

Why do You Involve Me? (John 2:1-12)

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A resource I found extremely helpful in prepping this sermon was *The NIV Application Commentary: John*, Gary M. Burge. I'll be quoting this frequently throughout this sermon.

We've heard from John 2:1-12 this morning. From the reading, **What stands out to you?** What catches your attention?

We're going to begin at the end. This is Jesus' first miracle in the book of John, but after the miracle happens, John doesn't refer to it as a miracle. John really does not use the language of "miracle" in the book of John. At the end of what we just heard and read, John describes the incident as this: **What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11)** John refers to these incidents of supernatural power as "signs".

Instead of miracles, John talks about "signs". What these supernatural moments SAY about Jesus are more important than the moments in and of themselves. The book of John gives us 7 signs as a framework, building a case for who Jesus really is. Sign number one is providing wine for a wedding in Cana, which will tell us big things about Jesus.

Weddings are a big deal, and they were a major cultural event in first century Jewish society. For a wedding celebration that goes for days, running out of wine was an extremely embarrassing situation. The situation is of concern to Jesus' mother, Mary. **When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." (John 2:3)** At first this may seem like a meddlesome mom – Mary noticing a problem and bringing it to her son.

But there is a double meaning implied to what Mary is saying. Mary is talking about more than the immediate situation and immediate problem at hand. "They have no more wine" could be more of a statement about society and religion in general. There's "no more wine" at this wedding, but can't the same thing be said about our society and religion?

It would be like if Stephen and I were watching the Cincinnati Bengals football game on TV, and I were to comment, "Cincinnati is terrible!" And Stephen then ponders the words I've said, reflecting, "Cincinnati is indeed terrible. And isn't Cincinnati terrible much like America is terrible, and also Canada, too?" I've been referring specifically to the Cincinnati Bengals football team, but Stephen then takes this as a larger metaphor for Cincinnati, America, Canada, North America - society.

This is what Mary is doing here. This wedding is lacking everything it promises. It's not measuring up. It's out of wine. But so too are the culture and religion that Mary and Jesus find themselves immersed in. The current culture and religion are lacking everything they promise. The current culture and religion are not measuring up. The current culture and religion are "out of wine".

In saying this, realize I am not dumping on Judaism. The sentiment “They have no more wine” can be expressed for present day practices of Christianity as well. Christian faith and practice lacking in what it promises, not measuring up to the grace and love that Jesus has delivered. If we find ourselves not reflecting the goodness and grace given to us by Jesus, we can say of ourselves, “We have no more wine!”

Mary says, “They have no more wine.” Then Jesus responds. **“Woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.” (John 2:4)** I find this to be one of the more mysterious parts of the story. It sounds like a bit of a rude response, or at least a short-tempered response. But the commentaries keep telling me that Jesus is not being rude in his phrasing.

But there’s a richness of grace here. Is Mary the one initiating Jesus’ first sign? Jesus is tuned in to the will of God the Father and is one with God the Father. Why does he need this initiation? And if “his time is not yet come” why is he proceeding with this sign? This sign of Jesus, that reveals who Jesus is, is remarkably human in the way that it begins!

The way in which Jesus conducts the sign is very important. Jesus uses very sacred, religious items to complete this sign. Ceremonial washing was a vital part of hygiene, but it was also deeply symbolic and integrated into Jewish life of the time. This was one more practice that people did that reminded them of God’s faithfulness to them, and their needed faithfulness to God. Here’s what Jesus used to complete the miracle:

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. (John 2:6) As he commonly does throughout the book of John, Jesus takes something religious and sacred and makes it about himself. He replaces what was vital and symbolic and stands in its place as a completed version of what was originally offered. Gary Burge says, “Judaism’s vessels of purification are now being filled with new things.” (99) Jesus takes their sacred use for washing and turns the contents into wine instead.

It’s not just any wine that Jesus produces. This wine is GOOD! No one drinks this and says, it’s ok, but it tastes like hands. People notice that this wine is the best that has been served throughout the celebration. The master of the banquet notices: **“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.” (John 2:10)**

Gary Burge says, **“Jesus is delivering something to the banquet quite unexpected. It is superior to anything the banquet has witnessed. John’s emphasis is on the quality of this wine and its timing; things served before this wine are inferior.”** The best has been saved for last. What existed before was fine, but something better has arrived. And there is so much of this better thing - 120-180 gallons worth. It probably can’t be consumed, and it is not running out!

Jesus is making more than just better wine. Jesus is demonstrating that he himself is bringing something better than the old wine that runs out and doesn't measure up. Jesus is fulfilling what is needed, and he is fulfilling what was promised.

The Hebrew Scriptures, especially the prophets, were full of references to the promised goodness of God, and much of that goodness was symbolized by the arrival of new and great and abundant wine.

**On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines. *Isaiah 25:16***

**"In that day I will respond,"
declares the Lord—
"I will respond to the skies,
and they will respond to the earth;
and the earth will respond to the grain,
the new wine and the olive oil,
and they will respond to Jezreel." *Hosea 2:22***

**"The days are coming," declares the Lord,
"when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman
and the planter by the one treading grapes.
New wine will drip from the mountains
and flow from all the hills,
and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.
"They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
they will make gardens and eat their fruit. *Amos 9:13-14***

What happens at the wedding in Cana is more than just a miracle – it's a sign. The present culture and religious practice were lacking and unfulfilling – they were out of wine. Jesus brings new wine and wine in abundance. For those who see him in their Scriptures, he is the fulfillment of God's promises. He brings fullness, abundance, meaning and goodness.

This sign is big with rich, cosmic meaning. But it's also a simple intervention in the moment. Gary Burge again: **"There is a practical side to this story that we can easily miss . . . Jesus stepped into a wedding of good friends and fixed a simple problem. They were out of wine and the crisis could prove socially tragic unless a remedy was found. It is easy for us to spiritualize the work of Christ today and conclude that he is only in the business of saving souls and renewing lives. But is he really interested in the commonplace events of my life? Is he really interested in the simple conundrums of everyday living? The Cana story says, "yes.""**

Many of us can point to moments where we felt like Jesus truly intervened at just the right time in our lives. Maybe something was provided for us when we felt at our limits financially, when we felt we could no longer provide for ourselves and the people we love. Maybe someone was present with us in a dark moment. Maybe we remembered a verse or Scripture that gave us confidence or helped us hold on for one more day. Maybe it was a subtle correction that prevented us from embarrassing ourselves. Maybe we sensed God asking us to do something, and we were hesitant to obey but did so anyway, and God surpassed our expectations.

God cares about us moment by moment. Jesus sees and knows our joys and embarrassments and sorrows and needs. Jesus is Emmanuel – God is with us. Our lives can be littered with moments where we know God was gracious and God intervened. Those moments are vital. I believe Jesus is obsessed with the present, and cares about the details of our lives.

But these individual moments can also be pointing us to something bigger about God. A time that God intervenes can be a time that God is also demonstrating something massive about his character and God's dealings with us. Jesus can be saving people from embarrassment at a wedding; and at the same time, he can be revealing himself as the fulfillment of the words of the prophets.

When a needed trusted friendship arrives at just the right time, I'm (usually, hopefully!) grateful for the friendship. But in hindsight I can see what that friendship says about the love and care and friendship of God. And that past moment speaks to God's enduring love and friendship that is always there.

When a solution comes to a difficult situation, I'm extremely relieved in the moment! When I look back on the situation, I see how God provided and God continues to provide. I see God as provider in identity and interaction in the world.

When I listen to music, very often the lyrics will hit me in the right way at a very needed time. These lyrics and songs bring a needed perspective in the moment, but these also point to a God who speaks to me in ways that I can hear and understand. I am reminded that God meets people on their level, regardless of who they are.

May we see how Jesus provides for us in the moments and situations in our lives. And may we see what those individual moments say about Jesus in his character and love and interaction with the world.

Every moment is an opportunity for gratitude for specific things right now.
And those same moments are an opportunity to experience an even bigger view of Jesus.

Let's reflect on these two questions as we head into communion:

What is something Jesus is doing in this moment?

What does this moment say about Jesus?