



Around the Word
Bible Study
 Epiphany, 2017

The Light of Christ
 St. John 2:1-11

A Humble Miracle:

"But why was the miracle not wrought before the filling of the jars with water? This would have been more wonderful. For indeed it is one thing to give an actual substance another quality, and another to make a new substance out of nothing. This is indeed the more wonderful, but to many it will not seem so credible. It is for this reason that many times He seems to diminish the impressiveness of His miracles, wishing to make more credible that which He does."

—St. Augustine (*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*; Vol.1:258)

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Introduction: The Light of earthly joy!

While the water into wine miracle may be among the well known of Jesus' doings, it is often the least understood. Why this mundane, earthly event? Why more wine when the party is almost over? To interpret Scripture, we need Scripture. To understand our Lord here, we need to find other places where holy Scripture brings these things to light: weddings, wine, and joy in earthly vocations.

Opening: Psalm 66:1-12

¹Shout for joy to God, | all the earth;*

²sing the glory of his name;
 give to him | glorious praise!

³**Say to God, "How awesome | are your deeds!***
So great is your power that your enemies
come cringing | to you.

⁴All the earth worships you
 and sings prais- | es to you;*

they sing praises | to your name."

⁵**Come and see what | God has done:***
he is awesome in his deeds toward the chil- |
dren of man.

⁶He turned the sea into | dry land;*

they passed through the riv- | er on foot.

There did we rejoice in him,
⁷**who rules by his might forever,**
whose eyes keep watch on the | nations—*
let not the rebellious ex- | alt themselves.

⁸Bless our God, O | peoples;*

let the sound of his | praise be heard,

⁹**who has kept our soul among the | living***
and has not let our | feet slip.

¹⁰For you, O God, have | tested us;*

you have tried us as sil- | ver is tried.

¹¹**You brought us in- | to the net;***
you laid a crushing burden | on our backs;

¹²you let men ride o- | ver our heads;*

we went through fire and through water;
 yet you have brought us out to a place of
 a- | bundance.

Glorify be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

Read St. John 2:1-11

v.1-2: On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

On the surface, this is very earthly and relatable.

Weddings happen and sometimes you are invited to them. Many times Jesus demands small things from His hearers, instead of great things. What are some of these small things? See Matthew 9:6; Mark 5:19; Luke 1:23, 1:56, 2:51-52, 8:39.

In this way, the Lord elevates the work of the house and the work of the family. A Christian does not live by outward works (Rom. 4:9-10), but by what? See Galatians 3:11.

Now that the surface meaning is cared for, we need to make sense of why this is a "sign" of the Lord (John 2:11). Where else in Scripture do we hear of "the third day"? See Genesis 22:4; Exodus 19:11; Esther 5:1. To what does this all point? See Matthew 16:21.

Where else do we hear of weddings? See Matthew 22; Revelation 19:6ff.

The Cana miracle, which included St. Mary and Christ's disciples, is evidence that God condones joy and a happy life (cf. Ps. 104:15). However, in these first two verses we also hear of the cross.

v.3-4: When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

Without wine, the party is over and you go home. Without wine, there is no more joy to be had. Again, we can easily see a concern for earthly celebration, but why is Jesus so serious? It's only wine.

Where do we hear of wine in Scripture? See Genesis 14:18, 49:8-12; Isaiah 25:6.

Wine can be both a cup of wrath and a cup of blessing. So then what is this hour of Jesus' that has not come yet? See John 17:1; Matthew 26:45; Mark 14:35, 41; John 7:30; 8:20.

The "hour of Jesus" is the hour of His sacrifice on the cross. The connection is sacramental. That physical means can effect salvation. The wine running out is connected to that sacrifice; otherwise, Jesus would not have spoken of His hour of suffering.

v.5-8: His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

Jesus once again seems to refuse, and yet does as His mother requests. The 4th Commandment is still in effect and even though it is not His hour. Yet, He is still the Lord of that hour even as He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28).

When else does Jesus give the impression that He isn't going to perform a miracle? See Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 24:28.

St. Mary's last recorded words are, "Do whatever Jesus tells you". Do you suppose she would say the same thing to someone who would think of praying to her today?

Palestine is a desert. Water is scarce. You don't want to be running back and forth for water during a party. The water is there in such humongous quantities for that reason, so that the rites may proceed without interruption as you would wish upon your own wedding. The conversion is about 32 gallons each.

John the Baptist also talks about purification (John 3:22ff) and there are other references to purification by washing (Mark 7, Luke 11). What connection can we make then between this water and purification? See Hebrews 9:13-14, 12:24; 1 John 5:6-8.

v.9-10: When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did not announce His own miracle, neither did the servants. Who, in this text, had that office? Is this consistent with God's usual manner of proclamation? See Isaiah 66:18-19; Romans 9:22-24, 10:14-20.

Both Jew and Gentile, who did not know the Gospel of Jesus until now, will preach it. Your pastors will preach it. Not because Jesus cannot, but because God does not forsake His creation in accomplishing salvation. See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

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The word our Lord uses here for "poor wine" is lees, or dregs. This is the wine that isn't even worth drinking. We usually associate this with being poured out. The Lord has a cup of wrath that He will pour out. See 2 Chronicles 34:21; Psalm 75:8; Ezekiel 20:33; Revelation 14:10.

This Day of Wrath has come upon one man. Where does Jesus remind us of when this "pouring" happened? See Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 26:28.

The good wine is given to the servants and the dregs are drunk by the Lord. The cup of blessing which the Lord blesses is received by sinners, they drink in faith, and receive the title: "Son of God." Compare Psalm 82:6; John 10:34-35; Galatians 3:26.



v.11: This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Moses was the Great Prophet of the Lord. What was it that he did in front of Pharaoh? See Exodus 4:17; Deuteronomy 6:22.

What did Daniel say about the Lord's signs? See Daniel 4:3; 6:27.

At the risk of having His signs copied falsely (cf. Matt. 24:24),

what is it that Jesus tells us to look for? See Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 12:39; Acts 2:22.

Thus, the light of the signs comes full circle. They are not simply miracles, but signs pointing to the light of the cross, showing us a Savior that will suffer and die and three days later rise again.

These are the other Signs of Christ recorded in St. John:

Healing the Official's son (4:43-54)
Healing the invalid at Bethesda (5:1-47)
Feeding the 5000 (6:1-15)
Walking on water (6:16-24)
Healing the blind man (9:1-41)
Raising Lazarus (11:1-54)

Closing: The only Son from heaven (LSB 402)

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