

The Gracious Guest

John 2:1-11

No one wants to run out of food and drink for their guests at a party, let alone a wedding! It's always a bit challenging to estimate how much you'll need for the guests you've invited. Now picture planning for 7 days! That's how long people celebrated with feasting, dancing, wine, and celebration at a wedding in Jesus' time.

Apparently, at this wedding in Cana in Galilee, either people were really having a great time and drinking more wine than usual or maybe the wedding planner didn't plan so well. In fact, maybe there's a little humor in this passage of scripture when the person in charge of making sure things go smoothly goes to the bridegroom and says, "Hey...you've been holding out on us. Everyone knows you're supposed to serve the best wine first. You've kept the best wine hidden away until you had to use it!

If Jesus is called to make wine, he's going to make the best! Right? And he makes a LOT of it!

Now we don't know if the wine ran out early cause not enough was provided. We learn, it ran out on the third day! But we can probably assume that this was a rather large wedding! A lot of people must have been attending! When Jesus made wine, he went all out. He made more wine than we would expect anyone to make for a wedding –or for any occasion for that matter! So, how much are we talking about?

To put things into perspective, one bottle of wine, as we are familiar with bottles of wine, equals 1/5 of a gallon. So, in other words, a gallon of wine would equal 5 bottles. Now each of the stone water jars held 20-30 gallons. Let's go with 20 for a conservative figure. One of those would yield about 100 bottles of wine. They filled six! So, Jesus created 600 bottles of wine. Now, if those water jars held 30 gallons, then we are talking about 900 bottles of wine. That is some miracle! Not only did he create the wine, but it was the best anyone had ever tasted all week long! When Jesus invests in something or someone, he goes all in!

This "first miracle" of Jesus is not one he was prepared to do. He is not ready to "come out" so to speak as Miracle Messiah just yet. His time "had not yet come!" He does this first miracle to assist his mother, who...as we see here....knows already what he can do!

It must have been an important wedding. Jesus' mother, it says, was there. She is mentioned first, so she must be an important part of the wedding. It's clear that she has some kind of status at the wedding, as she seems to feel obligated to assist the bride and groom!

Jesus maybe, because he's Mary's son....is invited to bring his entire posse with him. Mary has some clout. And she obviously cares about the bride and groom and the success of the wedding, so much so, that she asks Jesus, to help, because she knows he can.

Jesus' first response is a bit snarky: "Woman, what concern is that to me and to you?" And then, "My time has not yet come!" or in other words, "I'm not prepared to draw attention to myself right now in this place."

Mary ignores his snarky comment, and simply says to the nearby servant, "Do whatever he tells you."

Obediently, Jesus commences to instruct them, and to perform a transformation!

Jesus' first transformation is from water into wine. Wine would henceforth be an important metaphor for Jesus.

In this first miracle, as he prepares for the commencement of his ministry, he "fills up." Later, as he equates wine with the giving of his life at the culmination of his ministry, he pours out.

Now to make this metaphor even more interesting, the water Jesus uses for this miracle of wine is the water used for Jewish rites of purification. We might call this kind of water today "baptismal font water." Its water meant to cleanse one for a ceremony or ritual in the Jewish tradition. Or as used in John's and Jesus' "new" concept of baptism, its water meant to renew, transform and restore. And what better place to celebrate God's restoration promise than at a wedding! The ultimate covenant union! The sweetest and purest of unions!

For everything Jesus proclaims is about covenant. And he is about to show exactly who he is –God come down and made incarnate, Both human and God. As God's blood of life (represented in the wine) flows from the holy waters into the bodies of his people from Jesus' hands, God's fulfillment of God's covenant promise is revealed, realized, released, commenced! It's a "grand Jubilee!" The biggest feast imaginable! A foreshadowing of what is to come when all will celebrate and be joyful within the blessings of God's kingdom.

In fact, the wedding at Cana could be said to represent a "little slice of heaven." For in that moment, the potential future of humankind was visualized! For all who would follow Jesus would receive all good things and take a rightful place at his heavenly feast! The ultimate Bridegroom. God's Holy Banquet.

In the scriptures, nothing is ever only about "face value." Everything told by the apostles to us today holds deep and lasting meaning about Jesus' identity, life, ministry, and promise.

This may have been Jesus' first miracle. But it is a portrait of all that is to come when God's promise is fulfilled!

As I said, when it comes to God's people, God goes "all in." God went "all in" coming down to earth in the form of a baby. God went "all in" that day in Cana, and even though "under cover" the promise of abundance that Jesus would inaugurate is loud and clear! God went "all in" as Jesus spent every waking moment in prayer and ministry for the next three years of life on earth. And God went "all in" when Jesus voluntarily took up the cross and died a human death, so that God's promise could be finally revealed in God's ultimate resurrection and forthcoming feast!

Those who drank and feasted that day were the first recipients of God's miraculous promise of joy, abundance, hope, and promise! When God throws a party only the best of the best will do! That's why God sent us Jesus! Still our greatest gift!