# Water into wine at a wedding. John 2:1-11

The message today is taken from John chapter 2, verses 1 to 11.

On the third day of that week there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, Jesus’ mother told him, “They don’t have any more wine.” “How does that concern us, dear lady?” Jesus asked her. “My time hasn’t come yet.” His mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now standing there were six stone water jars used for the Jewish rites of purification, each one holding from two to three measures. Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them up to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the man in charge of the banquet.” So they did.

When the man in charge of the banquet tasted the water that had become wine (without knowing where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew), he called for the bridegroom and told him, “Everyone serves the best wine first, and the cheap kind when people are drunk. But you have kept the best wine until now!”

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. John 2:1-11 ISV

“On the third day …” the first time we read that phrase in the Bible is in Genesis 1.

Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear".... **And God saw that it was good.**

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind … **And God saw that it was good.**

So the evening and the morning were the third day. - Gen 1:9-13 NKJV

The third day is a day of double blessing in the creation account so this is why Jewish weddings traditionally began on a Tuesday. In first century Israel a wedding feast would last for up to a week.

**The invitation**

Jesus’ mother was at the wedding and he and His disciples had been invited. Mary seems to be involved in the hospitality so it is believed that it may be a wedding for a relative from Marys side of the family or a close friend. This bride and groom invited Jesus to their wedding and we also need to invite Jesus into our marriages. By attending this wedding and doing His first miracle there Jesus is strongly endorsing the institution of marriage.

Mary’s husband Joseph is not mentioned in this account. The last mention of Joseph is the incident when Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem at age 12 so it is presumed that Joseph has died before this wedding. Jesus as the eldest son took care of His mother. When He is on the cross we see Him hand over that care, not to one of His half-brothers, but to the apostle John.

I imagine that when Mary tells Jesus that they have run out of wine there would have been considerable concern in her voice. It was socially acceptable to run out of food at a wedding but it was deeply embarrassing to run out of wine because wine was symbolic of joy.

I like the way the International Standard Version has translated Jesus’ response as “dear lady’ rather than ‘woman’ as seen in most translations. One other exception is the New Living Translation which uses “Dear woman”. The phrase ‘Dear lady’ better reflects the respectful term conveyed in the Greek.

Mary trusts that Jesus will do something about this embarrassing situation even though He had not done any miracles before. Mary’s instructions to the servants is the last thing that Mary is recorded as saying. She tells them to do what Jesus says which is really excellent advice. If Mary could speak to those who pray to her today I think she would humbly point to Jesus and give the same advice, ‘do what He tells you’.

**Water is converted into wine.**

Verse 6. “Now standing there were six stone water jars used for the Jewish rites of purification, each one holding from two to three measures [firkins].”

The liquid measures called firkins are about 40 litres each so each of the six jars held between 80 and 120 litres which is a total of between 480 and 720 litres. That’s something like 700 bottles of wine! Jesus is an extravagant giver. When He fed the 5000 it was not with just enough to keep them alive it was enough to have 12 basketfuls left over after everyone was full.

To understand what the “Jewish rites of purification” is all about I would recommend a book called “The Red Heifer’s Ashes” by Graeme Carle. The purification rituals are considered the greatest mystery of the Mosaic laws by orthodox rabbis. Graeme unravels the mysteries and shows how it all point to Jesus. The details of the purification rituals are found in Numbers chapter 19.

A perfect red heifer is need for the ceremonial purification of the temple, the priests and all the implements and alters etc used in the temple. The ashes mixed with water are also used to cleanse people who have become ceremonially unclean, for example, from touching a dead body. To cleanse people in places outside Jerusalem they need supplies of the water mixed with the ashes in other towns around the country. These stone jars held the purification water mixed with the red heifer’s ashes.

Jesus tells the servants to fill the water pots. I love the way they fully obey His instruction and fill the jars all the way to the brim. Not just full, but completely full. Jesus could easily have done this miracle without the involvement of the servants but instead He gives them a role in blessing the wedding. The servants obey Jesus instructions without needing to understand why. They just do it.

**Wine or Grape juice**

Jesus didn’t make grape juice as some preachers claim. The word in Greek is the one for fermented drink, for wine, it is not the word for grape juice. I suspect Jesus made the best wine mankind has ever tasted. The Bible does not prohibit the drinking of wine, in fact it suggests that a little wine is good for you. In the last few decades science has caught up with the Biblical truth and confirmed the health benefits of a small amount of wine in our diet. What the Bible condemns is drunkenness.

We get our practice of communion from Jesus instructions to the disciples at the Passover meal in the upper room. Passover is a spring festival but grapes are harvested in the autumn. There was no refrigeration 2000 years ago so there is no way they could keep grape juice from fermenting. When you store grape juice it naturally ferments and the alcohol content preserves it.

My personal preference would be to use wine for communion because I like the 1st century authenticity of it, but I accept the reasons we don’t. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 Paul tells us when we share together that we should not eat and drink what we feel at liberty to consume but rather we should respect the needs of others who, for whatever reason, do not enjoy the same liberty. By showing this respect we give glory to God.

“Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being.” 1 Cor 10:24

“It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble.” - Rom 14:2

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Cor 10:31

Anyone who believes in abstaining should not judge others who do not abstain.

“Therefore, let no one judge you in matters of food and drink or with respect to a festival, a New Moon, or Sabbath days.” Col 2:16

In the last verse of our passage John tells us that this was the first miracle Jesus did. This refutes the claims of the fake gospels from the 2nd and 3rd centuries that say Jesus did miracles as a child.

**Mystical interpretation?**

The law is represented by the empty ceremonial vessels. The law is empty and can’t save us. Six is the number of man, falling short of the perfection of seven. As the servants obey Jesus, the cold, lifeless, empty vessels are filled with wine representing joy, life and celebration. Jesus has come that we might have life.

In the previous chapter John told us that through Jesus ‘all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.’ I think this first miracle reinforces Jesus power to create

There are only seven miracles recorded in the gospel of John and this is the first of them. In chapter 20 John tells us why he recorded these seven ‘signs’ as he calls them:

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” - John 20:30-31 NIV

**Things to remember and do**

Jesus endorses the institution of marriage and we do well to invite Him into our relationships.

Wine in moderation is OK, but drunkenness is not OK. Jesus not only drank wine he made the best wine.

We are not to judge one another over drinking or not drinking wine. We are to respect those who cannot, or choose not, to drink wine by abstaining when we are sharing together.

Jesus loves to meet our needs with a generous abundance so we can bless others.

**Blessing**

Let’s bow our heads and I will end with a blessing based on 2Corinthians 9:8

My the Lord bless you abundantly, so that in all things and at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Amen