

**1 Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. 2 Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." 4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. 8 Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did. 9 When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, he did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew). The master of the banquet called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have had plenty to drink, then the cheaper wine. You saved the good wine until now!" 11 This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.**

### See Jesus in the Simple Things of Life

When a television series is first started, the creators want to make sure that the first episode grabs people's attention; otherwise people will tune out and not watch anymore. When you are interviewing for a job, the first impression is very important. You would think that if Jesus were to plan His first miracle, He'd want to start with the resurrection of Lazarus perhaps. But instead, He turns water into wine at a wedding, in a small little rinky dink town, and most of the people at the wedding don't even realize what He did! But isn't that how God still works yet today? His miracles are often times hidden under things that seem to be chance or coincidence or everyday occurrences that we take for granted. Most of the time people don't even realize what He has done. Maybe that's the problem with so many people's "faith" today, is that they seek God in the big and flashy miracles, while failing to see the hidden ones that happen every day.

Things were changing for Mary. She had to realize it. I can't help but think they talked about it - who Jesus was and what He had come to do. Her personal time with Jesus was over. She didn't get to have Jesus to herself anymore. He had just gathered His disciples right prior to this text. And that's an interesting thing to think about in and of itself. Imagine if your son came home from college and brought 12 young men with him, and they all claimed to be his disciples. This would seem odd, unless you were the mother of Jesus. She would have known Jesus was baptized and that the Holy Spirit had come down on Him. The Father had spoken from above. This is what Jesus was born for. Things were changing quickly. It was time for His public ministry to begin. But Mary wasn't ready to let go.

Mary was at the wedding before Jesus got there. Perhaps they were personal family friends of the bride or groom. Cana wasn't too far from Nazareth, only about 4 miles. They run into a problem, the wine had run out. Now, it's not a major problem. It's not like someone was dying. But it would have been an embarrassment to the bride and groom. Hospitality is very important in eastern countries. You want your guests to feel welcome and well fed. Maybe they weren't very well to do. Maybe they invited too many people. Maybe some people had too much to drink? Who knows? But the problem was there.

So Mary tells Jesus about it. She knows who He is. She knows what He is capable of doing. But Mary is overstepping her bounds a little bit. It would be like my mom coming here to church and telling me how to

preach or what Bible classes to teach. I love her dearly, but she would be overstepping her bounds a bit. Mary, bless her heart, was seemingly asking Jesus to perform a miracle for this young couple. And Jesus somewhat rebukes her for overstepping her bounds. He says to her, **“Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet.”** Doesn’t that address, “Woman,” kind of strike you? I’m not sure that it’s meant to be harsh, but it is a correction I would say. She was trying to use her influence as mother to try and get Him to do something as the Messiah. Jesus has to put some distance between Himself and her, difficult for her as it may be. He has to address her this way as a reminder that she won’t get any preferential treatment in His kingdom when it comes to His office as Christ.

That address and response makes Mary’s response all the more interesting. Even when He corrects her, she still seems undaunted. **His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”** Mary isn’t so bold as to tell Jesus WHAT to do. She simply presents Jesus with the problem. It is as if she knows the nature of Jesus so well, she knows that He’ll do something for them. Think about how many times Mary would have seen her child take care of others and be concerned for people. She KNEW His heart. She knew He was now anointed into His office. She was confident He would do what was needed. So she told the servants to do whatever He said. She had confidence that He would work it out.

Isn’t this a great example for us of how our prayers should be and our faith should be? Know the heart of Jesus. He tells you how it is. He is gentle and humble. (Matthew 11:29) Say, “Jesus, I’m having a problem here. I know you want to help. I know you care deeply about me. This is what the problem is. I know you can figure it out. I’m willing to do whatever you tell me to do. Have at it.” Trust that He knows what He’s doing and He can work it out and He will work it out for your good. He’s not out to get you. He doesn’t want you to fail. He wants to give you what’s best. But if your prayers are only filled with doubt and suspicion, and if when you are praying you really don’t think He wants to help, then what kind of a prayer is that? It’s like James said, **“let him ask in faith, without doubting, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”**

Now remember, Jesus didn’t have to do this. And He could have answered this prayer in any number of ways. It wouldn’t have killed the bride and groom to undergo a little bit of embarrassment. The essence of a wedding is not based on how much alcohol there is to drink. Wine can simply help to lighten the mood and gladden the heart a little bit, as Psalm 104 says. And Jesus could have given them just a little bit of wine - or maybe some cheaper type of wine that wouldn’t be as palatable - kind of as a safeguard so that the people wouldn’t get drunk. But instead Jesus decided to give them at least 120 gallons of wine, and He gave them the best kind of wine as well. He gave them more than enough, trusting them to use their own judgment and wisdom to use this gift with moderation and joy. Just because Jesus gave them plenty of wine, it didn’t mean that He wanted them to get drunk.

How many times does God do this with us? He is more than generous with us. He gives us better than we deserve, and takes the risk of knowing that we may overindulge in the very gifts that He gives us. But even when He knows that we will do that, He doesn’t become cheap with us. He gives to us generously, and works through these gifts to produce hoping that they will produce joy and thankfulness in us. Paul asks us in Romans 2:4, **“do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?”** When I think of all of the sins I’ve committed, and all of the stupid and foolish things I’ve done, yet here I am with a spouse and children and the gift of being able to preach the Word of God and give the sacraments, it leads me to say, “Who am I, that you have been so good to

me?” Someone once asked, “If God gave you everything today that you thanked Him for yesterday, how much would you have?” God wants us to reflect on His goodness, grace and mercy. He gives us more than we deserve, and allows us the freedom to use those gifts responsibly or irresponsibly. Have you thought about that with how you treat your parents or your children? Have you reflected on that with your job or your purchases? Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:17, “**Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.**”

Think also about the meaning of this miracle. Jesus was able to take an ordinary thing like water and turn it into powerful and flavorful wine. He was able to change a potentially embarrassing and shameful situation that would have ended a good night quickly, and turn it into a truly joyous and lasting event. He did this on a much more grand scale through the cross. We who should have no reason to stand before God, but to hide in shame over our sins, He was able to change this whole situation through His death on the cross. We should have been terrified of His coming, but now through our baptism and through faith in Jesus we look forward to it because of how He died for our sins! He is able to take the eating of simple bread and wine and turn it into a beautiful and powerful thing. We receive the body and blood of the Lord for the forgiveness of our sins. He changes this simple food into a powerful and saving meal. Jesus can turn things from bad to good, from weak to powerful, from everyday and uneventful to miraculous and strong! Through baptism He changes us from being sinful and worthless to holy and precious children of God in His eyes!

If you were Mary, wouldn't you have been tempted to shout out, “My son did this! He saved the party!” Wouldn't you have thought that Jesus would have called everyone around Him as He waved His hand over the water and said, “Watch this!” But this all happens so quietly. The wine taster, who is in charge of judging the wine, doesn't even realize what a miracle it is! He knows the ins and outs of good tasting wine, but he is oblivious to where it came from. It reminds me of those who know the ins and outs of nature, yet miss the biggest point - where did it come from? They who search the miracles of creation the most are all oblivious to what has happened. And the only ones who KNOW what happened are the servants, Mary, and the disciples.

Why didn't Jesus at least draw more attention to this miracle so that all the people there KNEW what He had done? Who knows? Maybe they would have assumed Jesus wanted them all to party and get drunk. Maybe they would have then only looked to Him as a cheap type of magic act. Maybe He wanted to save the bride and groom the embarrassment of having run out of wine in the first place. Was Jesus more concerned about their reputation than He was His own? Isn't that what He did on the cross as well?

What we do know is that the results of this miracle were exactly as Jesus wanted for His disciples. **He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.** The disciples were already following Jesus for His teaching. Jesus did this to generate faith in their hearts - so that His disciples would see that He was much more than a Rabbi. He had power. He could work miracles. He could be trusted. They could have faith in Him. He was their Messiah. He was their Savior.

And this is why God gives us so many gifts, so that we learn to rely on Him and come to Him. It might seem small and trivial to come to Jesus for a little bit of extra wine at a party. But if they could see Jesus provide for this little couple in the middle of Cana, then maybe He would be willing and able to take care of the bigger issues as well. And I think with us the argument could be from the greater to the lesser. We are willing to confess that Jesus has conquered death. We trust Him that He has paid for our sins and bought our salvation.

Yet we fail to come to Him for the seemingly smaller miracles, for the things that we don't think He really cares about that much. We fail to seek His advice and counsel when it comes to marriage problems or financial issues. We don't think prayer will really do much good. But if Jesus was willing and able to do this for a little couple in Cana, and if Jesus commands us to "come to Him" about anything that is wearying us, then why don't we? If you trust God with your salvation, then why not trust what He has to say about your budget, or your love life? Why not come to Him first when you are diagnosed with a sickness instead of last, after you've exhausted every avenue of the health system? Even when He seems to be saying "no," don't let that stop you. It didn't stop Mary. She knew Jesus cared. She knew Jesus was willing to help, and He did. Don't we know this too? Even though half of the guests at Cana didn't know where the wine came from, we do! We're still talking about it today.

If there's one thing I've noticed about Michiganders after having lived here for six years, it is that you like your entertainment. It seemed to me that Kansans weren't into their entertainment as much as you are. I'm not saying that to necessarily point the finger. It's just an observation, and it's good to enjoy the things God has given you, as long as it is in moderation. I wish I enjoyed some of these things more than I do. For instance, you are very sports minded. You love watching and cheering for your Tigers, Lions, Red Wings, Spartans and Wolverines. You know your sports and you love talking about them. You love nature too. You love camping. You love snowmobiling. There are some beautiful sights to see up here that I never knew existed. You know your drinks too. You love having a glass of wine, or two, or maybe even more. Might need to be careful with that.

In all of your enjoyment of life and entertainment, don't lose sight of the God who gives it to you! He's working behind the scenes, not because He wants to be invisible, but because He wants to be appreciated and sought: sought for greater things than a glass of wine. He wants to be sought for wisdom, forgiveness and salvation. He shouldn't have to jump and shout and say, "Look at me! I did it! Look at me!" Isn't it obvious? We know that He is the giver of all good things. He wants you to see Him at the center of the wedding. He wants you to see Him as the maker of wine. He wants you to trust Him to provide, and to come to Him in need - every day!

So how are you going to live your life? Isn't that one of the main reasons so many in America go astray? Isn't that why some have left the fellowship of the church? They lose sight of the Giver! They are like the wine taster and the other guests of the wedding, who love the party, but have no clue of the One who has provided the supplies. We see how generous and giving He truly is. God has opened our eyes! We see through the eyes of faith what happens behind the scenes. Keep them open! Live in appreciation to the giver of those gifts, and don't hesitate to come to Him for help, no matter what the situation. Don't forget also to let the world know who this God is through our testimony. We can reveal to them where all of this goodness comes from, so that they too will see the glorious light of Jesus which shines even in the simple things of life. Amen.