

The Wedding Party - John 2:1-11
Argyle – 2/19/17 – Encounters With Jesus (Keller)

Introduction to Scripture

When someone from out of town is coming to our church for the first time, I tell them to look for our front sign. Our sign points to the fact that this is the Argyle Presbyterian Church. And it tells people what our Sunday morning schedule is and through the phrases we put up, it tells them a little bit about what we believe. The purpose of a sign is to point to something else. Wikipedia defines a sign as “an object, quality, event, or entity whose presence or occurrence indicates the probable presence or occurrence of something else.” Signs don't exist for their own sake, but point to and reveal something about something else.

In his gospel, John doesn't refer to Jesus miracles as “miracles” like the other gospels do. Instead, he calls them “signs.” For instance, in our Scripture passage this morning, after Jesus had turned the water into wine John wrote, “This, the first of his miraculous **signs**, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.” Changing the water into wine was not a standalone event. It was a sign that pointed to something about Jesus. Our task this morning is figure out what this sign teaches us about Jesus.

(Read) (Pray)

Introduction

If you were Jesus and were looking for the perfect way to launch your ministry, what would you do? What miracle would you perform to show the world who you are and what your mission was going to be? Think of all the miracles that Jesus did. If they could be rated from the most important in your opinion to the least important, how would you do that? Surely near the top would be one of the raisings from the dead - Lazarus, or Jairus' daughter, or the son of the widow from Nain. I would probably go with Lazarus. Then might be one of Jesus' healings. I would have the healing of the paralyzed man by the Pool of Bethesda near the top of my list or the guy the lowered through the roof. Then there would be him walking on the water and the feeding of the 5000. Way down most of our lists would be the changing of the water into wine. Some of us might even be uncomfortable putting it on a list of Jesus' miracles. Yet, it is the one that he chose to use as his first sign, as the brand, if you will, for his mission. If the disciples wore Jesus T-shirts, they would have had a logo (picture) depicting the transformation of the water into wine.

What Does This Sign Reveal to Us About Jesus?

The question I want to explore is, "What does this sign reveal to us about Jesus?" It seems at first glance to be a trivial use of his power. Raising people from the dead makes sense to us. So, do the healings. So, does the feeding of the

5000. All of those met a genuine human need. But what did this miracle accomplish? What does it reveal to us about Jesus?

This Sign Shows us that Jesus is Compassionate

First, this sign shows us that Jesus is compassionate. In *Encounters With Jesus* Tim Keller tells about an English literature professor from Duke University who analyzed the Gospel of John. One of Reynolds Price's conclusions from the perspective of a literary analysis is that John's gospel is an authentic eyewitness account, rather than a piece of fiction. One of his reasons for reaching that conclusion is that John's Gospel includes this miracle. Reynolds writes, "Why invent for the inaugural sign of Jesus' great career - a miraculous solution to a mere social oversight?" A lot of us see this miracle that way - ie. as a solution to a mere social oversight. That's because we don't understand this first century, Middle Eastern context where hospitably was incredibly important. A wedding was not just a family affair, but it was also a community event for the entire town. It was the biggest day in the personal lives of the bride and groom as they became full adult members of their society. A wedding feast would last for days up to a week.

To run out of wine in the midst of the wedding feast was as Tim Keller writes, "not a mere breach of etiquette but a social and psychological catastrophe, particularly in a traditional honor-and-shame culture." It is likely that this was an

under resourced family trying to make their limited resources go as far as they could and it wasn't working. As we see over and over again in the Scriptures, Jesus is compassionate on the poor, the sick, the widow and the oppressed. He was saving this young couple from a shame that would follow them throughout their lives. We see Jesus' compassion here just as much as we do in his healing of Blind Bartimaeus or the raising of Jairus' daughter or the feeding of the 5000. Changing water into wine shows us that Jesus is compassionate.

This Sign Shows us that Jesus is the Long Awaited Messiah

A second thing and probably the most important thing this sign shows us is that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. You might be thinking, "Where do you get that McLean?" The key to seeing this is to understand the Biblical background on wine. We live in a culture that is conflicted about alcoholic beverages. Most of us have seen firsthand what happens when alcohol is abused and so we are wary of it and rightfully so. The Biblical perspective on wine is very different. First of all, the wine that was drunk in Jesus day was highly diluted with water, 3 parts water to one part wine. We think of a weeklong wedding feast with an abundance of wine as being an out of control affair. That would not have at all been the case.

The second thing for us to realized how wine was used metaphorically in the Bible. Wine is symbolic of joy in the Scriptures. It often shows up in passages that talk about the joy the Messiah would bring when he came. For instance in

Isaiah 25 we read, “On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. ⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth”(Isaiah 25:6-8). Likewise in Amos 9 we read, “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, ¹⁴ and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. ‘They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,’ says the LORD your God”(Amos 9:13-15).

Jesus turning water into wine was a sign pointing to the fact that the Messiah who would bring about these things described by Isaiah and Amos had arrived. His presence and work would bring joy, just as the angel had announced at his birth.

When Jesus turned the water into wine he was claiming for those who were paying attention that he was long waited Messiah who had come not just to

transform water into wine, but light into darkness and mourning into joy and sinners into saints.

This Sign Shows us that Jesus Would Have to Die to Accomplish His Mission

One last thing this sign shows us is that Jesus would have to die to accomplish his mission. Many of us are puzzled by the way Jesus responds to his mother. She lets him know that they have run out of wine for this wedding feast. He responded, “Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.” He seems to be a little irritated with her, which is not very Jesus like. Couldn’t he have just said, “Sorry mom, I can’t do anything about it?”

What Jesus is doing here is letting her know exactly what he is doing here. Changing water into wine was going to be the sign of the much more significant transformations that he was going to bring. And to transform light into darkness and mourning into joy and sinners into saints was going to be very costly to him. It wasn’t going to come about by touching someone or simply saying “You are forgiven and reconciled to my Heavenly Father.” No, it would only come about through his death.

That is what he meant when he said, “My time has not yet come.” This is not the only place where he says something like this. In John 7 he told his brothers that he was not going to go to Jerusalem for the festival because “his time” had not yet fully come. Later when he did go to Jerusalem John tell us, “At

this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.” (John 7:30) Then in John 13 we are told that Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave the world and so he washed his disciples feet. Finally in John 17 Jesus prayed, “Father, the hour has come.” His “time” was a reference to his crucifixion. It is the reason he came into the world. It is what his whole ministry was oriented toward. To change the water into wine was the beginning of the end. Although it would take three years, Jesus’ whole focus from this point on was the cross

This thought is magnified by the presence of the stone jars that were used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. These weren’t just any jars filled with water, but ones that represented the need for purification. They were part of the extensive Jewish sacrificial system that highlighted to human need for spiritual cleansing from our sin. That system pointed forward to One who would come to fulfill what that sacrificial system pointed toward. In changing that ceremonial cleansing water into wine, Jesus was claiming to be that ultimate sacrifice, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. To accomplish that mission, Jesus would have to die. So, Jesus made over 120 gallons of wine, of excellent wine to illustrate the abundance and the effectualness of how he would meet our needs including our need for forgiveness. Peter wrote, “For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.” (I

Peter 3:18). He abundantly and effectually has met our need for forgiveness through his death on the cross. Nothing else is needed. We only need to receive this great gift that God offers us and the joy that comes with it.

Conclusion

If you want to know about our church, check out our sign and our website and Facebook pages would virtual signs that point to our church and what we are like. If you want to know about Jesus, meditate on the signs he preformed. There is a lot more there than meets the eye. Sure water gets transformed and folks get healed and raised from the dead. But more than that, Jesus glory is revealed and we are helped to put our faith in him.