

Jesus The Messiah

John 2:1-11

Preached at 8.15 and C@10 on 24th May 2015

Intro

Weddings are mostly joyful occasions.

Last weekend Sue went to the reception for the wedding of a lady she works with.

It was an Indian wedding and Sue and the other work colleagues were invited to day 3 of the reception! The celebration went on and on.

Many of us have a funny story to tell about a wedding we've been to.

The first wedding I conducted I was so nervous and focussed on the couple that I forgot to tell everyone to sit down after the first song...

...so everyone stayed standing for the whole introduction and vows – about 20 minutes.

Ladies in enormous high-heeled shoes shuffled from side to side hoping I'd notice, but I never did.

After the service, Sue and Jasmin told me and I didn't believe them. Now I write clearly in my notes and highlight the words "please take a seat!"

Of course every best man tries the old joke of feeling around in his pockets for the rings when he has to hand them to the minister.

One time a friend of mine asked the best man for the rings and he really couldn't find them! The wedding was delayed while someone made a lightning trip to his house to get them.

How embarrassing!

The rings were found and the wedding went ahead...

...but how would that have spoiled the joy of the occasion if they really couldn't find them?

Wine or sign?

The bridegroom at the wedding in Cana was facing great embarrassment too.

Weddings in those times ran for multiple days like the one Sue went to last week.

The groom had the responsibility for making sure there was enough wine to last the entire feast.

But they'd run out! How embarrassing for him.

People would soon be heading for the doors and they'd be talking about the wedding where the wine ran out around town for ages.

Jesus is at the wedding as a guest and he fixes the problem.

Jesus saves the day (and the embarrassment) and the joyful celebration can continue.

But is that all this is about?

In v11 John says this is the first of Jesus' signs through which he revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Context

This wedding take place at the end of the first week where Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael and (most likely) John had started following Jesus.

John the Baptist had said 'look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world' and they started following him, telling their family and friends that they'd found the man God had promised to send – the messiah, the Christ.

Jesus said "come and see", and "you'll see greater things than what you've seen already."...

... the things that John has said he's written down 'so that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that by believing you may have life.' (John 20:31)

For the next 10 chapters of John we read about signs like this one.

When we were travelling north on our holiday a few weeks ago there's a sign we always look out for... it's the sign to Heatherbrae's Pies.

As soon as we see that sign we know there's something great to look forward to – a great pie and a custard tart to die for!

John calls these miraculous things Jesus does 'signs' because they point to something about Jesus that leads to faith in him, for those who have come to see.

But there were more than just Jesus' early followers at that wedding. Let's think about what this sign meant for the various people who were there.

Three Responses

The guests

For most of the guests, they had no idea there had even been a problem!

The reception continued uninterrupted for them.

In fact it got better for them as the wine that Jesus provided was far better than what they'd normally expect towards the end of a long reception – as the MC says to the groom as he commends him in v10 for saving the best till last.

So many people live like the guests at that wedding – thinking life will just keep serving up the good times.

But without Jesus, that wedding would have ended in embarrassment and the joy of the day would have been replaced by despair.

And the same is true of life. Without Jesus, the joy of life is eventually replaced by despair and embarrassment as our shortcomings – our sins – are exposed.

The six stone water jars at that wedding were there for ceremonial washing.

The guests came in and plunged their arms up to their elbows into the water to symbolise cleansing as they came in to celebrate the wedding feast.

The Old Testament pictures heaven as a wedding feast... a great and joyful celebration of the union of God with his saved people.

But his people need to be first cleansed of sin.

Jesus commanded those jars to be filled to the brim, as a sign that the time for that ritual cleansing had come to an end...

...because he has come to cleanse everyone who follows him from sin – not symbolically, but genuinely, by dying on the cross as the Lamb of God.

The cleansing we need to come in and take our seat at the great wedding feast of heaven is Jesus' death for our sins.

Without faith in him, we won't be at that wedding feast.

So many people are like the people at that wedding in Cana – not realising the time will come when the joy will run out, unless they know Jesus.

They need to meet Jesus.

The Servants

Secondly, the servants.

These people knew the situation about the wine and who was responsible for the solution.

They'd probably been the ones who'd raised the problem with Jesus' mother (which probably means that Mary was somehow involved in the catering arrangements – so it was probably the wedding of a family member).

And the servants had followed Jesus' instructions about filling the water jars and then going and drawing out wine.

There's good reason to believe that Jesus told them to draw the wine from the well... the word 'to draw' usually means to draw water up out of a well, not out of a container.

Plus the symbolism of the stone jars is that by filling them, the time of the Old Testament laws for cleansing was complete. The wine of the new age doesn't come from them, but from Jesus.

So the servants witnessed an astonishing miracle.

But there's no mention of them putting their faith in Jesus in v11.

Miracles on their own rarely lead to faith.

“God, if you get me out of this spot... heal my child... fix my problems, I’ll believe in you.”

People who make that promise rarely do believe.

...because all they meet is a miracle-worker... not the Son of God they need to know.

That’s all the servants saw in Jesus. Perhaps they might call on him again if they’re in a similar spot of bother.

The disciples and Mary

Then there’s the disciples, and Mary here as well.

There isn’t much about the disciples here until v11. They’re observing what happens but aren’t involved in it.

Mary isn’t called by name in John’s Gospel – she’s just referred to as Jesus’ mother.

Mary learns a lesson here in humility that we should recognise and honour.

When she’s told about the wine situation, she turns to Jesus.

It’s likely Joseph has been dead for some time by this stage as there’s no mention of him after the incident with Jesus when he was 12.

So Mary turned to her first-born son who she would have had to rely on in the past.

But when she goes to hand the problem to him, Jesus responds in what we might think is a cold-hearted way.

In v4 he says:

“Dear woman, why do you involve me?”

‘Dear woman’ isn’t the way a first-born son would normally address his mother.

It’s not a rude term, but it does put more distance between them than for Jesus to say “Mum!”

And he says “why involve me? My time (hour) has not yet come.”

As we follow Jesus through John we find out about the 'hour' he's come for...

...it's the hour of his death... the sacrifice he'll offer as the Lamb of God, the Son of God to bring cleansing from sin and life to all who believe in him.

That hour is what Jesus has come for.

And he will not be diverted from it.

Even his mother doesn't have the right to divert his attention to anything less important.

Nobody has Jesus in his or her pocket – not even his own mother.

He didn't come to solve the problems we want him to solve.

He came to solve the problem only he can solve... our greatest problem... the problem we need him to solve... the problem of sin and its punishment: death.

Even Mary had to realise that she doesn't call the shots for her son...

...because he is the Son of God, who's come to be the Lamb of God to save her as much as anyone else.

She has to take her place as a disciple – alongside all followers of Jesus.

The Roman Catholic view of Mary as someone we need to get to approach Jesus on our behalf because she has some sort of sway over him is wrong.

Jesus hasn't come to do what we think needs to be done.

We're so screwed up by sin that we don't even know what needs to be done.

But after this gentle rebuke, Jesus does respond to Mary...

...but for his own purpose.

His purpose in performing this sign is so that the disciples will get a glimpse of his glory as the Son of God and believe or put their faith in him.

The sign points beyond itself to Jesus.

Who else could do what he just did?

It was like Jesus was pulling back the curtain of his human-ness to show who he has always been – the eternal Word through whom all things were made (1:3).

And at the same time he was pulling back the curtain on the life that comes to all who believe in him – the life of abundant joy that never ends.

Our response

This sign, as John calls it – a wedding where Jesus intervenes to ensure the wine doesn't run out – is pointing us to a life where the joy never runs out...

In Revelation 19:7 the same John, as he encourages Christians to keep following Jesus, paints a vision of heaven with these words:

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.”

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is the bridegroom who never lets the wine run out – who ensures the joy of the celebration never ends.

... but only for those who come to see his glory as the Son of God...

...and who make themselves ready, simply by believing in him.

People like the guests at the wedding – who think there's a good life for them without having to have anything to do with Jesus – they will be embarrassed when their sin is exposed when they stand before him.

People like the servants who only want Jesus to do the miracles that suit them – they'll miss out on the great benefit of what Jesus actually came to do – what his hour was about – what we all desperately needed him to do for us.

Are you like one of the guests or the servants at the wedding in Cana?

Or are you coming to see more and more the glory of this man?

Do you look at this sign and say “here is my Creator and my God who’s come to earth to sacrifice his life for me so that I can have life as a child of God”?

Does his glory lead you to put your faith in him?

... not just once, but more and more as life goes on?

Jesus reveals his glory to us as we spend time getting to know him through what he’s given us to get to know him.

Seeing his glory leads us to a joyful life of faith in him.

And joyful followers of Jesus, in their joy, bring other people to meet him.