

August 4, 2024 by Steve Brandon



# The First of His Signs

## John 2:1-11

- 1. The Party (verses 1-2)**
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I love weddings. Weddings are times of great joy, as two people come to pledge their lives to one another, and begin a life together. Brides are happy at weddings. Grooms are happy at weddings. The bridal party is happy at weddings. The only tears that are shed at weddings are tears of joy.

Weddings are fun parties, but not the sort of party that you arrange the week before. They are the sort of party that takes months of preparation. A venue is chosen. Dresses are bought. The men's wardrobe is chosen. A caterer is selected. A photographer is hired. A baker is picked. Invitations are sent out. The day is planned. A day or two before the wedding, the plan is executed. There's a rehearsal. Decorations are placed. Tables are set.

Then comes the day of the wedding. Friends and family gather. The bride walks the aisle. A scripture is read. A song may be sung. A message is given. The vows are made. The groom kisses the bride. The two are declared husband and wife! It's often very beautiful! I love the beauty. I love weddings.

Then the party begins at the reception. Finger-foods are provided. The bridal party is introduced, and they make their entrance. The main course is served. The music is nice. Then come the traditions. The cutting of the cake. The first dance. The bouquet toss. The toasts and speeches. There is often dancing and merriment!

There are often ways that a bride and groom put their own special touch on their wedding. An object to sign your name to. Polaroid cameras on the tables for you to use to preserve the memories. Picture boards. Games. Photo booths. Surprise entertainment. Special food options. Finally, the sendoff, with birdseed or bubbles. Thinking of all of this brings a smile to my face. I love weddings.

I have described weddings in America. All around the world, there are other activities that are unique to various cultures, which add their own element of joy. The Jewish weddings, the groom will often break a glass under his foot to symbolize the fragility of marriage, and how bride and groom need to be careful in their future relationship. At Chinese weddings, the bride and groom will often serve tea to their parents as a sign of respect. At Korean weddings, the groom gives his new bride a piggyback ride around the room to show his strength and dedication to support her. At Scottish weddings, the couple's hands are tied together with a cord or cloth, symbolizing their union, which shouldn't be broken.

Now, as we turn to the Scriptures this morning, we are going to be reading about a wedding. In many ways similar to our American weddings, with a bride, a groom, and a reception afterwards. In other ways, this wedding was surely, quite unique from what we experience in America, as were the Jewish customs of 2,000 years ago are quite distanced from our culture today. But it's close enough that we can understand what's taking place. A man and a woman are being joined together in marriage and their community is invited to join in their celebration. We find this wedding story in John, chapter 2. So open your Bibles, if you will to John, chapter 2. Let's read our text:

### John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

As is our custom, let us remind ourselves why these words are written.

### John 20:30

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; John 20:31 but these

are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This I is my hope for you all this morning. That you would believe in Jesus. and that by believing you may have life in his name. The story ends with the disciples believing in Jesus. Look at the very last phrase of verse 11.

John 2:11

And his disciples believed in him.

The glory of Jesus that was manifested at this wedding by changing the water into wine was enough for his disciples to believe in Jesus. John has written these things, that we might read about Jesus changing the water into wine, and believe in him as well. The title of my message this morning comes from verse 11. "The First of His Signs."

John 2:11

This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Now, if you remember, there are seven signs in the book of John.

1. The water that is turned into wine (chapter 2).
2. The healing of the official's son (chapter 4)
3. The healing of the paralytic (chapter 5).
4. The feeding of the 5,000 (chapter 6).
5. The walking on the water (chapter 6).
6. The healing of the blind man (chapter 9).
7. The raising of Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11).

The first of his signs was turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana.



To remind you of what we went over in my sermon "Glory, Grace and Truth" on John 1:14-18, and to help you remember that chapter 2 contains the wedding at Cana, this is our picture of John 2. The husband and wife kneeling together with the six stone jars in the background. Knowing these pictures and knowing these events will help you to understand and embrace the message of the gospel of John. So, let's work through the text. My first point is this:

## 1. The Party (verses 1-2)

It's a wedding.

John 2:1-2

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

This wedding was "at Cana in Galilee." To give you a little help, here's a map of Israel during those days. You see the sea of Galilee in the upper portion of the map. Cana was some 10 miles to the west of the sea of Galilee and about 10 miles north of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up.

So, Jesus knew people in Cana. So did his mother. So it makes sense that Jesus and his mother were invited to the wedding. It may have been some family members who were married. we don't know.

It somewhat make sense that the disciples of Jesus were invited. I say this because Nathanael is from Cana (John 21:2). With the smallness of the village, we can assume that he knew the wedding party. Yet, Andrew and Peter and Philip were all from Bethsaida (John 1:44). We don't know why they were also at the wedding. If their connection was with Jesus, they had only been following him for a few days. It's what John indicates at the beginning of verse 1. It was 1 "On the third day" that this wedding took place. That is, the third day after Jesus called these men to be his disciples.

It was customary for scholars to be invited to weddings, perhaps it was known that Jesus had some followers, so he and his followers were welcome at the wedding.<sup>[1]</sup> We don't know all the details, but we do know that Jesus, his mother, and his disciples were at the wedding. Now, here in John 2, the scene IS NOT the wedding itself, but the wedding feast, the reception, if you will.

Now, I think it's helpful to point out that Jesus was at this wedding celebration. It gives a flavor of the life and ministry of Jesus. He wasn't some cloistered monk, who thought that spirituality was equated with being somber and serious and away from society. No. Jesus willingly joined in the joy of this festivity. In fact, this is what the wedding celebration was all about. It was about joy.

Craig Keener says in his commentary on this passage, "[The] Jewish people emphasized joyous celebration at wedding feasts. . . . Most rabbis concurred that the importance of joy at a wedding banquet even excluded the groomsman and his wedding party from festal obligations. . . . Wedding celebrations ideally lasted seven days, and many associates of the bride and groom would remain for the full period, abstaining from work to share the joy of the new family. Blessing were repeated for those who arrived later in the seven days.<sup>[1]</sup> Jesus was there in the heart of the party enjoying the joy of the celebration. This is the one we follow! Jesus, the joyful one, who joins in our joy, and calls us to joy.

Later in the gospel of John, after teaching his disciples about what it means to abide in the love of Jesus, Jesus sums it up with these words, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). I'm sure that if we could have seen the face of Jesus, he would have had a smile on his face, enjoying the festivities. He calls us to join with him in his joy. We are called to be happy people! Joyful in Jesus. Let us share our joy with the world. As the party progresses, there is a problem. This is my second point.

## 2. The Problem (verses 3-4)

Verse 3 introduces the problem.

John 2:3  
When the wine ran out,

They ran out of wine. At a wedding in those days, this was a problem. This was a huge problem! Psalm 104:15 says that God has given "wine to gladden the heart of man." As central as joy was to this wedding, so also was the presence of wine to help bring that joy! To run out of this wine was to dampen the celebration. It was also to bring disgrace upon the family, who weren't able to plan appropriately for the party.

It is equivalent today to running out of food. Can you imagine going to a wedding today, and you are seated at your table. You're enjoying the music and festivities. Finally, your table is called to walk through the food line and all that's left is a little bit of scraps. Barely enough to put anything on your plate. It would be of great embarrassment to those who invited you to come to the wedding, if you ran out of food. So likewise here with the running out of wine.

This is where the story turns to Jesus. Look again at verse 3,

John 2:3-4  
When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

There is a lot going on in this conversation. First of all, the fact that the mother of Jesus turns to him to tell him that there is no wine tells us that she knew well of the ability of Jesus to solve the problem. She had given birth to this miraculous child. She had watched as this child grew up, and understood his power and ability. So, she brought the problem to him.

Second, in verse 4, Jesus addresses his mother by calling her, "Woman." To us, this seems incredibly rude. Especially as she has come to her son, telling him of the problem at the feast! You would think that he would be somewhat sympathetic to her request. "Mother, I will do what I can." Instead, he calls her, "woman." I think what Jesus is doing at this moment is giving a little distance between the two of them. Later, Jesus will say, "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38 and John 4:34). That is, Jesus came to follow after the will of his heavenly Father, not his earthy mother. So, calling her "woman" is a way to distance himself from her.

Also, we see Jesus pulling away from the problem. He says,

John 2:4  
"Woman, what does this have to do with me?"

In other words, "It's not my problem!" From everything we know of Jesus, this is strange for us. We know him as the one who is always willing to help. The one who is always ready to heal or to give his time to help. Yet here, it seems as if Jesus pulls back. This is strange to our ears. It was probably strange to the ears of his mother as well.

Finally, in this conversation, we are introduced to this concept of "the hour." Jesus says,

John 2:4  
"My hour has not yet come."

With these words, we are introduced to a concept that we will see throughout the gospel of John. Jesus will often talk about "my hour." From later clues we will see that Jesus refers to his suffering and death upon the cross, where the gospel of John is headed. Perhaps the clearest

place we see this is in chapter 12, verse 23, when Jesus told his disciples "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

As the context then goes on to explain, Jesus was talking about his death upon the cross. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). In other words, "I'm like a grain of wheat that will bring forth much fruit. But to do so, I need to die. It's through my death that my greatest impact will be made."

Jesus knew of how hard it would be. Just a few verses later, Jesus would say, "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name" (John 12:27-28). The gospel of John is aiming us to that hour of Jesus, when he would be lifted up on the cross to die for our sins! Thus bring fruit as many would believe in him!

Now, this hour in our passage this morning seems a bit different. It seems as if Jesus is speaking about "the hour of his coming out for his public ministry." But when he does "come out" it will lead to his ultimate hour upon the cross. All that to say, that Jesus indicates that he's not going to help. But his mother knows a thing or two about Jesus. He says to the servants,

John 2:5

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

### 3. The Provision (verses 5-8)

Now, we know what this means. It means that Jesus is going to change the water into wine, so that the party might go on! But those at the wedding reception didn't know what Jesus was going to do. Nor do those who read the gospel of John for the first time. So let us hear this miracle afresh, as if for the first time. John, the author of this gospel tells us:

John 2:6

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

The law of Moses places a strong emphasis upon being pure if you would enter into God's presence. The law spoke about what was clean and unclean to eat (Leviticus 11). The law spoke about how to purify yourself after childbirth (Leviticus 12). The law spoke about how your skin condition or how the mold in your house can make you unclean (Leviticus 13-14). The law spoke about how you can be unclean after regular bodily functions (Leviticus 15). As a result, they did everything in their power to insure that they were clean before worshiping the Lord or joining in a festival. Often, this would mean taking some water and ceremonially cleansing your hands or your feet.

At the place where this wedding was taking place, there were some stone water jars filled with water for the purpose of cleansing yourself before you entered into the reception. John tells us that there were six of these jars. John also tells us the size of these stone water jars. Each of them were 20-30 gallons. To give you an idea of how large they would be, I have some show and tell. I have two plastic trash cans. The first is 15 gallons. The second is 35 gallons. So these stone water pots would have been about half-way in-between the size of these trash cans.

In verse 7, we see Jesus telling the servants,

John 2:7

"Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.

This is a simple statement, but not so simple to do. Each of these stone water jars would have been incredibly heavy to move, especially if they were filled with water. So, they didn't carry these jars to the water, they carried the water to these jars. Further, they didn't have a faucet anywhere in site that they could fill the jars with a hose. They needed to go and fetch the water from a water source. Perhaps a nearby river or well. But these jars were filled often, as the Jewish people would use the water whenever the Jews would gather in the building where this wedding reception was. So it wasn't unusual. It just would have taken some time. Who knows? Half an hour? Two hours?

During this time, the feast was continuing on. Some may not have even noticed that their wine had run out. Perhaps the mother of Jesus had news from the back room, that the supply of wine was gone. At any rate, these servants filled these jars, "to the brim." All the way to the top. Then, in verse 8 we read that Jesus said to them:

John 2:8

"Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

I'm not quite sure what these servants thought about this. Bring it for him to wash? Certainly not to drink. Yet, when they drew out the water it had become wine. So it was clear to them that they were to bring the wine to the master of the feast for him to drink.

In verses 9 and 10, we have:

### 4. The Proof (verses 9-10)

John 2:9-10

When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

That's proof that when Jesus makes wine, he makes good wine. In fact, the wine was so good that the master of the feast scolded the bridegroom for withholding the good wine until now. He said, "The normal practice is to serve the good wine first. and then, once the people have had some to drink, then would come the cheap stuff, which people wouldn't mind so much." But this bridegroom (who was ultimately

responsible for the wedding celebration), did the opposite. The good wine (which Jesus made) came out late.

This is easy for us to understand. But it's simply the proof of the miracle. He didn't know that this wine had been water only a few minutes before. Nor did he know where this wine came from. But he said that it is "good wine." Jesus has the power to make the wine. Jesus also has the grace to help with the problem at the party.

Now at this point, I do feel compelled to say a few things about wine. Many have taken this story and used it as a justification for their own alcohol use. "Jesus made wine!" "I can drink my alcohol." You certainly can. The Bible speaks often of the benefits of wine. God's blessing to Israel when entering the land included the wine. "He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you" (Deuteronomy 7:13).

The Proverbs speak of the blessing of the LORD to those who give includes the blessing of wine: "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10). That wine is intended to be drunk. Our ultimate hope is the blessing of God that includes wine at the marriage supper of the Lamb. "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined" (Isaiah 25:6).

Yet, the Bible is also filled with warnings of too much drink: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). We are told in the New Testament:

Ephesians 5:15-20

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

It's a call for wisdom. I would encourage you all to "look carefully how you walk." Think long and hard of your approach to alcohol and how it will affect those around you, your children, and your unsaved friends. I know of many whose lives were destroyed by alcohol. The blessing of God, given to make us happy, is used to destroy lives. Yvonne's uncle died because he drank too much. Yvonne's cousin died because she drank too much.

Most of all, I would exhort you to take Psalm 4:7 to heart: "You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound." Pursue joy in the Lord, which far exceeds that of the world, even when their grain and wine abound! Even when they are drunk and happy! Our happiness in the Lord can (and should) exceed theirs.

Finally, we come to our last point.

## **5. The Purpose (verse 11)**

What was the purpose of the miracle?

John 2:11

This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

It was to manifest the glory of Jesus. It was to bring the disciples to faith in him. Did you notice how Jesus did the miracle? Whenever Jesus does a miracle, it's always helpful to see how he did the miracle. In this case, Jesus wasn't hovering over these stone jars. Jesus wasn't doing any tricky business. There was no sleight of hand here. It wasn't a magic trick. It was a miracle. It was a sign. Jesus could be at his seat at the reception, transforming water into wine across the room.

Just think about the process here. This is wine. That often takes months, or even years to ferment. It's not Kool-Aid that you can add the powder and mix, and within a few minutes have gallons and gallons of Kool-Aid to drink. No, it takes a long time for the grape juice to ferment to become wine. But such is the glory of Jesus. That he can do this.

This phrase in verse 11, "Jesus manifested his glory" takes us back to the opening of the gospel of John. Do you remember what was said in verse 14? "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Here is one instance of the glory of Jesus on display! When he transformed the water into wine, such a gracious act, to keep the bridegroom from the embarrassment of running out of wine at the feast.

As we work our way through the gospel of John, we will see more of the glory of Jesus, as he heals sick people, as feeds the 5,000, as he walks on the water. Remember, turning water into wine was merely "the first of his signs." There are more to come!

It's all to show that this Jesus isn't merely a man. He is the God-man. He is God come into the flesh. He has come that we might believe in him, as do the disciples.

John 2:11

And his disciples believed in him.

Only a few days before, these disciples had come to Jesus requesting that he teach them. For a few days, perhaps Jesus taught them a thing or two with his words. But now, with this miracle, Jesus was teaching them about himself and the disciples, seeing the glory of Jesus,

“believed in him.” In other words, they “trusted in him.”

John may have pointed a few of them to Jesus as the one who is greater than John. But now they have come to experience that indeed, Jesus is greater than John. He has a glory that John never had. He has a power that John never had. so, “his disciples believe in him.” What about you? John wrote these things about Jesus, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:31). Do you? Are you believing in him? Because if you do, you will follow him wherever he goes. You will seek to do whatever he says. That’s the sign of faith. Oh, church family, believe in him! Believe so that you may live.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 4, 2024 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

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[1] Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of John, volume 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 499.