

Water to Wine: The Miracle of Transformation

Expectations. They're something every single one of us deals with in life. Jesus' mom had a few expectations at a certain wedding. What are some unmet expectations you've had of God in the past? How did you deal with your disappointment?



John 2:1-11 (NIV) 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. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. 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." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Reflections

What does a miracle look like? We all know. A miracle is when someone prays fervently and the cancer is in remission, or the job offer comes or...

But when we look at Jesus' first miracle in John's Gospel, it is all askew. Jesus performs the miracle under duress. The recipient is unaware even of the existence of the miracle. And it is turning water into wine.

His mother brings up the problem "They have no wine". Jesus protests "My hour has not yet come". Mary has watched Jesus grow, so perhaps she is aware of what Jesus can do. She tells the servants "Do whatever he tells you." How very ordinary, servants are always doing what people tell them to do. So the servants are sent to carry water. In those days this was a big part of a servant's job. Carrying 150 gallons of water from even a nearby well is a laborious task. Then they take the water/wine to the steward, just a normal job for a lowly servant. A miracle breaks in.

So what does a miracle look like. It begins with someone noticing a problem. "Ah Samuel we're down to the last three bottles of wine here, what's the protocol when you run out?" Next someone brings

the problem to Jesus and listens for his answer. Then begins real work. The servants haul water and fill the jars. Finally one of the servants brings the water/wine to the steward in faith. Somewhere there was a miracle, but there was also hope, trust, faith, and work.

When we read John, it pays to be aware of the context. John is particularly rich in references to other parts of the Bible. Just before chapter 2 in John we read "You shall see greater things than these." (John 1:50). So the greater things begin with a miracle. John 2 begins "On the third day..." a reference forward to Jesus' resurrection and the new wine of communion.

We also note that the jars are for holding the water for the rites of purification. Perhaps, the old Jewish rites have grown stale. The next time the guests dip in their hands for a ritual wash they are in for a surprise. The familiar water is now wine. We are reminded of our initial contact with Jesus in the water of baptism, now becomes the wine of communion. In the wedding, we are reminded of the "marriage" of the church to Christ.

Then, like now, most of the people surrounding the scene are unaware of the miracle happening in their midst. If we

had been guests at the wedding would we have noticed the miracle? Or would we continue feasting, drinking and talking with the other guests oblivious to the miracle that we had, in fact, tasted. Even now, are there miracles going on about us that we are too busy to recognize?

When Mary brought her problem to Jesus what was she expecting? Did she expect a miracle or did she expect the servants would make a quick trip to the local wine merchant to pick up a few bottles? She had faith that Jesus would handle the problem, and left the method up to him. And what a response, 150 gallons of wine, way more than the situation required.

John tells us this miracle to teach us. The wine of communion is to remind us of Jesus' resurrection. When we pray to Jesus for what we need, he is ready to give more than we imagine. Yet we are still commanded to do as he asks, to carry the water, to serve the guests. In our service, Jesus can imbue the old tired rites with a new spirit.

When we tell Jesus about our problems, what do we expect? When Jesus asks us to fill the jars with water, what is our response?

— Dale Fixsen

Readings

Sunday, May 17

John 2:1-11

When we tell Jesus about our problems, what do we expect? When Jesus asks us to *fill the jars with water*, what is our response?

Monday, May 18

John 1:50

"Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." What do you want to see from Jesus? If Jesus brings the unexpected, what might cause you to miss it?

Tuesday, May 19

Mark 7:3-4; Psalm 24:3-4

In what ways has our "purification" become an empty ritual? How can we really become clean?

Wednesday, May 20

2 Corinthians 11:2

Paul extorts us to be as a pure bride to Christ. How are we made pure? What in your life needs to be examined in the light of purity? How will you respond?

Thursday, May 21

Matthew 28:19

How does Jesus tell us, his servants, to "carry water"? When you have been faithful to do what he commands, what miracles have you seen? What is he asking you to do in faith today?

Friday, May 22

Matthew 9:15-17

In what ways your relationship and communion with Jesus reflected in joy? How is Jesus making you into new wine?

Saturday, May 23

Matthew 26:28

How does Jesus demonstrate the real miracle of the wine? Whom is it for, and why?

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