

Title: The Wedding Feast at Cana in Galilee

Subtitle: Jesus Manifests His Glory

Video URL: <https://youtu.be/lQtxsbkoCuw>

One of the things that I like about the Episcopal Church is that we are a fun-loving bunch who know how to throw a party! My time at St. Mary Magdalene has certainly proven the truth of that observation. So, it is no wonder that the story of the Wedding feast at Cana of Galilee is one of our all-time favorite Gospel stories. It is mentioned at every wedding and read in the Epiphany season because, through this miracle, the gospel writer tells us that Jesus “*manifested his glory, and his disciple believed in him.*”¹

Therefore, the fact that Jesus began his ministry by turning water into wine at a wedding feast shows us volumes about what God is like and confirms the assertion that Christ came and that we might have life and have it to the full.

The details contained in the account are intriguing. The Apostle John opens with these words: “*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.’*”²

Weddings are grand affairs. In the time of Christ, a typical Hebrew wedding took place late in the evening following a feast. After the ceremony, the bride and groom were brought to their home in a torchlight parade complete with a canopy held over their heads. They were always taken along the most roundabout route so everyone would have the opportunity to wish them well. They wore crowns and, dressed in bridal robes,

¹ John 2:11

² John 2:1-3

were esteemed as a king and queen for the day. It was as if they didn't want the celebration to end but continue as long as possible as a sign of what their future blessedness in marriage might have in store.

Therefore, ***“Having no wine,”*** which the Psalmist proclaimed ***“gladdens the heart”***³ and symbolizes joy and exhilaration, would be a major letdown for the couple.

We can imagine the dismayed host saying, “Is that all there is?” The party cannot end now; we just got started. Jewish wedding feasts were known to last for days, and so it was a terrible embarrassment. However, “Having no wine” is a succinct statement of the young couple's problem and, as John saw it, a spiritually concise version of the human experience without Christ. The universal experience of humanity, apart from Christ, is that there comes a time when the joy and exhilaration of life dwindles into thin air and is quickly gone.

Solomon contemplated and wrote about this problem in the Book of Ecclesiastes, where, from his own experience of having everything that this world could offer, he was left to exclaim, ***“All is vanity, a striving after wind.”***⁴

When Mary becomes aware of the young couple's dilemma, she asks her son for help.

Mary had waited 30 years for Jesus to manifest who he was to the world. The time had finally arrived for him to begin his ministry, and John the Baptist had just a few days earlier declared him to be ***“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”***⁵ Mary is just bursting with expectation as if to say, ***“Come on, Jesus, I know who you are, do something.”*** This young couple, who have just begun their life together, is in a tight

³ Psalm 104:15

⁴ Ecclesiastes 1:17 and 2:11

⁵ John 1:29

spot. You can do something extraordinary, so why won't you help?

If Jesus' mother was anything like mine, trying to say "no" to her must have been very difficult. Therefore, Jesus addresses his mother in a way that seems perplexing. Instead of addressing her as Mom or Mother or by her first name, he asks, "**Women, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.**"⁶

Mary is not offended, and neither is she put off. She probably was not used to being spoken to in that manner, nor did she know what he meant when he said, "**My time had not yet come.**"⁷ But she certainly was not going to let those things stop her. Her faith moved into action, and she overcame all obstacles and resistance; when turning to the servants, she said, "**Do whatever he tells you.**"⁸

But choosing to do what he tells them is a tall order, for he says to the servants, "**Fill the stone jars with water.**"⁹ Each of these jars used for ceremonial washing held between 15 to 25 gallons, and there were six of them, and hauling that much water from the local well was not easy.

But as a result, a behind-the-scenes miracle occurred. John said that this miracle was "**the first of his signs.**"¹⁰ And we can read what this sign means if we can make points of connection with it in our lives.

John concludes that this sign "**revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him.**"¹¹ The word '**glory**' has great significance in this context. The word comes from the Greek word '**Doxa.**' It is a term used to describe the manifestation of

⁶ John 2:4

⁷ John 2:4b

⁸ John 2:5

⁹ John 2:7

¹⁰ John 2:11a

¹¹ John 2:11b

God's splendor and divine essence. The Old Testament uses the word to define God's character when the LORD proclaimed his name to Moses as he passed by him in the wilderness, announcing that He ***"...is "compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty,"***¹²

Therefore, wouldn't God, who is the epitome of compassion and steadfast love, want to be with this couple at the first sign that the party was over? He longs to be gracious to us not just in our high moments but also in our lows. God longs to be with us even when our love for each other falls short, the wine runs dry, and we need forgiveness again and again.

The dilemma that overtook the bridal couple is a metaphor for why he came. So when life is not turning out the way we would hope, and the wine of our party seems to be running dry, we need to remember how Mary handled the situation even when Jesus appeared hesitant to get involved. If we, too, will do ***"whatever he tells you,"***¹³ things will turn out better than we could ever expect, for He has ***"saved the best for last"***¹⁴ for those who trust him. *Amen.*

¹² Exodus 34:5-7

¹³ John 2:5

¹⁴ John 2:10