

Water to Wine: The Miracle of Something New

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Scripture Lesson: John 2:1-11

Scripture: “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴ And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” ⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So, they took it. ⁹ When the steward tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

This is the word of God for the people of God.

At first, I was going to do my best to avoid preaching over this Scripture, but the more I read about it, prayed about it, and thought about it, the more God just would not let it go. There is just so much here to consider, contemplate, and learn. You see, having grown up Southern Baptist, this miracle makes me a tad bit uncomfortable, because, well, it involves

alcohol, and even an extremely-ex Southern Baptist like me gets a little nervous to be talking about wine from the pulpit on a Sunday morning.

So the original plan was to preach on another Scripture from this week's lectionary. Then, as I was reading those passages, they led to this one, and well, I found it really interesting and being the theology nerd that I am, I got sucked in and so we are going to dive into the Scripture because it was just so wonderful. I hope you will find this passage interesting and applicable for your own lives and faith.

John writes about the life of Jesus with different eyes. His gospel differs from the other three in large part because Mark, Matthew, and Luke use a lot of the same source material to tell their audiences about Jesus and his ministry. John writes with a slightly different emphasis and has what scholars call a "high Christology." In Mark, we see Jesus' humanity emphasized frequently. He is still very much the Son of God, but Mark wants to make sure his audience keeps in mind that Jesus is fully human at the same time. In John, we find that Jesus's divinity is emphasized. Jesus is still fully human, but John isn't as interested in pressing this point for his audience. For his audience, he wants to continually emphasize the point that Jesus *is* God, and so John never lets us forget it for a second.

That's one reason why this miracle is so important. You see, this is the first miracle of Jesus's that John shares with his audience. John, with an incredibly high sense of Jesus as the divine Son of God, shares with us that Jesus's first miracle was not some big, flashy, life-saving miracle. This wasn't the sort of thing that would make the news, papers, or possibly even twitter today. Instead, we learn about an everyday miracle, done just so that those he was with

might enjoy their celebration to the fullest, and so that his host would not suffer any social embarrassment. At the time, there were few witnesses.

Why does John start here? Why this miracle? I believe it is because in this miracle we can see exactly how Jesus has come to create abundance. John wants his audience, and thousands of years later us, to know that Jesus is here to bring about the kingdom of God. Jesus isn't about exclusivity and God isn't someone we can impose any sort of human limits on. In starting with this miracle, John tells us that God's kingdom isn't like some sort of diet, limiting what we can expect of God, it's more like a Thanksgiving feast.

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays, because I love how it's a little taste of heaven on earth: more than we want or could need and filled with love. Thanksgiving isn't a time typically where we exclude but is usually a time where we work to welcome all of those around us, all of those who are wanting to join in a time of fellowship and celebration. God, God's kingdom, God's love is bigger, and more, and plentiful, and wonderful than we can imagine. God is doing something new, something wonderful and Jesus is here to show us that God goes far beyond our expectations. With Jesus turning water into wine at a celebration, we see that God has come to create a kingdom of joy, of welcome, and of more than we can imagine, of plenty.

We also learn something key about discipleship from this passage of scripture. Surprisingly it is not the disciples who show us something to emulate, but instead Mary, Jesus's mother, is the one who shows us some important aspects of discipleship. Following Jesus means trusting Jesus and knowing that he will act in accordance with the will of God, not our own wishes. Mary asks Jesus to intervene, because she knew he could do something to help the

hosts in this situation. Jesus's response might sound harsh to our modern ears, (I know my personal response to being called "woman" is an immediate straightening of my back and an internal, indignant "excuse me."), but Mary and John's audience would not have heard this response in a rude way, as it was a common form of address during this time. Jesus responds by reminding his mother that she does not determine what Jesus does, that only God determines Jesus's actions.

Mary's reaction is not that of a mother, insisting her child (adult or not) listens and obeys, but that of a disciple. She does not argue with Jesus, nor does she insist on Jesus doing anything in particular in accordance with her own wishes or with the wishes of anyone else. Instead, she instructs the servants to listen to Jesus, because she knows and trusts that Jesus will act. Mary presents a picture of discipleship for us and for John's audience.

She knows Jesus, she knows his power and love for others, and she trusts him to act in a way that will make an impactful difference. And Jesus does not disappoint. Indeed, Jesus does act. He takes the jars, has the servants fill them, and then tells them to take the contents to the chief steward, who discovers that the best wine of the celebration is now to be found in the stone jars.

What else do we learn about Jesus, about God, and about the Kingdom of God from this miracle that John starts us off with? This miracle shows us that Jesus can and does turn the ordinary into the extraordinary. Ordinary stone jars and plain ole' water are used to create the best wine of the celebration. A more tangible example that we can see today is a quilt. Now, I do not sew much, but I am blessed with family and friends that are quite crafty and they do things like quilt.

A quilt is made from scraps. Leftover fabric from other projects and clothes that are worn out or torn are then cut up, pieced together, and used to create something that is beautiful and warm. Creating a quilt is creating something wonderfully extraordinary from something old and ordinary. Jesus's miracle of water into wine shows us the same idea: Jesus is all about the unexpected. He can and will take those things (or people) that are broken or a mess and create from them something new, beautiful, warm, and unexpected.

In addition, we learn from this passage of Scripture that the miracles of Jesus, no matter their size or impact, shatter boundaries- they did then, they do now. Were the ancients more likely to believe in the miraculous than we are? Humans do change, but human nature seems to stay pretty consistent over time. The servants who took the water turned wine to the chief steward do not appear to have shared where the wine came from.

Do you think that perhaps they weren't sure they would have been believed by someone who wasn't there and didn't see it happen with their own eyes? Do you wonder if they left the wedding wondering what on earth they had seen, and who was this Jesus of Nazareth that he could and would perform miracles? We have no way of knowing what the servants thought, nor why they did not share the news of the miracle with the chief steward, but my guess in knowing how humans encounter the unexpected or the not easily explained is that they were just absolutely floored from their experience in encountering Jesus.

Miracles, then and now, represent a breakdown of what we know about how the world works. Jesus, in performing this and other miracles, is announcing that he is not going to be about doing things the way they've always been done or the way the world expects them to be done. Jesus is announcing that he is here to do something new. To show us something new.

Miracles always make me a little bit uncomfortable because I'm a rational, post-modern era millennial. I know that God is more than I can comprehend, but when I'm faced with evidence of God moving beyond how I think God should act, I get nervous and start to fidget. I think most of us feel that way if we are being honest.

The unorthodox, the strange, the new, and the not-normal as we perceive it throws us off and makes us feel discomfort. To be honest thought, Jesus's miracles should make us a little uncomfortable because they remind us that Jesus was not just a human, but God in human flesh and blood. And beyond reminding us that Jesus was God incarnate and that God is more than we can comprehend, Jesus's miracles remind us that Jesus didn't come to maintain the status quo.

That leads me to the final thing we can learn about in this passage that I'll have time to cover. We learn that Jesus is doing something new, something unexpected. Jesus came to upset the previous ways humans had encountered the world and encountered God. In turning water into wine, Jesus creates something new out of something that is already present. What does that tell us about how God might be at work in our community and in our lives? Where is God at work doing something new, maybe not out of the blue new, but something new out of something already in existence. How can we join with God in that work? How might God use us and our skills and our daily encounters to begin to do something new in our lives and in our community?

When we join with God in the work of creating something new, we participate with God in creating the Kingdom of God, right here and now. Our area is growing, our community is changing. It is something that is already present and will only continue. God is at work in this

growth and change. The Kingdom of God is here. How can we join with Jesus in the work of God, the work of creating something wonderful and unexpected out of something already present?

My challenge to you as we go forth into the world this week is to keep this miracle in your mind as you go about your life this week. Jesus started his ministry with something small, just making the celebration of those he cared about something special. In doing so, he showed those who witnessed it: his mother and the other disciples, and the servants something about him and about the character of God. God takes the ordinary and turns it into the extraordinary. God is a God of abundance, and there is more to God than we can begin to understand.

Take with you the example of Mary and seek to be a disciple like she was. Seek to know Jesus and trust in the work he is doing in and around us. The work of Jesus might make us uncomfortable at times, but that is ok. Acknowledge the uncomfortable and then seek to see where you can join in with the work Jesus is doing with what is already here. Because he's already at work around us.

Invitation: If you'd like to live out your faith with the congregation of Salado United Methodist Church, I invite you to come forward during our time of response.

Benediction: O living Christ, you changed Cana's water into festival wine. As we leave this place, we ask that you transform our lives as well, that we may taste your glory here and now and anticipate that heavenly banquet where we shall behold your face forever. Amen.

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