rather than darkness, truth rather than lies, love rather than hate and fear, fighting for justice rather than tolerating injustice, forgiveness instead of bitterness, reconciliation rather than division, risk before safety. Loving our neighbour as ourselves; before ourselves.

At the moment we face a very different world than we did a year ago, with great uncertainty and a lot of sickness and physical, emotional and financial suffering. And we know that death is something we all have to live with.

At the same time the message of the gospel is that Jesus rose from the dead, and so when we give our lives to Him he gives us the gift of His Spirit to live within us and sustain us spiritually. That Spirit *never* dies, we're permanently connected to God, through faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit enables us to live lives which despite everything we might go through are positive and creative and loving and productive. This is the message of the miracle at Cana – God can give us unlimited grace and power and wisdom through the gift of his Spirit. We only have to open our hearts and minds and begin to receive what He offers. Amen.