

Weddings. I have a daughter. I'm concerned if the day ever arrives. You need the Wedding Dress. Food and drink for 200. Photographers. Flowers. Invitations. Rehearsal Dinner. Hall Rental. Our church secretary gave me a quote of \$10-\$15,000 for a nice wedding. Ug. Kathy, you've got to be kidding. I mean the church is free. The Word of God is free. You don't have to pay me. And the license is what \$20.00. How do we get to \$10,000? Well, you say, this is a day of celebration. A day when you want your friends to totally enjoy themselves. A commitment of one man and one woman before God to spend the rest of their lives together. It's gotta be special. That's gotta cost something. Well, before I get stressed out about weddings, and I think fathers of daughters have it rough today, go back 2000 years. Did you know back in the days of Jesus the wedding celebration lasted 7 days. You had a big procession going around the town, and then traveled from the bride's house to the groom's house for a 7 day celebration. I have trouble with company staying over for 3 days, but 7 days. In addition, you had to feed that group food every day, and have plenty of wine on hand.

And you know it was very important back then, as it is today, to have things run smoothly. No snafus. That is why we have a rehearsal the night before the wedding today. Everything needs to run smoothly. In the days of Jesus, they did not have a rehearsal. It was live and in color for 7 days. And sure enough a major snafu occurred. For some reason, they ran out of wine. Wine was crucial, not for drunkenness, but for what it demonstrated. The presence of wine stated that this was a special day and that all the guests were special guests. It was considered an insult to the guests if the host ran out of food or wine.

How could this happen? Remember these wedding celebrations went on for up to a week. Maybe the couple was poor and could not afford enough wine. Maybe the disciples and Jesus were unexpected guests that they hadn't counted on. Whatever the reason, Mary comes to Jesus, expecting him to do something about it. She says to Jesus, "They have no more wine". Jesus responds back, "Why do you involve me in this? My time has not yet come!"

In essence Jesus is saying, "What common interest do we have in my activity here?" Mary was speaking as his mother, "Heh Jesus, help me avoid embarrassment and dissatisfaction among the guests. Jesus was speaking as the long awaited Messiah. "I am looking for ways to show the world I am the Messiah, the Son of God. I want to strengthen my disciples in their trust in me." So you see, although their purposes were different, a miracle here would satisfy Mary's need as well.

Herein we learn our first truth. Mary took the problem to Jesus before she took it to anyone else. She trusted Jesus and knew that He would help her with her problems. What causes us to think of prayer to Jesus as the last option rather than the first? I can think of two reasons: feelings of independence and insignificance. Sometimes we're independent. We can handle our own life. We will use our power and resources to get us out of this mess. We are self-centered. This spirit that we find in us, shows clearly that we are sinners. We don't want to always give glory to God. We want to handle life our way. But through the snafus and troubles that come our way, God wants to show us the world is broken, out of sync with Him. God wants us to recognize in our troubles in life, how desperately we need Him.

Another reason why we may not run first to Jesus for help is that we feel insignificant. We think, "Sure, Mary can take her problems to Jesus. She's his mother.

He doesn't want to hear my problems. I mean, he's got a universe to run. He's got planets to keep balances and presidents and kings to watch over. He's got wars to deal with and famines to fix. Who am I to tell him about my problems?

I'm glad you asked. Let me tell you who you are. You are an heir of God and co-heir with Christ. You are eternal like an angel. You have a crown that will last forever. You are a holy priest, a treasured possession. You were chosen before the creation of the world. You are destined for praise, fame, and honor, and you will be a holy people to the Lord your God. But more than any of the above—more significant than any title or position—is the simple fact that you are God's child. The Bible says in I John, "The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children." That's why Jesus, the Son of God came. He came to restore us to the family of God. He came so we could once again be children of God.

Jesus wanted to show his disciples and Mary, that he was indeed the Son of God. He was the Messiah. He had divine authority and majesty. He could satisfy not only mankind's physical needs, but also his spiritual needs.."

Take your problems to Jesus, and realize that He will help you. In fact, Jesus will supply you with that deep-seated joy that many be missing in your life. To the Jewish people wine symbolized joy. The Jewish rabbis had a saying, "Without wine there is no joy." At the wedding in Cana their joy had run out! This is a reminder to all of us the emptiness of our life without Christ. If I were to say to you the name, "Earnest Hemmingway" today. You might not know in detail who he was, but most of us would know that he was a famous writer. Hemmingway was a great storyteller. Many of his books are considered to be classics. *The Old Man and The Sea*, a story he wrote while living in Cuba reveal his genius. He was a Nobel Prize recipient. From the very early years of his life he was a person who went for it all. He was drinking long at the natural wine of life. But there came a day when those wines ran out. Early one morning he tiptoed down the basement stairs and unlocked the storage room. It smelled as dank as a grave. He chose a double barreled shotgun with a tight choke. He had used it for years to shoot pigeon's. He took some shells from one of the boxes in the storage room, closed and locked the door, and climbed the basement stairs. He crossed the living room to the front foyer, a shrine-like entryway five feet by seven feet, with oak-paneled walls and a floor of linoleum tile...he slipped in two shells, lowered the gun butt carefully to the floor, leaned forward, pressed the twin barrels against his forehead just above the eyebrows and tripped both triggers. The joy had run out in his life.

There are times when the wine runs out for us too. The joy is dry! A stock broker takes some heavy losses for his clients. His own personal account is dwindling. He turns on his car one morning in the garage, with the doors shut, and dies of carbon monoxide poisoning. Families that were once begun with exuberant joy are now ending in the pain of divorce—why? There is no more joy in the relationship. There are those who have not went to that extreme, but they are not living life, they are just enduring life. They drift from one day to the next. You and I have no resources available within ourselves to replace the joy. Only new wine can come from Jesus Christ.

When we run out of wine ... Jesus can turn the water into wine. Mary came to Jesus and told him of the problem that they were facing. I can just imagine her telling the groom's mother, "You hold on just a minute! I know just what to do with this situation." She came to Jesus and told him...I love her instructions to the servants. "Whatever he

says to you, do it” Just Do It! Jesus took the waterpots that were filled with water for handwashing. When the guest arrived someone would pour some of this water over their hands in a symbolic purification. To eat with unwashed hands would have been a defilement. Jesus took this water and made approx. 180 gallons of wine. What a wedding gift.. It’s interesting to note that Jesus took the water for purification and used it for his first miracle. The water in those pots was merely for an external cleansing. Jesus ministry over the next three years would teach people about an inner cleansing. Jesus stuck to that plan - the plan of salvation that took him to the cross where he shed his blood, blood that has cleansed us from our sins like bleach making the foulest rag clean. But we’re not to think of ourselves as an old rag that has been cleaned up. No! Listen to how God describes us. “You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God” (Isaiah 62:3). Because of the blood of Jesus we are God’s crown! To him we are the best thing he’s created. We are more glorious than the Rockies, more majestic than the oceans! Jesus brings us lasting joy, when we consider that we are God’s crown.

If we look at the first miracle of Jesus we see this truth...Jesus is not just the giver of joy...he is the giver of “abundant” joy. He not only met their immediate need, but he gave an abundance. Jesus did not just make some ordinary wine. No, the wine that he produced was better than that which they had started the celebration with. Plus this wedding was refreshingly different than most weddings, where people were getting drunk. Here the wine was used as a beverage with the meal, not to get drunk on. Further, Jesus didn’t just doctor the water so that it tasted like wine. No, the water in those pots was transformed into the finest wine the people had ever tasted. The truth for us is this— Jesus is not going to just doctor up our lives a little bit. Just put a Band-Aid on our needs—no he wants to transform your life, just like he transformed that water. Someone once said, “Don’t focus on the stone water pots—and miss the whole point—Jesus is about transformation. He turned water into wine; He turns frowns into smiles; he turns whimpers of fear into songs of hope; he turns deserts into gardens, he turns sorrow into joy; he turns sin into grace; death into life. Jesus is all about transforming power. Changing people—that’s what its all about. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

What if the servants had refused to fill the water pots? What if they had said, No way. Or to bring the point closer to home, what if you refuse? What if you identify the problem, take it to Jesus, and then refuse to listen to what His Word says? That’s possible. After all, Jesus is asking us to take some pretty gutsy steps. Money is tight, but he still asks us to give generously. You’ve been offended by someone, but he asks you to forgive the offender. Someone blew the assignment, but He still asks you to be patient. You have this tragedy in your family, and He tells you, it will somehow work for good, although you can’t see the good right now. Will you believe and trust in what the Word of God says? Mary believed and trusted in Jesus in a most difficult time, and Jesus didn’t let her down. We believe and trust in Jesus, and He won’t let us down either.

So go ahead. Tell Jesus what hurts. Talk to Him. He won’t turn you away. He won’t think its silly. Let us approach his throne with confidence. He is the Son of God. He is the Messiah. Has your joy run out today? Jesus wants to transform you! Bring your need to him! Jesus will supply you with what you need for the situation, even more than you ask for.