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JOHN 2:1-12

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

Alright. Open your Bibles with me to John 2.

[PRAYER] Lord, thank you for this fellowship. I'm grateful for my brothers and sisters here. We just lift up these two requests that I just made. Now I pray for my daughter and granddaughter and my son-in-law that you would bless them this week. Protect them. We also pray for Andrew as he goes back to China, that you'd find a church for him to grow spiritually. Lord, I thank you for the answer to our prayer about the scholarships that were provided for the folks to go to family camp, so Lord, I just thank you for this church and the way it pulls together in a lot of different ways. I do pray that you would continue to encourage us in this area of discipleship. That we would not only be disciples ourselves, but have opportunities to disciple others. We ask you to provide those opportunities. To that end, Lord, we're going to open your word now and ask you to teach us from it. We ask that your Holy Spirit would illumine the truths from your scriptures. I pray that you'd reveal to us practical things that we can take away and use right away in our lives. Inspire us to follow you and to serve you. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Stand with me and let's read our passage from today. This is about the wedding at Cana. Some of you know this story. It's in John 2.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

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

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and

then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

You may be seated.

I can feel the emotion in this story. Feel the emotion of a wedding happening. The reason I can feel it is because we've got one happening in our own family in the next month. My daughter Megan is getting married next month and I know all the preparations that are involved in such things. Last week it was the make-up test for Megan and this week there's something else going on. Oh. The signing of the application for the marriage license this week. And today some of the ladies are going out to celebrate the bride's thing, whatever they do for a party in advance. Oh man. Planning all the food for a wedding is amazing and making sure that it's all there. And then the invitations and getting invitations back. I'm telling you, it is a lot of work.

So I can feel what's going on at the wedding. I can feel the pressure of what's happening when they run out of wine. I'm just imagining what if I forgot as we plan a wedding and then you get there and you go, "Oh no, I forgot the..." whatever. So that's kind of the emotional feel that I think is going on in this story. I can relate personally to that story.

Now John chooses seven miracles in his book. Only seven of the miracles to report in this book, in the gospel of John. He had to pick and choose which ones he was going to share with us. He also, by the way, shares seven *I am* statements and we'll see that as we go through. *I am the bread of life, I am the door*, and so on. So we'll look at those seven statements as we continue on through the gospel of John.

But here he chose this miracle. Why would he choose this miracle in this list of things to choose? I mean I can think of some other miracles to put right up there at the front. The raising of this daughter to life, the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the water. I mean I can think of a lot of other miracles that might be more valuable or more impressive or maybe even more meaningful than this one. Why does he choose this one? I think he tells us why he chose it in verse 11. So let's look at that verse first. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and open them up and see.

Verse 11 says this: *What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs (so one, it was His first miracle. But secondly) through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

I looked at that and I said, "I want that." What is it that I want? I want to believe. The word *believe* here is to entrust yourself to something. The disciples entrusted themselves to Jesus. When a person makes that commitment in their life to entrust themselves to Jesus, it changes everything about them. It starts to affect the way they talk. It affects the way they act, the decisions that they make. It affects who they hang around with. It affects what kinds of things

they discuss with other people. It changes their culture. They become counter-culture. They become something different because now they've entrusted themselves to Jesus.

What was it that prompted them to entrust themselves to Jesus? What was it that they saw? He revealed His glory, His greatness. So they saw something really big that other people didn't see. So this miracle, although it seems like a small miracle that Jesus did, was something that touched the hearts of the disciples and they entrusted themselves or they believed in Jesus.

I want that. I trust that you want that too. I would encourage us all to want to move to the next level in our belief. How is that going to take place? In part it's going to take place when we see the glory of God. In our passage today we're going to see how we can do that. I think you're going to see some how-to kinds of ideas. But we've got to go back into the story and look at it first and try to understand what's taking place in this story. Then we'll draw some application out of this that I hope will inspire you to experience God's greatness and entrust yourself to Him maybe in a new way or maybe for the first time.

Let's go back into our passage and start with verse 1. It says – *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee.* Cana is about eight miles from Nazareth where Jesus and His brothers and sisters grew up. We don't have record of Joseph after this point, so maybe he's passed away by this time in Jesus' life. But we do see that Jesus' mother was there and Jesus and His disciples had also been invited to the wedding. But we don't know why. We don't know whether this was a family member that was getting married. We don't know if they were friends of someone in the wedding. But we do know that they were on the guest list and they were invited to the wedding. So they're there in the midst of this.

It's interesting that we have pointed out that we have Mary the mother of Jesus as a key person in this story. So far we have Mary, we have the disciples, and we have Jesus. So log them away as characters in our story as the story develops.

Jesus' mother was quite a woman it appears because she's going to see a problem. We don't know if she was in charge of something or maybe she just saw the problem and she knew what the solution was. So there are just those kinds of people who see problems. I know some of you are that kind of... Sometimes we call them engineers. You know, they see problems and they have a solution and they bring those things together. But maybe it's just the fact that she was a mom. At least six children, you know. Jesus had brothers, sisters. Mark 6 tells us that. So maybe just being a mom is what empowered her to solve problems because that's obviously what happens in motherhood as you're solving problems continuously.

So now we have Jesus and there's going to be this dialogue that takes place between them. Let's add some more verses here. *When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."*

"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

Now I look at those words in my language or my understanding, it almost sounds like Jesus is being rude to His mother. But I think if we look at the culture, we see something a little different. The word *woman* is like saying "ma'am." Yes ma'am.

Occasionally I get to visit Alabama to teach a parenting seminar. I think everybody ought to visit Alabama. In Alabama everybody treats everybody nicely. It's a very "yes ma'am, yes sir" kind of society and it's a beautiful, beautiful kind of thing to experience. Everybody ought to go there just to experience the manners.

I think if we were to translate this into southern terminology, I think Mary is saying, "Hey, we're out of wine. Jesus, would you do something?" And Jesus' response is, "Yes, ma'am, but I'm not sure this is the right timing."

You see Jesus knew that He was on earth for a purpose. He knew that He was going to the cross, that His mission in life would be revealed over time, that He would preach a sermon we call the Sermon on the Mount which He would talk about the kingdom that is coming and different aspects of the kingdom. Jesus had a mission to talk to people about the hearts, not just the external behaviors like the Pharisees and religion of the day. It was something deeper. Jesus was on a mission and this didn't quite seem to fit as He's describing it here.

But I like Mary, who is the problem solver who says to Jesus, "Hey, here's the problem. Would you do something?" and then she goes away. She disappears. She just turns it over to Jesus and lets him take care of the problem. I think there's some value to that in our own lives. Sometimes we need to turn it over to Jesus and walk away and it's Jesus' problem now. We'll let Him take care of it.

What happens in the story is that she also says to the servants, "Do whatever He says." "*Do whatever he tells you to do.*" Well now we're adding a new character group into our story. These are the servants. And what characterizes the servants is that they do the right thing even though they don't understand why. I like that. They're obedient.

I think we'll see a part of experiencing God's greatness is that we have to have obedient people. That's what happens in the passage. His glory is going to be revealed, but part of that is we have obedient people doing what they need to do. So the obedience factor in our lives needs to be high even when we don't understand why.

I think we do this a lot in our lives, that we obey and we don't understand why. Emotionally we're upset and we know we have to just release this to the Lord instead of trying to control it with our emotions. We don't really understand why, but we do it anyway. Or in our finances: we give to the Lord in our finances even when it may not make sense in our budget or whatever. We do it. Why do we do it? Because it's a step of faith that we take where God impresses on us something that we need to do, so we do it not understanding why. And that is important to obey even when we don't understand why.

Some people feel like they have to understand why before they do anything. I just think there's some benefit and it's called faith. I mean sometimes we take steps to do the right thing even when we don't understand why because it's faith. I like this statement: "Sometimes faith doesn't make sense; it makes miracles. Our job is to obey." Now I think sometimes faith does make sense, so I don't want to say it always doesn't make sense. But I think sometimes faith is that

extra step we take that doesn't make sense. I just need to do this even though I don't understand why. My job is to obey the Lord. And what happens in the midst of that? Miracles take place. So God wants to do things in and around our lives, I think even in the common areas, the common things that we do. That's what's happening in the story. It's just a common story that's happening here.

But we have to digress a little bit because the passage digresses a little. So let's look back at the passage before we can get into understanding the story of the water being turned into wine. We have to understand a little bit what's going on in the scene. So John tells us that in verse 6. It says – *Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.*

One of the things that I like about the servants is they didn't just do the bare minimum. They filled them all the way to the brim, and notice a point is made about that. A great application for us as children, young people. Jesus honored His mother even though He questioned her. Right? He honored His mother and did the right thing or did something in honor of her. Secondly, the servants did a thorough job. They did a complete job filling it the brim. I like that.

But we have to learn more about these ceremonial washing pots because I want you to get the picture. These six stone pots or jars are big. They're heavy. Notice how much each one holds. It holds between twenty and thirty gallons. So let's say twenty-five gallons. Do you know how much a gallon of water weighs? About eight pounds. Eight pounds for a gallon of water. So we're talking about two hundred or some pounds of water. So these aren't containers you're going to take down the river or take to the well and fill up and carry back. They're going to be making trips back and forth in order to fill these stone water pots.

I found a picture of some stone water pots on the web that seemed to be about the same size. So if you're taking twenty-five gallons, that's like five Home Depot buckets and filling them with water and pouring them into these containers. They take one solid piece of stone, and they carve the outside and dig out the middle. So we're talking about something that weighs quite a bit. These stones were not stones for drinking water. Maybe you could drink out of them, I don't know. But you saw in the passage the purpose of the stone water pots was ceremonial washing. Now that's going to be really important in this story. That's why John takes us back to explain to us what's going on in this story.

Stone water pots used for ceremonial washing are significant because Jesus is going to use them. Why does He use them? Well part of Jesus' mission is to show that the religiosity of the day was inadequate for the internal change that needed to take place in people's lives. So he's going to take stone cold jars or pots and he's going to breathe new life into them with wine. Vibrancy. Life. An amazing thing takes place.

That's why it's so stunning that the servants went and filled up the washing containers. The problem was we don't have enough wine to drink. And they're filling up washing containers to wash with. Maybe they thought Jesus was going to do some kind of a washing exercise.

These kinds of pots were all over the place. They would often be in people's home where they would take out and wash their hands, sometimes wash their whole bodies. Not for a bath, but ceremonially to clean themselves so they would be purified. It comes from Old Testament teaching. They were also in front of the temple, at certain places around the temple, or they were at synagogues. They were at different places where people would ceremonially wash.

So people had this kind of idea that actually comes from the Old Testament. It was focused more on externals and Jesus wants them to know there's something new. Something special. And I'm convinced God does that in our lives all the time. He takes something that's stone cold, something that's common, something that's even religious, and then He breathes life into it.

I know some of you grew up in homes where religion was practiced in one form or another. But there comes a place in your life where you recognize that religion isn't enough. I need something more than that. I need Jesus to come and live inside of me. I need the vibrancy of that life that He provides. So it's pretty significant what Jesus does in this miracle because He takes some common things, He takes some stone jars, some religious items and He does something really special and transforms them in the same way that God wants to do in our lives. Each one of us, all around, things going on right around us that are the miracles that God wants to do. Can we see those things?

Let's go back to our passage. Verse 7 says – *“Fill the jars with water,” so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”* Now we're adding another character to the story. The master of the banquet was like the head waiter, the guy who's in charge of making sure everything's okay. And obviously he had a problem that there was no more wine. So he's another character in our story.

Verse 9 says – *They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.* Now I want you to see there are two different kinds of people. I know we've talked about all the different individual characters. There are two kinds of people: some who experience the miracle and see it, and some who don't. They all get the benefits. Right? They all get the benefits of the new wine that they have, but some see it as a miracle. Some see it as, “Wow, you found some wine.”

I find that really interesting because that's true in our lives as well. If we just go around in our lives, there are miracles taking place around us all the time. Some people see them, some people don't. Many people experience the benefits of miracles, but don't realize that they're miracles. But because we know Jesus and we're seeing Him and we're close to Jesus. The disciples are close to Jesus and they're hanging around with Jesus and they see Jesus working. They see and what do they do? They believe. They entrusted themselves to Jesus. Wow. I want to be one of those people who sees the miracles taking place in people's lives all around.

He did not realize where it had come from though the servants who had drawn the water knew. I wonder what they thought? They knew where the water came from. It doesn't say they believed or entrusted themselves to Jesus. We don't know what happened to them. All we know is that they were part of a miracle. They obeyed and as a result they knew this water that came in these

ceremonial washing pots is now drinkable wine. That's stunning. They realized it was a miracle. The disciples realized it was a miracle. Did the head waiter realize it was a miracle? No. It doesn't appear so. He didn't realize where it came from. He just decided, "Oh we got some more wine. Finally. Where did you guys get it from? Bring it on."

Let's go on and finish the passage here and look at the rest. It says – *He did not realize where it had come from though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom.* Now here's another character in our story.

In weddings in the New Testament it was the bridegroom's responsibility to manage all the affairs, to make sure that everything that needed to take place was taking place. It was his responsibility. In our modern culture, it's the bride's family who's responsible for the wedding itself. So it's a little bit of a change here.

So there's this dialogue that happens with the bridegroom. But this is more than a story about providing a beverage that had gone out for a friend. This is about something going on in the changing of the physical contents or the physics of the water. It's a miracle taking place. And the bridegroom hears about it.

We don't know his response, but I can imagine, as you would in more weddings, you don't tell the bridegroom too much. He's just enjoying what's going on. Right? Everybody's doing their thing and the bridegroom is having a great time at his party there, so you don't tell him about the problems that are going on behind the scene. But the head waiter has this just urging about him. He just can't believe it. He's got a question he's got to ask him. Why did you do it this way? So he says – *"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."*

I just want to say when Jesus does a miracle, He does the best. And He likes to take those things that are common around us and He likes to turn them into miracles in our lives. And we can see those miracles and when we trust Him, we can see what He's doing. It's just an amazing thing that we want to acknowledge in our own lives and see what God is doing in our own hearts. So let's go back now and kind of look at the picture here of what is happening in this story in regards to experiencing the grace of God and seeing His greatness and His glory and talking about how we then can increase our faith.

What happens in this story? Well one, if you want to experience a miracle, you want to experience God's greatness, the first thing that we see in this story is that there's a focus on a problem. Notice the problem isn't Mary having a problem. She's seeing a problem somewhere else. If you want to watch God work, then look around for problems.

People have problems. We live in a very complex world, I want to suggest. It's a very difficult place to live for many people. There's a lot of things going on in people's lives and it's very complex just trying to keep your head above water for many people. You see a need going on and when you see that need, that is your ticket to a miracle. Miracles start with impossible things, you know. So you see a need and you step into that need and you say, "Hey, can I pray for you?"

We have this five-for-five tool that you can use that says choose five people. Pray for them daily. Touch base with them once a week. Surprise them with kindness once a month. Invite them to special events – birthday parties, holiday parties, fun outings, etc. And look for opportunities to share your testimony or the gospel. It starts with a need. It is not hard when we start looking around to see needs in other people’s lives and to say, “Hey, can I pray for you?” or maybe even to say, “I’d like to share a verse of scripture with you,” or “Jesus has a solution for where you’re at.”

What Mary does is very strategic. So I think the one component about seeing God’s greatness and increasing our own faith is seeing needs and trying to introduce Jesus into the midst of that in one way or another.

The second thing we see if you want to experience God’s greatness is that we are obedient, like the servants were. We do what we’re supposed to do. We do what God wants us to do even if we don’t understand why. And when that takes place, what happens? The best wine...the best...comes out.

I was just thinking about that this week. I mean God wants to do the best, which is really big. He wants to do these miracles that are stunning in people’s lives. And I don’t know where He wants to do those things. Sometimes we pray for someone and that problem doesn’t go away, but God does something deeper in their hearts. I don’t know how God’s going to answer the prayers that we have. They’re not just magic formulas. What we’re doing is praying for people’s hearts that God would change them and God does these amazing miracles and then we have the best. The word ‘the best.’ I was meditating on that this week. We have access to the best. Because we can see God at work, we can see what He’s doing. We have access to the best.

I’m going to share with you a little bit of Jewish culture. Not just in the past, but this is more current Jewish culture. Do you see how it says *on the third day*? The third day is Tuesday. We don’t usually choose Tuesdays for weddings, but in the Jewish tradition, even today, often they will do that. And here’s why. So they’ll choose Tuesday. The Jewish people today will choose Tuesdays to start a business, to get married, or to do some special thing. They’ll often choose Tuesdays. And the reason they’ll do that is because of creation.

On creation on the third day, on Tuesday, God said, “And it was good,” twice. Every other day it’s once. But on Tuesday He says, “And it was good.” When He created the land and separated the water from the land, He says, “And it was good.” Then He created all the vegetation and the trees and the flowers and He says, “And it was good.” So we have two *tov*’s. *Tov, mazel tov*. The word *tov* means good. So the Jewish people even think today because God blessed that day and said it was good twice on Tuesday that I want to do some special things on Tuesday.

I thought that was kind of interesting to think that this wedding started on a Tuesday. Often weddings in those days would last two to ten days. So it’s not just a one day wedding. But a double blessing on Tuesday. We’ll call that double blessing Tuesday, I guess, for them.

But then I started thinking of some other scriptures that really do apply to us and help us understand that God has something really big and more for us. 2 Corinthians 9:8. Just hear the

word 'best.' The word 'best' isn't there, but just listen to these words. *And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.* That's a little over the top for me. Whoa whoa. There's a lot of stuff there.

I want that in my life. How am I going to see that? Then I'm going to obey the Lord. I'm going to do what He calls me to do. I'm going to entrust my life to Him. I'm going to fit into His plans instead of asking Him to fit into my plans. I want God to be exalted in my life because I want to experience all of those things. The word *all* is used several times in that verse.

Here's another verse. This is something similar. Ephesians 3:20 – *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

God has this power that He wants to work inside of us. The ticket to this power is to open ourselves up and say, "God, use me." I want to be near the Lord, I want to be with Jesus when He's doing these miracles. I want to see where the needs are. I want to watch Him do these things. I want to be there. I want to entrust my life to the Lord more because I want that. I want that blessing. I want that best. I want that immeasurably more that He offers us. I want that in my life and I know you do too.

So receiving that is a privilege that we have. It's one of the benefits of being a believer in Jesus Christ. It's one of the privileges of knowing Him and obeying Him. It's a privilege of serving Jesus Christ.

I would encourage you to serve the Lord with all your heart. Look forward to what He's going to do and watch those miracles unfold around you as you see needs around you. And you bring Christ into that somehow. You have to be sensitive to how you're going to do that, but you're trying to bring Christ into those situations and then watch God work in these immeasurably ways, these best ways.

I'm convinced God wants to do great things and it starts with our hearts. Are we open to that? Are we willing to let God do that work? Wherever you are and whatever place in your life, God wants to do something big. It starts by turning yourself over to the Lord and allowing Him to do it.

Would you stand with me? We're going to pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, it's with humility that we come before you and acknowledge that our world is complex and knowing exactly how to serve you in the midst of that can be challenging, but we know you'll guide us. We know that you'll provide the solutions when we present them to you. So I ask, Lord, that you would reveal things this week in the lives of each of us that we can see problems and then bring solutions into that situation that are focused on you and what you can do. We ask for that blessing. In Jesus' name, amen.