

Sunday Lesson – January 16, 2022

GOSPEL: John 2: 1-11

“From Water to Wine”

Context

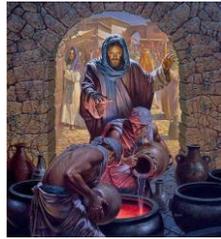
“The structure of John 2:1-11 is typical of a miracle story: the setting is established (verses 1-2), a need arises (verses 3-5), a miracle addresses that need (verses 6-8), and there is a response to that miracle (verses 9-11). The changing of water to wine is Jesus’ first public act in John, the inaugural “sign” of God’s presence in the world through him.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/wedding-at-cana/commentary-on-john-21-11-3)*

Insight

“Perhaps the key is a line from John’s Prologue, the profound and poetic introduction to his telling of Jesus’ story. There John writes, “From his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace” (1:16). Not just grace, mind you, but grace upon grace. An abundance of grace in other words.

And that’s the case here, as well. To run out of wine at a first century wedding would not have been just embarrassing, but disastrous. Wine was associated with blessing, joy, goodness, and more. To run out of wine would have felt like a curse, like you’d run out of blessing. And Jesus doesn’t just offer enough wine to cover the balance, but turns six huge washing basins of water into wine, providing more wine – and blessing – than they could have possibly consumed. More than that, and as the steward acknowledges, it’s the best wine they’ve had.

Jesus, that is, creates abundance. Wine upon wine, blessing upon blessing, joy upon joy, and grace upon grace. That is the tone of the opening of this narrative, and we should take note because, after all, the first event of a story matters.” *(Excerpts from davidlose.net/2015/01/john-21-11/)*



Gospel Reading

“Three days later there was a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were guests also. When they started running low on wine at the wedding banquet, Jesus’ mother told him, “They’re just about out of wine.” Jesus said, “Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn’t my time. Don’t push me.” She went ahead anyway, telling the servants, “Whatever he tells you, do it.” Six stoneware water pots were there, used by the Jews for ritual washings. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus ordered the servants, “Fill the pots with water.” And they filled them to the brim. “Now fill your pitchers and take them to the host,” Jesus said, and they did. When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn’t know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, “Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you’ve saved the best till now!” This act in Cana of Galilee was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” *The Message*

What It Could Mean?

“It is perhaps a bit surprising that the first miracle of Jesus’ ministry in John’s Gospel is one that seems almost frivolous. There is no desperate, life-threatening need in this story, no crisis of hunger or illness. Rather, the crisis in this story is that the wine has run out at a wedding banquet. It is a problem which threatens to cut a wedding celebration short and to cause considerable embarrassment to the hosts, but certainly poses no immediate danger to anyone’s life or health.

What is it that Jesus’ mother (she is not named in John’s Gospel) knows about her son? Why does Jesus perform a miracle after all? And why such an extravagant one at that? John tells us that there were six stone water jars which held 20-30 gallons each.

Not only was this wine great in quantity, but it was also high in quality. The chief steward comments to the bridegroom, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk, but you have saved the good wine until now” (2:10). The chief steward does not know that it is Jesus who is responsible for this abundant supply of good wine, but Mary knows, the servants know, and we the readers know. Still, our question remains: why such an extravagant miracle?

In fact, John doesn’t call this act a miracle, but a sign (*semeion* in Greek). It is the first of seven such signs in John’s Gospel. Signs point us to something beyond themselves, as road signs alert us to something that lies ahead of us or before us. The sign of Jesus changing the water into wine at the Cana wedding points us to something far more valuable than the wine itself, as fine as the wine may be. It points us to the source of all life and joy.

The image of the wedding banquet is used frequently in Scripture as a picture of the restoration of Israel, and wine is frequently used as a symbol of the joy and celebration associated with salvation. The abundance of fine wine is a symbol of the abundance of joy that awaits not only Israel, but **all peoples** on the day of God’s salvation.

Jesus’ extravagant miracle of changing the water into wine is a sign that in him, life, joy, and salvation have arrived. At the beginning of John’s Gospel, the narrator told us that “in him was life, and that life was the light of all people” (1:4). And later in the Gospel, Jesus will tell us, “I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (10:10).

Abundant life is more than mere existence or survival, and certainly more than an abundance of material things. Abundant life is to know and be known by the One through whom all life came into being (John 1:3; see also John 17:3). It is to have an intimate relationship with the One who loves us so much that he

doesn’t know how to stop giving. It is the kind of life depicted by the abundance of fine wine in this story.

Of course, abundant life does not mean a life of ease, comfort, and luxury or an absence of sorrow and suffering. But it does mean that in Jesus we have an abundant, extravagant source of grace to sustain us, grace that is more than sufficient to provide where we fall short and to give us joy even amid sorrow and struggle. Abundant life means that in Christ we are joined to the source of true life, life that is rich and full and eternal, life that neither sorrow, nor suffering, nor death itself can destroy.

The Gospel of John does not use the synoptic expression “reign of God” (*basileia tou theou*) very often, but it certainly shows us what the reign of God is like. It is like a village wedding celebration to which everyone is invited and at which the guests are surprised by the abundance and quality of the wine. This first of Jesus’ signs in John’s Gospel shows us that the true bridegroom has arrived (John 1:29), and he is truly the life of the party!” (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org, Revised Common Lectionary, by Elisabeth Johnson*)

Readings for Further Study

- [Jeremiah 31:12](#) “they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord—the grain, the new wine...”
- [Amos 9:14](#) Israel “will plant vineyards and drink their wine”

Thought for the Day

“Remember He is the artist and you are only the picture. You can’t see it. So quietly submit to be painted—i.e., keep fulfilling all the obvious duties of your station (you really know quite well enough what they are!), asking forgiveness for each failure and then leaving it alone. You are in the right way. Walk—don’t keep on looking at it.” ~ C.S. Lewis, [The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis](#)

A Prayer

“Dear God, draw our gaze toward you that we might receive blessing upon blessing and grace upon grace. In Jesus’ name.”

Amen. ~ [davidlose.net/2015/01/john-21-11/](#)