

## **Jesus' Glory Revealed – Jesus Turns Water Into Wine**

**John 2:1-12**

**6<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

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### *Introduction*

'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.' (John 2:11). What a wonderful and straightforward summary from John. It tells us all we need to know about this story. Jesus did something special in Cana, it revealed his glory, and his disciples were strengthened in their faith.

Now this is John's conclusion, but it would also make a fantastic introduction. If this was John's opening line, you'd be hooked. You'd be thinking "What did Jesus do? How does it reveal his glory? Should I believe in him too?" Maybe you're already asking a couple of those questions.

Well, my plan this morning is to explore this passage by answering those three questions. What did Jesus do? How does it reveal his glory? And why should I believe in him? So, let's start by recapping and unpacking the story. What did Jesus do?

### *Story*

The scene is set in verses 1 and 2, 'On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.' Now John doesn't tell us why Jesus and his disciples were invited to this wedding. In fact, he doesn't tell us a lot about this wedding full stop. We don't even know who the happy couple are. But this is deliberate. John is taking our attention away from the big event so that our focus is on the miracle. We're taken away from the wedding party so that our focus is on Jesus.

But another important player in this story is Jesus' mother, Mary. She is also at this wedding. Again, we don't know why she's at this wedding, but she seems to have a hand in the arrangements. It's Mary who finds out that they've run out of wine. So, she goes to Jesus and says, 'They have no more wine.' (v3).

Now, running out of wine at a wedding was a massive social embarrassment. Running out of food or wine at a wedding today would be bad enough. One South-Asian commentator said this was the equivalent of running out of biryani at a South-Asian wedding. I don't know exactly what that means but I'm sure we can sympathise with the situation.

We aren't told why they've run out of wine, but the reason isn't that important. Whatever the reason, the result will be the same, it's going to be really embarrassing. And, on top of the humiliation, it wasn't unheard of for bridegrooms to be fined or have lawsuits filed

against them in these circumstances! If this news gets out it will ruin the wedding for sure and there might be severe social and financial consequences.

So, Mary approaches Jesus for a solution. Based on Jesus' reply, we can tell that Mary's statement is a not-so-subtle hint that Jesus should do something miraculous about this issue. Which is an incredible act of faith. Jesus hasn't performed a miracle yet. Jesus hasn't begun any "official" ministry yet. He only got baptised two or three days earlier. Yet Mary believes that he can do something about this problem. She remembers all that was said about him before his birth and during his childhood. She has watched him grow up as the perfect child and young adult. And now she is confident that he can do something miraculous.

But Jesus gently rebukes her. He says to her, "Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come." (v4). It would take a brave or stupid man to call his mother 'woman' in our culture today, but it doesn't have that meaning here. 'Woman' wasn't a term of disrespect; it's more like Jesus calling her 'mother'. 'Mother, why do you involve me?'

But Jesus doesn't call her 'mother', he calls her 'woman'. Jesus does intend to create some distance between him and his mum. Not because she has done anything wrong, but because Jesus has a lesson to teach her. When he replies, 'Why do you involve me?', Jesus is reminding his mum that his ministry isn't hers to direct. He will only get involved with what God tells him to get involved in. It is God's decision when Jesus' hour has come, not Mary's.

Mary humbly accepts this rebuke, but Jesus' answer also confirms her suspicions. Jesus hasn't said that he can't do what she's suggesting, he's just said that it isn't her decision whether he does. So, Mary takes another giant leap of faith, and, despite Jesus' rebuke, she says to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' (v5).

Mary's faith is rewarded as God had decided that this was a moment for Jesus to reveal his glory. There are six stone water jars nearby which each hold 80 to 120 litres of water, and Jesus tells the servants to fill each of them to the brim. We're talking about 500 to 700 litres of water. Which they do, and then Jesus says to the servants, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." Which, again, they do, and at some point between the filling of the jars and cup reaching the master of the banquet, Jesus miraculously transforms this water into wine. And not just any wine. Listen to what the master of the banquet says. 'Then he called the bridegroom aside 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.'" (v9-10). The bridegroom was facing major disgrace and maybe more, but he instead finds himself praised and honoured. Jesus has saved this wedding. This could have been the wedding where they ran out of wine, but instead it's the wedding where the bridegroom saved his best wine till last.

*How Does This Miracle Reveal Jesus' Glory?*

So that's what Jesus did, and John claims that this reveals something glorious about him. So, what does this miracle actually reveal about him? I have two answers to that question. Jesus is powerful and Jesus is compassionate.

### *Jesus Is Powerful*

If you were to read the Bible like a novel, you would come across several powerful people before you got to this story. Moses struck the Nile River with his staff, and it turned into blood. Samson had supernatural strength. Elijah brought a young boy back to life. Elisha cured Naaman's leprosy by sending him to bathe in the Jordan River. But these men were not powerful in themselves. Moses was following a command from God, Samson's strength was a gift from God, Elijah asked God to bring the boy back to life, and a healed Naaman recognised that, "There is no God in all the world except in Israel." (2 Kings 5:15).

In comparison, Jesus doesn't reach out to God for help. He doesn't need to because he is God himself. As Paul tells us in Colossians, 'The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.' (Colossians 1:15-16). Jesus doesn't need to touch the water or pray over it or stage some visible ritual because he can just will the water to change. He can just decide the water should become wine and it will, and it does. He was the one who created water in the first place. I think the 17<sup>th</sup> century clergyman Richard Crashaw captures this beautifully. He wrote that 'the water saw its God and blushed.'

It usually takes vines, grapes, winepresses and fermentation to turn water into wine, but Jesus skips that whole process. He changes the chemical makeup of the water in a heartbeat. This is not normal. This is godly power. This is godly power at its most unmistakable and uncomplicated.

But Jesus didn't turn one cup of water into wine. Jesus provided enough wine for the rest of the celebration. Which we assume was the contents of the six jars, about 500-700 litres. That's about 800 bottles of wine. And remember that Jesus produced the very best wine. So, we're talking about thousands of pounds worth of wine. God's own power is not just miraculous, it is unmatched and incomparable.

Jesus is not a magician. He is not merely a prophet with God on his side. He is God himself. This miracle reveals that Jesus is supremely powerful in his own right.

### *Jesus Is Compassionate*

So, Jesus is powerful, he is mighty and transcendent. But Jesus is also compassionate. Jesus doesn't have to deal with this issue. It's not his problem to deal with. He was invited to this wedding like the rest of the guests. He could have ignored the issue and enjoyed the party while it lasted.

But that's not who Jesus is. This is the man who had compassion on hungry crowds and fed them. In Matthew 9, we're told that 'Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.' (Matthew 9:35-36). Jesus will not avoid the issue in front of him. Jesus knows what horrible shame the bridegroom will have to endure and so he steps in to save the day.

But Jesus' compassion extends beyond simply stepping in and solving the issue. There's something about the way Jesus helps that is filled with tender grace. Jesus could have announced that there was a problem, brought out the jars, and transformed the water in front of everyone. The party can continue, hallelujah! But then everyone would find out about the lack of wine, and the bridegroom would still have to suffer the embarrassment.

So, instead, Jesus keeps everything under wraps. Think about how few people know about this miracle. In verse 9, we read that the master of the banquet 'did not realise where [the wine] had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.' And later in verse 11, 'the disciples believed in him' so we assume they knew. Outside of the servants, the disciples, and Jesus' mother, no one else knows what happened at that wedding. If the master of the banquet didn't know, I doubt anyone else did.

Now put yourself in the shoes of the bridegroom. Maybe he knows he didn't buy enough wine, or maybe he couldn't afford enough wine, or maybe he just underestimated how much he would need. He could be nervously awaiting the reveal, or he has no idea what's coming his way. Either way, imagine his surprise when the master of the banquet calls him over and praises him for serving the best wine last rather than first. This wasn't normal practice. Whatever the bridegroom had planned, it certainly wasn't that.

For mine and Tori's wedding, we ordered a bunch of pizza for the reception. It was great. But can you imagine how surprised I'd be if, rather than a pizza delivery man, a full kitchen staff and catering team turned up and started serving a four-course meal? And I certainly wouldn't be complaining.

Where the bridegroom would have been embarrassed and disgraced, his reputation is inconspicuously saved, and he is even undeservedly praised for going above and beyond. Such is the compassion and grace of Jesus.

### *Why Should I Believe in Jesus?*

So, we've considered what Jesus did and what it revealed about him but remember how John finishes this story. '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*.'

Now Jesus' disciples are already following him at this point. Granted it's only been a couple of days, but they already believe in him. So, when John writes, 'his disciples believed in him,' he's saying that this miracle either confirmed what they already knew

about Jesus, or it introduced them to something new about him. Either way, the result is the same, their faith was strengthened.

So, whether you are a Christian or not, this miracle has implications for all of us. The point of Jesus' glory being revealed is that our faith grows, whether we believe in Jesus already or not. And that brings us to our final question. Why should I believe in Jesus?

And my answer to that question is the same as before. It is worth believing in Jesus because he is powerful and compassionate. But I'm not just talking about the power and compassion Jesus revealed here. We can't benefit from the wine Jesus made, but we do have the benefit of knowing the whole story. We know that Jesus' power and compassion extends far beyond saving weddings. Jesus' power and compassion saves us from our sins.

Human beings do have incredible power. We live in an incredible world filled with immense talent. You may have heard of the Swedish pole vaulter Armand Duplantis who broke his own world record for the 11<sup>th</sup> time this year. I'm sure you've heard of the astronauts who arrived back on earth last week. They were up there for 286 days and, I didn't realise, they were only supposed to be there for 8!

We somehow keep expanding the realms of human possibility but there is one crucial thing that humans will never be able to do. We cannot make ourselves right with God.

The Bible tells us that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.' (Romans 3:23). We are imperfect people. We fall drastically short of God's wonderful standard. And most of the time, we deliberately fall short. We lack the power to reach God's standard, but we also rebelliously fight against it. That's what it means to be a sinner.

So, we shouldn't be surprised that the Bible tells us there are repercussions. Football fans may remember the 2019 League Cup final where Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga refused to be substituted. He refused to follow his manager's instruction, so he was fined and dropped for the following game.

Our repercussions are much more severe. Romans 6:23 tells us that the 'the wages of sin is death.' This death is more than just a physical death, it is a spiritual death. We are separated from God now whilst we live and forevermore after our bodies die. We are cut off from his goodness and justly left to bear the consequences of our actions.

You can see how powerless we are. However hard we may try; we will always be sinners. There's no amount of good that can undo or overturn the wrong we have done. And we are powerless in the face of our punishment. We deserve it. There's nothing we can say or do in our defence.

But Romans 5:6 tells us that 'when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.' Here's where Jesus' power and compassion are ultimately revealed. We don't have the power to make ourselves right with God, but Jesus does. And he was more than willing to help.

In the ultimate act of selfless love, Jesus took on death for our sake. Jesus went to cross, he bore our sins on himself and died to fulfil their punishment. 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.' (1 Peter 2:24).

But death's only power is over those who deserve it. Death is the price of sin, and Jesus wasn't a sinner. 1 Peter 2:22 says, 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' So, the Bible then tells us that 'God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.' (Acts 2:24). Death couldn't hold him because he was innocent. So Jesus rose to life, conquering death for all those who believe in him. 'Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' (2 Timothy 1:10). And so, Paul can proclaim, 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

It's all well and good having the power to do something but how often do we see those in power not using their power for good. Jesus could have stayed in the glory of heaven, but he decided to endure a human existence and ultimately die for us out of the immense kindness in his heart. Jesus himself said, "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." (John 10:17-18).

Is this not the sort of man we want to believe in? Is this not the God we want to believe in? Why should we believe in Jesus? Because he has the power to defeat death and save us from our sins, and the compassion to do it himself.

### *Conclusion*

'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.' (John 2:11). Do you believe in Jesus this morning?

If you don't then hear the words of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:26). Jesus has paid for your sins and overcome death for your sake. Everlasting life is available to you if you simply believe. He is worth believing in.

If you do believe in Jesus, then remember that he has a special compassion for his people. He cares about all our suffering and will resolve those issues in his timing. Isaiah 42:3 says, 'A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.'

And don't forget to meditate on Jesus willingly dying for us to reconcile us to God. We must repeatedly preach the gospel to ourselves.

'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.' (1 Peter 1:3-4). Amen.