

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: June 27, 2010
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“WALKING IN CANA”
John 2:1-11

We are walking with Jesus in Cana in John 2.

- In verses 1-10 Jesus transforms water to wine.

Then, in verse 11, John states: **“What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples put their faith in him.”**

Λ **“The first of the signs.”** By and large Matthew, Mark and Luke use other words for Jesus’ miracles, but John always refers to them as *σημειον*, as *signs*.

Why does John call them signs? It goes back to their function. The purpose of a sign is not to stun us with its beauty or to elicit a “wow,” but to clearly communicate its intended message.

We have all seen a or two commercial that tugs at our hearts or has us rolling on the floor with laughter, yet five minutes later we cannot remember what it was selling. That may be good art, but it is bad signage. In contrast, I don’t know any driver who is moved to tears by a stop sign. Yet they apply the brake when they see one, because it unambiguously says, “Stop!”

☞ John calls Jesus’ miracles *signs* to take our eyes off the wonders and draw our gaze to the deeper reality to which they point: that {Jn 1:1, 14} **“the Word”** who is God took on **“flesh and made his dwelling among us”** so that we may see **“his glory.”** And that in seeing we {Jn 20:31} **“may believe ...Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of**

God, and that by believing [we] may have life in his name.”

“Through [the transformation of the water] he revealed” (and continues to reveal) **“his glory,”** with the result that his first disciples (and millions since) **“put their faith in him.”**

- **“Through [it] he revealed his glory.”**

☼ 1st, His glory is shown in his power to transform. With a thought, He transforms the liquid. In a moment the molecules are changed from H₂O to the chemical formula for red wine. It is an irrefutable sign of his glorious power.

- ☼ 2nd, His glory is revealed in his *αγαπε* love.

In first century Palestine a wedding is a highlight for the whole community, for an entire generation or more. People will still be talking about it after the bride and groom have grandchildren.

Even the poorest of families go all out. Their home overflows with wine. (Getting falling-down drunk is strongly discouraged, but a light “buzz” is perfectly acceptable.) The party will continue for 7 days, and the groom must provide copious quantities of food and drink to the end.

○ Still, at this wedding the wine does run out. So in verses 7-8 Jesus creates somewhere between 120-180 gallons, of exceptional quality.

The Messiah has never made a lame man walk or a sick woman well. He has not yet cast out a demon, walked on water, or raised a dead person. This is his wonder-working debut.

The first of anything is always especially significant. The Lord expends – some might say, *wastes* – his golden opportunity on this? *Why does He do it?*

If word of this disaster gets out, the couple will be forever disgraced. It will be regarded as a dark omen of misfortune that will doom their union to hardship and unhappiness.

In a world of widows and paralytics and lepers and demoniacs their problem is not *that* desperate. Even so, it is significant to them. Jesus meets them at the point of their material, emotional and social need. He transforms the water to spare them unnecessary shame and heartache, that they might {Jn 10:10} **“have [life] to the full.”** It is an irrefutable sign of his glorious love.

○ Let’s go back to the heart of the narrative in verses 3-5. **“When the wine [runs out], Jesus’ mother [says] to him, ‘They have no more wine.’”** Jesus replies, **“Woman, why do you involve me?”**

To us his words sound abrupt, even disrespectful, but they are not. This is a standard form of address between adult men and women, including those who are closely related. (Some translators insert the word, **“Dear”** to capture the sense of his words: **“Dear woman, why do involve me?”**)

● Then He adds, **“My hour has not yet come.”**

What does He mean? The course of Jesus’ life is not unfolding by chance. He is moving deliberately intent toward his death, resurrection and ascension. At the end, the Lord will at last declare: **“The hour has come for [me] to be glorified.... it was for this very reason I came to this hour”** (John 12:23, 27).

Those events are still three years in the future. Regardless, Mary instructs the servants, **“Do whatever he tells you.”** And Jesus quietly turns the water to wine.

I believe He gives in because this miracle is a sign of what He will achieve when his hour has come. It is a foretaste of the time when the Messiah’s power of transformation and his *αγαπε* love will intersect, with cosmic impact, in his death, resurrection, and ascension.

As for his outpouring of love, I hope that is obvious: {Jn 3:16} **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.”** Jesus said, {Jn 15:13-14} **“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends,”** and **“you are my friends if you do what I command”** – but He went further: for {Ro 5:8, 8:7} **“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners,”** while we were yet **“hostile to God,”** inherently unable to **“submit to [his] law,”** **“Christ died for us.”**

As for his power to transform, in his hour ...

✪ Jesus changed death to life.

Early on, Jesus did the impossible when He transformed water into wine **“on the third day”** (John 2:1).

At the culmination of his earthly ministry Jesus did the impossible again and transformed death to life by rising from the dead on the third day.

★ By the grace of God, we can partake of this! For {Ro 6:5} **“if we have been united with him in a**

death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.” And, in his hour...

☉ Jesus changed humiliation to exaltation.

The Messiah spared those newlyweds in Cana from public humiliation, exchanging their disgrace for triumph. Yet at the culmination of his earthly ministry Jesus embraced the worst possible degradation on the cross.

{Php 2:7-11} **“He made himself nothing by taking the nature of a servant,”** then **“humbled himself”** further **“by becoming obedient to ... death on a cross!”** Thus – not despite this, but as a consequence of this – his Father **“exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

★ By the grace of God, we can partake of this! For despite our embarrassing frailties and humiliating failures {2 Co 3:18} **“we”** (the followers of Christ) **“are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord.”**

☉ And Jesus changed despair to hope.

→ In about 800 B.C. God’s prophet foretold Messiah’s advent. Amos 9:13-14:

**“The days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“when... New wine will drip from the mountains
and flow from all the hills... and ... my people...
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.”**

→ Two or 3 centuries later Joel foretold the Day of the LORD: **“In that day”** (Joel 3:18) **“the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water.”**

The Almighty inspired both men to speak hope to people in despair. Their metaphor of **“new wine”** points to freedom, joy, and life to the full.

It is not happenstance that Christ’s first miracle was to supply new wine for the wedding. It is not a coincidence that at the conclusion of the Last Supper He said, {Mt 26:29} **“I will not drink of this fruit of the vine [again] until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”** Nor is it an accident that He compares his Second Coming to a wedding banquet.

★ By the grace of God, we can partake of this! For {2 Co 4:8} **“we are”** sometimes **“perplexed, but not in despair.”** {2 Co 4:16-17} **“We do not lose heart... For our ...troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”**

✠ Walking with Jesus means seeing his glory, even when it is revealed in unexpected ways. Most of the people at the wedding did not see the amazing sign Jesus performed. His disciples did, and they **“put their faith in him.”**

Walking with Jesus means seeing his glory.

✠ Walking with Jesus means glorifying him.

Mary helped to glorify Jesus when she told the servants: **“Do whatever he tells you.”** Likewise, the unnamed servants helped to glorify Jesus when they

filled the jars with water, drew some out, and took it to the master of the banquet as He said.

Unlike them we have the witness of Scripture, the assurance of God's Spirit, and the testimony of our brothers and sisters in the kingdom. How much more can we glorify Jesus through our obedient service!

Walking with Jesus means glorifying him.

✠ And walking with Jesus means submitting to his power of transformation.

Many of us like the *idea* of being changed, but resist the essential process. We want to learn a foreign language, or acquire a new skill, or lose weight, or kick a bad habit or addiction – yet we don't want to work hard or endure discomfort to make it happen.

And transformation – especially transformation that is worthwhile – typically involves pain. If grapes were sentient, if they had self-awareness and experienced pain, they probably would not want to be squished and mashed and cooked to produce even the finest of wines. But that is what is required for the transformation.

→ Romans 8:28 promises that **“in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** Romans 8:29 reveals that this **“good”** is not worldly comfort or success, but transformation into the likeness of Jesus: **“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”**

Walking with Jesus means submitting to his power of transformation when it is pleasant and when it is not –

just as He, {Heb 12:2} **“for the joy set before him ...endured the cross.”**

Let us walk with Jesus in Cana.