

Jesus' First Miracle: Faith Reassured

Scripture Reading: John 2:1-12

Text: John 2:1-12

Our Savior begins His ministry in a small way. **He doesn't seek glory from men, but demonstrates His glory that is inherent in Him, as the only Begotten Son of the Father.** Jesus begins to further confirm that which was just announced over the last couple of days by performing a miracle in a quiet, out-of-the-way town called Cana. Cana was also the hometown of Nathanael, who had just declared the day before that Jesus was **"the Son of God, the King of Israel."** **What was announced by John the Baptizer, and then Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel is now being confirmed in a way that strengthens his small band of disciples' faith without the public being aware of its occurrence.** But the miracle that was performed here at this small wedding party was not just for His disciples' benefit; it was for ours, also.

As we look at John Chapter 2, verses 1 through 12 there are many truths and gems that could be drawn from this passage; however, this morning we will only look at two aspects of the miracle that is recorded for us here. **The first aspect is found in verses 1 through 5.** In these verses we find the truth that the miracles Jesus worked were done not at the whim of others, or for entertainment, or for mere convenience, but were a significant aspect to His ministry and are done for the purpose of

demonstrating who He is, and confirming the faith of those who belong to Him; both then for His disciples, and for all who believe in Him with true faith throughout the ages. **The second aspect to Jesus' first miracle** that we will look at this morning is the nature and the manner in which He performed the miracle, which are found in verses 6 through 11.

Though Jesus could have worked miracles before, making them the common actions of his life as He grew up and prepared for His three-year ministry, He waited until an appropriate time to begin to confirm with signs, who He was. **The miracles that Jesus performed were designed with a special purpose in mind; they were the sacred and solemn seals of His doctrine.** It is for this reason He waits until He begins His preaching ministry to confirm the truths that He taught and the claims that were made concerning who He was.

Jesus' first miracle occurred in the small obscure town of Cana in Galilee, far from Jerusalem, which was the public center of religious activity. By beginning His miracle in this way, Jesus demonstrates His desire to honor the lowly and not the so-called religious elite of Jerusalem. Matthew notes, **"His doctrine and miracles would not be so much opposed by the plain and honest Galileans as they would be by the proud and prejudiced rabbis, politicians, . . . at Jerusalem."**

It was God's eternal purpose that brought Jesus to Cana, to a wedding party that was most likely for a poor friend of the family or relative. **In**

the Providence of God, Jesus and His new disciples were invited to this wedding party; and that for a purpose; the purpose to strengthen their faith by performing a miracle in private, in the presence of His disciples and a few others. So it was that according to God's good purposes that after a while and before the celebrating was to end, the wine ran out.

The significance of the wine running out before the end of the wedding party is not entirely known with much certainty. However, it is reasonably assumed by the reaction of Jesus' mother that it was most likely considered a disgrace upon the bridegroom, or that it would be considered disrespectful to the guests. **Either way**, running out of wine was of such great concern to Jesus' mother that Mary expresses her concern to Jesus in verse 3 of our text. Calvin suggests that it may be doubtful that she expected or asked anything from Jesus to remedy the situation, since He had not performed any miracles up to this point. Perhaps, by informing him of the lack of wine, Mary was advising Jesus to give some pious exhortations which would have the effect of preventing the guests from considering the lack of wine as a sign of disregard for them by the bridegroom, and at the same time provide some relief of disgrace on the part of the bridegroom. **However**, Jesus' reply leads me to think that Mary was expecting more, and that she knew that Jesus, being the Son of God was capable of remedying the situation, though Jesus had not demonstrated publicly that particular gift.

Jesus responded to His mother, saying in verse 4 of our text, **“Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.”** At first reading one might think that Jesus was being disrespectful in His reply to His mother. **On the surface, addressing one’s mother, as “woman,” in my opinion and in the opinion of many others, including my mother, would have been unacceptable.** But to be disrespectful to His mother would be sin; and since Jesus cannot sin, we must travel down a different road, as we consider His response. It is more likely that Jesus was giving a firm, yet loving rebuke to His mother. There are two truths that we learn from Jesus’ rebuke of His mother. **First**, by rebuking her for meddling in a matter that did not concern her, or Him as Christ, we understand that Mary was a sinner, just like you and me, subject to the effects of the curse of Adam, as well as actual sin. Though this is contrary to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, it is evident here that Jesus is rebuking His mother for involving herself and Her Son in something for which they were not responsible. **We also saw this truth** concerning his mother and father in Luke 2:49, when Jesus, as a child, reminds his anxious parents that He was where He should be doing His Father’s business.

The second truth we learn from this loving rebuke is that Jesus does not minister at the whim of His mother. This is especially seen when He tells her in His response, **“My hour has not yet come.”** The hour of performing public miracles had not come, which indicates that Jesus performed His miracles according to the command of His Father in heaven,

not His earthly mother. **The works that Jesus did were not done from a whim, or at the call of someone's request, just because they wanted a miracle done; Jesus worked miracles for a reason and did them as His heavenly Father had given them to Him to do.**

We learn this from John Chapter five, verse 36, where Jesus says, "**But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish -- the very works that I do -- bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.**" Jesus only did those works that were given to Him to do by His heavenly Father, and He worked the miracles for the reason that they bear witness of who He is; that is, the Son of God, and that He was sent by the Father.

It is interesting to note that the Lord would record in Scripture for us this rebuke, and other events where we see Jesus relating to His mother in a manner that shows He did not give her special privileges above His followers, such as what we read in Luke 8:19-21. Matthew Henry says it this way, "**The Son of God is appointed our Advocate with the Father; but the mother of our Lord was never designed to be our advocate with the Son.**"

In fact, it seems as though the Lord knew that corrupt men would exalt her above the honor due her as the one who bore the Son of God by ascribing to her the attributes that uniquely belong to Jesus, as true man and true God; that He was without sin, and that He is our only Mediator between God and man. These blasphemers and idol worshippers would have us

believe that Mary was without sin and is our mediator between Jesus and us. **However**, the rebuke that is recorded for us in the verse before us in the Gospel of John teaches us to the contrary. In answering the question as to why Jesus calls His mother, '**woman**,' Calvin provides us with the following application: "**Christ, therefore, addresses his mother in this manner, in order to lay down a perpetual and general instruction to all ages, that his divine glory must not be obscured by excessive honor paid to his mother.**"

But Jesus does the miracle anyway. Why would He rebuke His mother for meddling in other people's affairs and asking Him to remedy a situation that is of no concern of His; **then**, turn around and work a miracle anyway? Doesn't this prove that Jesus did do what His mother had advocated on behalf of the bridegroom? **The answer is simply 'no!'** Later in His earthly ministry, Jesus made it clear that He was only going to perform the miracles that the Father had given Him to do, and that the miracles were for the reason of demonstrating who He was and that He was sent by the Father to do a specific task. **None of these things had anything to do with His mother's request and her concern that the wine had run out at the wedding party.**

Mary submits to Jesus' loving rebuke not knowing what He will do for she knew that she had overstepped her bounds. **So it was**, she simply tells the servants in verse 5, "**Whatever He says to you, do it.**" **Jesus was going to remedy the situation by performing a miracle**, but it was

going to be done quietly and privately for the benefit of his disciples, not to save face for the bridegroom, **nor** would it be done in submission to His mother's request. A miracle was going to be done because it was appointed by the Father, and because the Son does the work of the Father. The invitation to the wedding party to both Jesus and His disciples; the running out of wine; indeed the whole circumstance was arranged by the Father that Jesus' new disciples, and us also, may behold the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father (1:14). This leads us to the second aspect to Jesus' first miracle; **that is**, the nature and manner of the first miracle that Jesus performed, which we find in verses 6 through 11 of our text.

In verses 6 through 8 we read, "Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷ Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And He said to them, "Draw *some* out now, and take *it* to the master of the feast." And they took *it*."

The nature of the miracle that Jesus performs at the wedding feast was the changing of one substance into another totally different substance, whereby the substance of water acquired a new form, and possessing all the attributes and qualities of wine. **There were no grapes involved in the transformation, nor was there any time lapse for grape juice to ferment. The water truly became wine, instantaneously.**

In the Old Testament we read of similar miracles done by the Lord through Moses, where the substance of one object became something entirely different. We read in Exodus Chapter 4 that when Moses threw down his staff, it turned into a snake; **then**, when he picked it back up it returned its original substance, a wooden staff. Later, at the direction of the Lord, Moses struck the water from the river of Egypt, and it turned into blood; not a blood-like substance but actual life-giving blood with red and white corpuscles. **In the same way**, the nature of the miracle that Jesus works is the transformation of water into actual wine. However, unlike Moses, who is an agent of the Lord, Jesus is the one who actually worked the miracle. It is by His power as the Son of God, according to His divine nature that He turns the water into wine.

Psalm 104:14 and 15 we read concerning the Lord God, "**He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the service of man, That he may bring forth food from the earth, ¹⁵and wine *that* makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make *his* face shine, And bread *which* strengthens man's heart.**" The Lord God is the One who controls all of nature; He controls the grass and vegetation that grows, the food that is produced from the earth, and the wine that makes glad the heart of man. **So it is that by turning the water into wine Jesus demonstrated that He is the Incarnate God of all nature, who made the earth for the benefit of mankind.** This now leads us to the manner in which Jesus performed His first miracle.

In verses 6 through 8 we see what Jesus did to transform the water into wine. **In fact**, the process of the miracle is so unremarkable that it would be easy to overlook just how remarkable it actually was. There was no ceremony, no **"magic"** words spoken, no wand waved over the water pots; there wasn't even a prayer offered up, as Elijah did on Mt. Carmel.

The instructions given by Jesus to the servants seemed unusual, or should I say, casual. They were to simply fill with water the water pots used in the Jewish purification rites. The servants might have been thinking, **"What does this have to do with there being no wine. But who are we? We will do as we are told. In fact, we will fill the containers to the brim."** We might note that the containers used in the miracle were for a purpose that was unrelated to wine; they were water pots used for the purpose of the Jews to perform the purification rite before they reclined to eat, as was the requirement according to Mosaic Law. **They had never contained wine, only water had been held within their walls.** We also note from verse 6 that they were large pots that held 20 or 30 gallons each. So if we did the math, these six water pots represented a total of 120 to 180 gallons. There was a lot of water in those pots; it would have taken a long time to produce that much wine through normal means. **Not to mention**, it would have taken a great deal of money; much less, effort and time to purchase that much wine in such a small obscure town as Cana.

Having filled the water pots with wine, Jesus immediately instructs the servants to draw up the contents of one of the waterpots and take it to the **“master of the feast.”** **The amount of effort that Jesus exerted was less than me blinking my eyes, or lifting my own arms.** The manner of this miracle reminds me of the miracle that was worked by the Lord through Elisha in the Old Testament, when he told Naaman in 2 Kings Chapter 5 to go dip himself in the filthy, dirty Jordan River three times. Just as with Naaman, so also in the miracle that Jesus performed in our text, one would have thought that there should have been some kind of ceremony, the waving of the hands, calling out with a loud voice the name of God, or some other dramatic procedure. **Yet,** there was no such melodrama; it wasn't necessary. Instead, our Savior sits in His place, doesn't say a word, but merely wills it; and transforms the water into wine. **On occasion Jesus does work miracles, using words and some kind of process.** But He does so for the sake of those who stood by, as we learn from John 11:42, and elsewhere in Scripture. In the case that is before us this morning, the miracle was not a public miracle, but private. The disciples who stood watching what took place did not need to hear a word, or observe a ceremony. **On the contrary,** a ceremony, or a prayer would have been a distraction to the power that Jesus demonstrated in working the miracle in this instance, and would have most likely lessened the impact it had on the disciples.

So confident was Jesus in the first miracle that He performed that He did not even test the wine to make sure He got it right, or that it was of

high quality. He knew what the water pots now contained and that the wine was of a superior quality to that which had just recently ran out. He told the servants in verse 8 of our text, “**Draw *some* out now, and take *it* to the master of the feast.**” **Jesus had no doubt** about the success of His first miracle. He didn’t even ask the servants to give it to Him first to test it, but to give it the master of the feast, who would be the first to taste the fine quality of wine that had been miraculously produced by Jesus.

The master of the feast took note of the better quality of wine that the servants brought to him, and goes to the bridegroom to compliment him on the superiority of the wine, which he thought the bridegroom had held back until the end of the wedding party, or feast. Not knowing about the miracle that Jesus just performed he says to the bridegroom in verse 10 of our text, “**Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the *guests* have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!**” While the dignity of the bridegroom had been preserved, and even raised a bit, by the miracle performed by Jesus, this was only an overflow of the blessing of God’s grace that was demonstrated on that day. **The real purpose of Jesus working this miracle is revealed to us in the next verse of our text in John Chapter 2.**

We read in verse 11, “**This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.**” The irrefutable signs began in an obscure, small town in the northern region of Galilee. They began not with pomp and ceremony, not

with drama, but quietly and in an unremarkable way. **Yet, it was most remarkable.** No other human being could have worked such a miracle, only Jesus Christ, who is very God and very man.

Transforming the water into wine was just the beginning of the irrefutable signs that Jesus would provide to those whom the Father had given to Him. **It was done according to God's perfect will and eternal decree, not at the request of Jesus' mother.** The miracle worked here was the beginning of signs in order that the glory that belonged to Jesus would be manifested to His disciples, so that their faith may be confirmed. **By transforming the water into wine without ceremony, drama, or prayer,** Jesus demonstrated that He was the Author of the miracle, not the agent through which the Lord worked, such as Moses, Elijah, and others, including the apostles.

Finally, this miracle was done to strengthen the faith of the disciples, a faith that already existed, but was in need of being strengthened and increased. Jesus knew that though the disciples had true faith it still needed to be strengthened; and the miracle He performed did just that. In fact, all of Jesus' miracles served to reaffirm and strengthen the disciples' faith.

But how is our faith strengthened? **How is our faith confirmed?** We do not have miracles that are performed by Jesus today? **Or, do we?** There are many ways in which Jesus confirms and strengthens our faith. But let's

consider two ways that are relevant to us today. **First**, there are many miracles that occur each day of our lives, which sadly get unnoticed; or worse, ascribed to the work of man's will or effort. Every day there is someone who is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, transforming a heart of stone to a heart of flesh; a person dead in trespasses and sin raised up to a new life together with Christ; this is contrary to the nature of man, who is conceived and born in sin. **Everyday**, there are those who come to Christ confessing their sins; this too is not natural for man to do, but is a miracle performed upon the heart of man. Everyday, two people in Christ are reconciled and fellowship is restored; this is also a miracle, for we are not inclined to be reconciled with one another, but to hate one another, and seek revenge upon those have offended us and caused us hurt and harm in some way. **It is a miracle when a person goes through agonizing trials and tribulations, and yet trusts in the sovereignty, goodness, and wisdom of God to work out their suffering for their good and God's glory.** It is a miracle when one commits one's life to serving others in Christ, for we are inclined by nature to be self-serving, and too proud to serve others. It is a miracle to confess from our heart that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, for it is only by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the Word that we can make such a confession. **So**, let's be strengthened in our faith in these miracles that abound around us; miracles that Jesus works in you and me everyday to confirm the faith that we have in Him.

The second way in which our faith is confirmed is through the sacraments. The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments, which consist of only 2, not many sacraments as false teachers and heretics would have us believe. **The sacraments don't give us faith;** they only confirm the faith that has been worked in us by the Holy Spirit in the hearing of the gospel. The use of the sacraments is correctly understood to **"more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the Gospel, namely, that of free grace He grants us the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life for the sake of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross."** **"The Holy Spirit teaches in the Gospel and assures us by the holy sacraments that our whole salvation stands in the one sacrifice of Christ made for us on the cross"** (H.C. #'s 66 & 67). It is because Jesus has given us the sacraments as signs and seals of His promise of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Him; it is only disbelief in Christ that keeps us from embracing the assurance of His promises that He has graciously given to us.

So it is, just as Jesus confirms the already existing faith of His disciples in the performance of His first miracle at the wedding feast, so also Jesus confirms our faith in Him in the miracles that He works in us and witness in others every day. **In addition,** He has also given us the sacraments to confirm the faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel.

Let's, therefore, be strengthened in our faith, for Jesus is the only one who is the originator of miracles, as we saw today in the passage before us. **Further**, as we look to Him for all things let us rejoice in His salvation that He obtained for us on the cross, and applied to all of us who belong to Him, to all of us who confess with our whole heart in true faith that Jesus is the Christ, the only Begotten Son of God, the King of Israel; **God manifested in flesh**, who is glorified in His miracles; especially, in His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

May God confirm to us this day and everyday the faith He has worked in us by the Holy Spirit so that our faith may be strengthened and increased so that we serve Him with our whole heart according to His written word alone all the days of our lives to the glory of God – **To Whom alone belong all glory, honor, wisdom and power, forever!**

AMEN!