

Sunday Sermon

3/2/24

Series: Revealed

Passage: John 2:1-11

Title: More and Better - Water into Wine

This morning, we begin a new series, "Revealed," which will take us all the way through the Easter season. In each of the Gospels, the author lays out a purpose statement, so that the reader might understand what they're reading and why they are reading it.

Matthew begins his gospel with: **"The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"** (Matthew 1:1). Matthew prominently features Jesus' lineage from David and fulfilled prophecy, highlighting his royal status as the promised King.

Mark is even more clear in his purpose: **"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."** (Mark 1:1) Mark emphasizes Jesus' actions and deeds, portraying him as a servant who came to suffer and die for humanity.

Luke, being the physician we was, aims to provide a reliable and trustworthy account of Jesus' ministry to a man named Theophilus, who is likely a gentile covert to Christianity. Why? So that he **"may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught"** (Luke 1:4) concerning the identity of Jesus the Christ.

John's gospel is different. All three of these purpose statements come right at the beginning of their gospels. John, too, has a purpose statement, but it doesn't come until the end. John 20:31, **"But these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."**

John writes his gospel differently.

Instead of simply telling you what's up, all along the path of his gospel, he posts signs. Signs which point toward something. We've all taken road trips before. On my trip to visit the Porpilia's, we're going to Anderson, SC. And miles before the destination we began to see signs for Anderson, SC. We do inherently understand this concept. No one, when they see the sign on the expressway for Anderson, SC, stops their car, gets out, and thinks to themselves while looking at the sign, "I've arrived." No. It's a sign. It points to something, a destination, beyond it.

I was reminded this week of this quote by CS Lewis. He makes this observation about dogs in his book *The Weight of Glory*. He says, **"You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand *pointing*. You point to a bit of food on the floor; the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning. And in a period when factual realism is dominant we shall find people deliberately inducing upon themselves this doglike mind."** - C.S. Lewis

Here's his point: As dogs are prone to miss the food because they don't understand the meaning of the finger. We, as humans, are often prone to miss the object, or the greater truth that scripture lays out for us, because we don't understand the meaning of the sign. And the question becomes, when we see the signs, what will we do with them?

John lays out for us in his gospel 7 signs – 7 signs (miracles) that Jesus performed – each one revealing, pointing to, a deeper truth about who He is. I don't think it is by accident that the first recorded words of Jesus in John's gospel are a question: **“What are you seeking?”** (John 1:38). As you come to church, as you listen to this message, as you sing the songs, I think how you and I answer that question will be telling as to whether or not we are going to find anything. The pharisees kept asking for the sign, but had no desire to find the One the signs were pointing to. And my prayer as we go through this series is that just as the disciples were encountering Jesus and asking – Who is this? So might we, as we study the signs, come to an encounter of Living God and his glory in our own lives and hearts.

So let's read our passage this morning: John 2:1-11 (read and pray)

The scene is a wedding. A bridegroom and his bride being united together in a covenant love relationship. This is the backdrop during which Jesus decides to perform his first miracle.

Now back in Jesus' day, weddings were not just one day, but week-long events. And one of the Groom's major responsibilities was to provide the wine for the event. So as you can imagine that was not only a fairly important piece of the festivities, but a very expensive one as well. So what would often happen is that, at the beginning of the ceremonies, they would serve the good wine first, and over time as a way of saving money, as everyone got nice and loose, they would switch the good wine to lesser quality wine. Everyone knew this was going on, but at that point no one really cared.

What was NOT okay was to run out of wine. And this is exactly what happened. Verse 3, **“When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’”** So Jesus turns water into wine. Cool. Why did he do that? Was Jesus making a statement that he supported the drinking of alcohol in this passage? Is that why he did that? Did Jesus do this miracle simply to avert a social disaster so that the groom and his family wouldn't be embarrassed - just doing someone a solid?

I don't think so. The meaning is much deeper than that. Look at our text this morning. John starts the miracle story in verse 1 with the phrase **“on the third day.”** Look up here, does that phrase ring any bells for anyone? What do most Christians immediately think of when we hear the phrase “On the third day.” That right, we think of Jesus' death and resurrection. This is not by accident.

If we look at this story in context, in John 1:29, John the Baptist (who is not the author of the gospel of John, it's a different guy) sees Jesus and declares to his disciples **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”** Now that's an interesting statement,

because Jesus hasn't done that yet, but then three days later there's a wedding. This is a foreshadowing. Perhaps, even as Jesus is attending this wedding he is beginning to think about his own wedding.

The whole story of scripture is around God creating humanity to be in relationship with himself, but because of our sin, we were eternally ripped out of relationship with him, and because we couldn't do anything to fix our situation ourselves, God in the Son came to us bring us back into relationship with himself by taking care of the sin issue through his death and resurrection. And because of that act of love, we celebrate a restored relationship to God which is painted throughout scripture as...you guessed it...a wedding. With Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom and his Church, not the building, but his people being the Bride.

Hosea 2:16,19, ***"In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband'...I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord."***

Eph. 1 tells us that we are Christ's inheritance. We are what he came to earth to get, his beloved. Then in Rev. 19:7, when God returns to make all things new, we read, ***"Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure."*** Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. What's that going to take? Jesus' death and resurrection.

Listen: it makes complete sense that Jesus would first choose a wedding to reveal who he is. You don't think in the midst of this wedding that he's not thinking about his own wedding? That's what we often do when we attend weddings. Don't we? If you're married, you reminisce about what your wedding was like. If you're not married, you inevitably think about what you want your wedding to be.

That's why when Jesus' mother comes to him with this problem, he responds to her, ***"My hour has not yet come."*** We need to understand that any time Jesus talks about his hour it is a reference to his death.

Here's the point: The wine ran out because the groom was unwilling or unable or unprepared enough to pay the cost. One source I read in my studies this week, made the point that, in effect, by coming to Jesus, Mary was asking Jesus to act as or step into the role of the bridegroom on behalf of all who were at the wedding. Jesus is about to reveal, that ***not only is willing and able to pay the cost, the wine he will provide will be more and better than anything they've had before.***

In Isaiah 25, a prophecy is given that one day God will do a work that will swallow up death forever. Listen to what it says, ***"On this mountain"*** (that is a reference to Mount Zion, the dwelling place of God, as well as his rule and reign). Where God reigns, ***"the Lord of Hosts***

will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined” (A feast of rich food and wine – more and better). **“And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.”** What is that? Sin. **“He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord will wipe away tears from all faces...”** Eyes up here. Where do we know that from? That’s right the marriage of the Groom and his Bride in Revelation. Rev. 21:4 - The renewal and salvation of our God, offered to us, the Bride, through the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is revealing that what he has come to give us, his people, the world is more and better than what we can have apart from him. More and better than anything this world has to offer. We see the sign. Do we understand the significance of him to whom the sign is pointing?

What are you seeking? These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

When the Messiah comes, the best wine is going to flow. Wine in the Bible is used to symbolize joy, celebration, blessing, life, and God’s kingdom.

And only when you lay hold of Jesus Christ, and he is allowed to live and rule and reign in your life, is the best wine is going to flow. Do you understand the meaning of the sign? Would you put your faith in Jesus this morning and devote your life to following him?

Let’s ready our hearts for communion.

In verse 6, John notes that there were 6 stone jars. Now never mind that the number 6 in scripture is often symbolic of newness or completeness (after all God chose to create the world in 6 days), but these jars were used for the purpose of ceremonial purification. Could it be that THE Bridegroom was using them to show that, in himself, he would provide a new and greater purification?

God saying, “Behold, I am doing something new. Something more and better than what was here before.” There is one more thing that wine symbolizes in scripture, and that is the blood of Christ shed to atone for the sin of humanity. Hebrews tells us, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.” And it’s a humbling thing to know that the Bridegroom was willing to pay the cost for the sake of his Bride, his beloved, you and me, in order to bring us into relationship with himself.

By coming to his table, we are not doing an act that saves us. We are recognizing an act that saves us, and as in Hosea, remembering our response to his marriage proposal. And if you have never responded to him in such a way, the invitation is open to do that right now. To say yes to Jesus and adhere your life to him. And if you would do that, he bids you, too, to come and eat at his table.

As we come, because we collectively are the bride of Christ, we ask that you would hold the elements until all have been served, and then we will take communion together.

Revealed

THE SIGNS OF JESUS

"The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"

- Matthew 1:1

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

- Mark 1:1

“That you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

- Luke 1:4

“But these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

- John 20:31

“You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand *pointing*. You point to a bit of food on the floor; the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all...”

“His world is all fact and no meaning. And in a period when factual realism is dominant we shall find people deliberately inducing upon themselves this doglike mind.”

- C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory

“Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, ‘What are you seeking?’”

- John 1:38

Revealed

THE SIGNS OF JESUS

“When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’”

- John 2:3

“On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee.”

- John 2:1

“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

- John 1:29

***“In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me
‘My Husband.’”***

- Hosea 2:16

“I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.”

- Hosea 2:19

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.”

- Rev. 19.7

“And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.’”

- John 2:4

“On this mountain the Lord of Hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.”

- Is. 25:6

“And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.”

- Is. 25:7

“He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away...”

- Is. 25:8

What are you seeking?