

013 John 2:1-12 The Wedding at Cana in Galilee

On 19th May 2018 there is going to be a big wedding. Harry and Meghan will be married at St Georges Chapel in the grounds of Windsor castle. I am sure the planning is meticulous because the last thing they want is for something to go wrong!

The wedding at Cana was a very different kind of wedding, in a small village in the back waters of Galilee, probably about 8 miles north of Nazareth. But whether in the limelight or an obscure wedding, a wedding is always a special day for the young couple, the family and the wider community.

Jesus' mother was there (John 2:1), probably because there were family connections, and maybe she was helping with the catering. John tells us this wedding was on the third day. In the Hebrew Scriptures the third day carries a special blessing because, *And God saw that it was good*, is stated twice on the third day (Genesis 1:10,12). So it was a good day to have a wedding!

The list of guests to Harry and Meghan's wedding can be easily found, but for the wedding in Cana we don't even know the names of the bride and groom. Even Mary is only called, *the mother of Jesus*. In fact, we only know the name of one of the guests, and that is Jesus – this should tell us something about John's reason for writing (John 20:31). Jesus was invited to this wedding, but the text says about much more than that. At the wedding Jesus turned water into wine, the first of His miraculous signs. Thus Jesus manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him (John 2:11, cf John 1:14).

For Israelites wine was a symbol of God's blessing (Deuteronomy 11:14). But the unthinkable happened, the wine ran dry, the blessing stopped flowing. Instead of joy, there was shame. If this happened to us the first thing we would do is to blame someone. But the text doesn't moralise or find fault or even give an explanation. Instead, we witness a manifestation of God's grace through His Son Jesus. If you feel the blessing has stopped flowing in your life, maybe you want to blame someone, or yourself. But God wants to do a miracle of grace for you.

Jesus turned to His mother and asked, *Woman* (an expression of affection), *why do you involve me? My hour had not yet come* (John 2:4). *My hour* in John refers to His death and resurrection. I think Jesus is making the point that now, at the beginning of His ministry, He is no longer under His mother's authority but under His Father's authority. Mary gets it and said to the servants, *Do whatever He tells you* (John 2:5). This reminds us of Pharaoh who told the Egyptians to, *Go to Joseph and do whatever He tells you* (Genesis 41:55). Joseph had been storing food during the seven years of plenty to prepare for seven years of famine. So Joseph, as a type of Messiah, became the source of food for the starving people. Jesus, also a son of Joseph (John 1:45), is the Source of blessing. He is the One from above and Who is above all (John 3:31). Unfortunately, we confuse the gift with the Giver, and the last place we look is to Jesus as the Source of blessing. Experimentation with sex, gender identities, drug taking, alcohol, occult practice are all an attempt to find the blessing, but will in the end leave us dry and empty. But if we come to the Source, Jesus will do a miracle.

There were six large empty stone jars used by the Jews for ceremonial washing – maybe that is what you feel like, cold and empty! Jewish law prescribed outward washing that pointed to the need to be cleansed from sin. But water can never cleanse the soul from the guilt of sin (John 1:17). The Law

(e.g. the Ten Commandments) without Jesus will leave us like those empty jars. That's what the religion of the Judeans had become. When Jesus came they didn't receive Him (John 1:11). A lot of Christendom has become equally cold and empty today: the outward form without the glory.

Jesus told the servants to fill the jars to the brim with water, which they did without questioning (John 2:7). Then Jesus told them to *draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet* (John 2:8). Again, they did so without protest. Between John 2:8 and 2:9 a mighty miracle happened. John tells of it in a breath-takingly simple way, *and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine*. Have you tasted the new wine of the kingdom? (Psalm 34:8). *The master of the banquet did not know where it had come from, through the servants who had drawn the water knew* (John 2:9). Do you know the Source of the Blessing? Do you the Source of everything: *through Him all things were made!* In John's gospel Jesus is the Source of living waters (chapter 4), living bread (chapter 6), the Spirit (chapter 7) and eternal life (throughout the gospel).

This first sign which Jesus did in Cana of Galilee is about transformation, just as fermentation transformed a mixture of water and grapes into wine. The things you have tasted in this life have perhaps left your cold and empty. Or, you maybe have tasted the new wine of the kingdom. Whoever you are, as with the miracle wine at the wedding, the best is saved until last (John 2:10)!

Peter said in his first epistle, *you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors ... by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect* (1Peter 1:18-19). The miracle of transformation changes everything. Once we have tasted the new wine (the Spirit) you can never be the same, and why would you want to be? On the other hand, the miracle of transformation changes nothing! *After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and His disciples. There they stayed for a few days* (John 2:12). And so it is for us. Life goes on as normal. We still have to put bread on the table and pay the bills! John in his gospel has the extraordinary ability to move from the sublime glory to the very ordinary effortlessly. Why is this? Because the best is yet to come. The sign at Cana was more than Jesus saving the day, though it was that. It was more than a demonstration of how Jesus can change our lives, though it was that. It was a sign of cosmic transformation, a foreshadowing of the Messianic era, which for example Joel spoke of:

Joel 3:18 *"And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim.*

At His first coming Jesus inaugurated the kingdom, but the best is yet to come at His second coming. At the last supper Jesus took the cup of wine, saying,

Matthew 26:27-28 *Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

The miracle at the wedding in Cana is our invitation to behold His glory and as His disciples to believe in Him (John 2:11). It is our invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9) in the age to come.