

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.
You may be seated.

So we lead off with the Gospel of John and the wedding feast of Cana and the turning of water to wine. John is the only one that records this. We don't find it in any of Matthew, Mark, or Luke. So we only have this record from John. And John is a Gospel of deep symbolism and connection. Everything has a purpose, everything has a sign, everything has a meaning behind it. And so John makes it very clear that this event, it really did take place and it took place as it is described, but it has such deep significance beyond what we read in the passage.

A lot of times, I think when we first read this, when we first hear about it, the question is, out of all of the things that Jesus could have done for his first miracle, you would've thought he would've done something a little bit more spectacular, like raise somebody from the dead or heal somebody who's blind. That would've really caused some attention to be drawn to Jesus and His message. I mean, sometimes it feels like this is sort of a, I don't know, secondary miracle. I mean comparing to raising somebody from the dead or healing the blind or the lame, this seems kind of mundane in some respects. But it's not the miracle that took place that is important. It's why it took place, what happened when it took place, and what it points to in the future. The significance of Cana cannot be underscored enough. I'm going to try to unpack all of this to you, but I'm not sure I'm going to get everything. So let's just dive into this today.

First off, we begin with, "On the third day." Now that probably has some significance. Where else do we hear about the third day?

Resurrection.

The resurrection. Exactly. So he begins his events, and not only this, this is part of a larger grouping where this is also the sixth day. So John begins describing the events that are going on in Jesus life, and this ends up being the sixth day as well as of earlier events and the third day of this particular event that he's talking about here. So he is already pointing us to creation, six days of creation where Jesus comes to bring a new creation. And how does He come to bring that new creation? He brings it on the third day when He rises from the dead. So already those of us who know the full story are getting ready to see how this points to Christ and His resurrection and His crucifixion and His whole ministry and the new life that we are going to begin and the new creation that we look forward to when He comes again in all of His glory. All of this is packed in in those few little words, "On the third day." We haven't even gotten through the first sentence yet, and the imagery is deep and abiding.

"So there was a wedding feast of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was here." Now, this again is the only time that Mary shows up, and she's not called Mary, she's called the mother of Jesus. She shows up here and only one other time, at the foot of the cross. So again, we're to see this connection. When we read John, he only records Mary's presence here and of the crucifixion. And remember, John is the disciple that brought Mary into his house, when Jesus on the cross said, "Here is your mother, here is your son." This is the John that is writing the gospel. And it's interesting, even the language connects us because when Mary or the mother of Jesus finds out there's no wine, she goes to Jesus and she says, "They have no wine." And you'd think, well, Jesus would say something. But what does he say? He says, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

Now what in the world is going on there? First off, it's little odd of Jesus to say mother. You would think he'd say mom or something like that. Instead, he says woman, as if she's anybody else out there. Now, this is not Jesus saying, "Woman, what does this have to do with me?" That's not how he's saying it, okay? So don't get that imagery in your mind. That's not how he's presenting this. The word that he uses is a term of respect and reverence in the Hebrew, but it's not as intimate as mother, partially because again, what are we seeing here? This is the beginning of the ministry of Christ. It's going to be fulfilled on the cross. And so Mary, rather than being a unique individual in the life of Jesus, is a woman of respect, but she's with everybody else. She is need of the gifts that Jesus is going to bring as much as everyone else. So what he's saying here is not, "Oh, this is a private conversation between me and mom." But he's hinting at and already leading us to guiding us to think about this as a broader conversation for all people.

And he says, "What does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." Well, what is the hour of Christ? What is His hour? His hour, the main event, the main focus of the life of Christ is of course the death on the cross and His resurrection. And so when He says, "Mother, what does this have to do with me?" In other words, he's saying, "Pay attention. What does this have to do to me?" And we should be asking, what does this have to do with Jesus? It's a question that should lead us to look for more information. He's not dismissing her. He's telling her, "Think about this. This is more than just what you're asking. There's more going on here." And that's what He's telling us. What does this have to do with me? It has everything to do with Him. His last hour has not yet come, but it will come. And this is the beginning of it. This is setting the stage for what is to come.

When Mary shows up again at the cross, how does Jesus address Mary? "Woman, this is your son. Son, this is your mother." He addresses her in the very same way. The only time she shows up and he says the same thing, the same address, woman. This is for all people. This is pay attention, in other words. And so they have no

wine, but she says, "Do whatever he says." Because she knows he's going to do something because He has the authority, He has the power to do it. She doesn't know what, but she's looking forward to unpacking and discovering what Jesus is going to do.

So He tells the servants to fill these water jars up to the brim. Now interestingly enough, these are massive jars, 20 to 30 gallons. Again, when He turns the water into wine, it's not just like a scoop full. It's 120 to 150 gallons of really, really good wine. That's amazing. It's more than they could possibly ever use up, again, signifying the abundance and the overwhelming blessings that God promised to us. We could never exhaust the love of God. And it's hinted at again in this turning the water to wine.

But what are these jars? Notice it says they are stone jars. Normally when you have a bottle of wine, at least in those days, it was in a clay jar. That was what was used for eating and drinking was clay. And when you use clay once, it had to be destroyed because it housed bacteria and all this other stuff. So it could only be used once. But these are not clay jars, which are temporary and can be broken, these are stone jars. They're solid. They're meant to do something for a long time. And they're jars of water that are used for the Jewish rite of purification. They weren't used for drinking water. They were used for the ceremonial washings that were done and required in the Old Testament. And these are the jars that he is using. And now he's saying they need to be filled up to the brim. They weren't filled up, they weren't fully accomplishing their task until they were fully filled.

And then they were given a new task by Christ when He told them to fill and then give to the steward. See, these stone jars of purification are a sign and a symbol of the Old Testament and the role that the law of God and the Old Testament plays in providing for a temporary purification of humanity until the fullness of the purification of God was going to come, which was of course Christ Jesus. All of the sacrifices that were done in the Old Testament, all of the ceremonial washing and the ceremonial eating and all of those laws were temporary. They were pointing to Christ. They were not the promise, but they were pointing to what the promise was. They were a placekeeper for the hope that was to come in Christ Jesus.

And now Jesus uses them and replaces the water with wine. So the water is a symbol of the Old Testament promises pointing to Christ. And water has always been significant, even in the Old Testament as a means of purification. The flood itself purifies the land, the whole world. And then Peter then connects later on to baptism. And then same thing with the going through the Red Sea. The people were saved by God and they were purified through the waters. And then later on when they enter the promised land again through the waters of the Jordan.

Naaman, who had leprosy, dipped in the Jordan seven times and was made clean. Water has this purification element to it, especially spiritually. And so this is the purification of the Israelites waiting for the fullness of Christ to come.

But also the water is the beginning of our life with Christ. It is the beginning of our purification when God's word is placed upon us in our baptisms and we are made His children, we are washed in the waters of baptism and crucified. But that washing is not just water. Water cannot do the cleansing of our sins. We need something greater. We need something better. And what do we get? We get the blood of Christ, because we are washed in the blood of Christ and made clean, which is connected to the waters of baptism. And here we have the wine connected to the water. And yes, you are to see this sacramentally. Where else do we hear about wine for the purification of our souls? In the Lord's Supper when we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ in with and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, or you could say for the purification of our souls.

And so these jars from water to wine is a sign and a symbol and a statement of Christ that the old has gone and the new has come. The old covenant has been fulfilled in the new, which is, "Me and my blood. And my blood will purify you for all times. And it is abundant, it is tasteful, it is joyful. It is great beyond compare." And how many times do we talk about the wedding feast, the banquet it is to come. That's how heaven is described, as a wedding feast. A wedding feast? How does he start his ministry? At a wedding feast to help us to see what we're looking forward to. The wedding feast that is with Him for all eternity.

See, this is a sign of the glory of God. It is a sign to be understood as symbolic of everything that God is going to be doing from this point on, leading up to the crucifixion, and finally, the confidence that we find in the resurrection. It is all here. And it's always been talked about. Even in Isaiah, we have this reading where God is going to make Israel His bride and He is the bridegroom to come, and the parable of course of the bridegroom coming to receive his bride. Even in Ephesians where we have the conversation about, "Wives submit to your husbands and husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church." And then what does he say at the end of that? But I'm not talking about human relationships. I'm talking about God and his church.

See, our marriage is a symbol and a sign of the relationship of God. We submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. We as a church submit to Christ because He is our bridegroom and we the church are his bride. And we submit because He has protected us, He has loved us, He has saved us. And so in our marriage relationship, it's just a sign. It's a means by which we demonstrate how much we trust God, that we are willing to submit to each other, and we are willing to respect and love each other because it points us to what God does for us.

And now that He has done all of this, now that we know the Bridegroom has come and He has brought His bride, The church through His blood to purify us and to make us holy and beautiful in the eyes of God, precious in His sight, as we said last week, now we're called to take that gift and to live it out. To serve Him with joy and Thanksgiving. A husband and wife love to care for each other and do good things for each other, to demonstrate their love for one another, to build up the relationship. It's the same thing with God. He does and gives all good things to us. And what are we called to do? To give back for His glory, to serve one another so that they might know, the people out there who do not know the love of God, who are not purified by Christ, or who don't know that they're purified by Christ and don't want to be, to let them know they need it, that they are loved, they are precious in the eyes of God.

So we are called each and every one of us to serve God in the vocation that he has given to us. Not because we must. Not because if we don't serve Him, He won't love us. But because He has already loved us, we then seek to show our love back to Him by loving Him and loving our neighbor. And so whatever gifts he has given to you, use them for the glory and honor of God. Whether they be teaching or serving or whatever else your gifts might be, they are there to praise God and to serve your bridegroom and to give Him glory and praise and thanksgiving, because on the third day, he accomplished our salvation. On the third day, we know we will rise from the dead, just as Christ rose from the dead. His mission is complete. His hour has come for His glory, and for our benefit. May His grace, his mercy, and his love being abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.