

## Wedding Receptions

This morning we're going to talk about weddings. I like weddings. They're fun events. I've even officiated a few. We have a great venue here for weddings. A couple can have the service here in the sanctuary, and then follow it up with a reception over in Fellowship Hall.

When you go to lots of weddings, you see and hear some pretty funny stuff! You learn a lot about people by watching how they act, especially at wedding receptions. This may sound wacky, but from my experience, watching how the bride and groom treat each other when feeding their spouse the wedding cake gives a pretty good read on how the marriage is going to turn out. There have been lots of receptions where funny and embarrassing things happened. And one such event has actually been recorded in Scripture. If you have your Bible or a Bible app handy, turn with me to John 2:1-11. **Read John 2:1-11.**

Sometimes people use little kids in their weddings as flower girls and ring bearers. It's fun to watch the kids! I was at a wedding once where the officiant said, "you may kiss the bride," and the ring bearer leaned over and kissed the flower girl. The little boy thought he had gotten married, too! In our passage today, Jesus was at a wedding. It was a big deal because in those days, for as small as what the towns were, everyone would have been there.

## No Dr. Pepper

"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," (John 2:1-2). Of course, we know what happens after a wedding, the wedding reception. Wedding receptions are great. There's plenty of good food, lots of hors d'oeuvres – like those little butter mint things, man I love those – it's just a fun time, usually with music and dancing.

You have all sorts of cheeses, crackers, fruits, vegetables – about like the Alpha Center meal Tuesday night which was another fun time – along with salads, different sorts of meats, and of course the wedding cake that I talked about earlier. And then of course, you have drinks. Water, pop, juice. The United Methodist Church is a "dry" denomination – grape juice is used in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, rather than wine – and so New Hope also has a policy of no alcohol being permitted on the premises. You go to other wedding reception locations and you see folks with adult beverages – beer and wine.

Can you imagine being at a reception, and being told they had ran out of drinks? Wouldn't that be embarrassing for the people throwing the party, especially if the whole town were there? This is exactly what happened in our Gospel lesson. In those days they didn't have Dr. Pepper, which tastes amazing, you either drank water, or you drank wine. The wedding party ran out of wine. "When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to Him, 'They have no more wine,'" (verse 3).

### **What Concern is That?**

It would have been a huge oversight and embarrassment to the groom and his family. Why do you think Mary said this to Jesus? I think she knew that Jesus would help solve the problem that the wedding host had gotten himself into, and that's why she told Him. If we turn to Him, Jesus helps us solve every problem we have, too. Anyhow, Jesus answered, "Woman, why do you involve Me? My hour has not yet come," (verse 4).

I want to make sure we're clear here. Jesus isn't being rude in what He says in response to Mary. The Greek word translated as "Woman," isn't meant to disrespect or downplay who Mary is. And, His statement in the NIV, "Why do you involve Me?" is translated in other Bible versions slightly differently. For instance, the NRSV reads, "What concern is that to you and to Me?" He's not being rude.

Jesus, fully God and fully human, is not like us. He's not saying, "What's in it for me?" or "That's not my problem," like we might often say. I think without spelling it out, we have to read between the lines, and this is Jesus' way of saying, "What do you want me to do?" Remember, Jesus is sinless. He follows the Ten Commandments. One of which is to honor our fathers and mothers.

### **Do Whatever He Tells You**

He listens to His mom. He's an obedient Son. He meets our every need. When Jesus says, "My hour has not yet come," He's already thinking about the God-sized view of things to come – His death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb. He going to the cross on our behalf, to whip sin and death for us is His greatest work – and He proves He's capable of getting the job done by raising back to life and leaving the tomb empty three days later. Jesus Christ crucified, resurrected, and ascended is when His time truly came!

For whatever reason, we don't have Mary's response to Jesus recorded in Scripture, but we see the outcome. She tells the servants of the wedding host, "Do whatever He tells you," (verse 5). Now that's just good advice, for anyone. "Do whatever Jesus tells you." We know what He tells us, friends, He speaks to us through the Bible – all we have to do is read it! He speaks to us through the Church, and through friends who know and love Jesus, too. That's why corporate worship is so important – to hear Jesus speak to us through others who are also focused on Him.

John writes, “Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water,’ so they filled them to the brim,” (verses 6-7). These couple verses are really funny. God has a sense of humor! These aren’t water jugs people drank out of. These jars are used to store water that people wash their hands and feet with. These aren’t fancy, pretty jars that would sit in a kitchen. We’re talking plain, ordinary, junky cracked jars people used to wash the dirt and dust off their bodies in.

### **Saved The Best Till Now**

Think more along the lines of an old-timey wash basin before in-door plumbing was invented, and you’ve got a pretty good visual for what these things were like. And Jesus has them fill these plain, ordinary, ugly jars with plain, ordinary water. If each jar held twenty to thirty gallons, and there were six jars, how many gallons is that altogether? Do we have any mathematicians in the house? We’re talking about anywhere between 120 and 180 gallons of water in these jars. That’s a lot of water!

“Then Jesus told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew,” (verses 8-9). Can you imagine that? They drew water out of jugs that held water for people to wash their dirty hands and feet – they had to have been laughing. Just picture that! And the guy running the reception tastes it – and didn’t know where it came from.

Now watch this! “Then the master of the banquet called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now,’” (verses 9b-10). This is the best wine the guy has tasted so far at this wedding reception – it’s good stuff! You already know this – Jesus makes great stuff! There’s no doubt in my mind that the water Jesus turned to wine for that wedding feast long ago in Cana was the best wine that’s ever been tasted on the face of the earth.

### **Jesus, Making the Ordinary Extraordinary**

And He made it from water used to wash the dirty feet and hands of folks like Jim Beam and Jack Daniels, I suppose. The plain, common, ordinary water that Jesus turned into wine in this story tasted better than the wines that had been bought by the groom for the event. Jesus has a way of doing that in the lives of people who follow Him. He takes the ordinary, common, dirty, broken, plain, unremarkable – and even the unwanted – people of this world, and makes them into extraordinary, unique, brilliant, beautiful, remarkable, and treasured citizens of God’s Kingdom.

“What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which He revealed His glory; and His disciples believed in Him,” (verse 11). In John’s gospel, Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding feast. He showed His glory, and His followers believed in Him. Because the servants did what Jesus told them to do, a good thing – a great thing – happened. Jesus wants great things to happen in our lives, too.

If we do what Jesus teaches us to do in the Gospel – to love God with all our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls, and to love neighbor as self – He will bless us. He will make great things happen in our lives. It may not be what we expect or anticipate, but He always works for our good. You know friends, He’s been in the business of making the ordinary extraordinary for well over 2,000 years now. It’s like a vintage, finely aged wine that’s so nearly priceless no one wants to pop the cork off and drink it. But if we let Him, He takes these ordinary, common, plain, unremarkable, broken jars of clay that we are, and makes us into extraordinary, unique, brilliant, beautiful, remarkable citizens of His Kingdom, doing His work!

**Prayer:** O God of steadfast love, at the wedding in Cana Your Son Jesus turned water into wine, delighting all who were there. Transform our hearts by Your Spirit, that we may use our varied gifts to show forth the light of Your love as one body in Christ. Amen.