

“Do Whatever He Tells You”

Everyone loves a wedding. Right? Interestingly enough, I will be meeting this week with a couple who will be married in a few months, and this is really an exciting time. There is usually a lot that goes into the wedding celebration, including a gathering of family and friends – to celebrate that a man and a woman have decided to spend their lives together and have it blessed by Jesus.

In the time of Jesus, the festivities always began on Monday, and lasted seven days. Can you just imagine paying for a wedding that we was seven days long? Imagine catering that! There were large quantities of food and wine, rhythmic music, and lively dancing. In our Gospel account, as the party raged on, the hosts ran out of wine, causing them great embarrassment. Please open your Pew Bibles to page 1649, John chapter 2. *"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)

There are two places in the Galilee which have been identified as the village of Cana where Jesus performed the miracles of turning water into wine at a wedding feast and healing the official's son. Both are very near Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. It was from the town of Cana that Nathanael (“Bar Tolome” “son of Tolome” or Bartholomew) came, and it was he who initially rejected Jesus when they met. He said *“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”* (John 1:46) He later became one of Jesus’ Apostles and he was also present when the risen Christ appeared to the disciples and made them breakfast *"by the Sea of Tiberias"* (John 21:2) the Sea of Galilee.

This wedding site, where thousands of pilgrims visit, not far from Nazareth, sells a very sweet wine labeled "Wine from Cana," reflecting upon the marriage feast. On our visit to Israel in 2014, I was blessed to celebrate the marriage of a man and woman from Saint Bartholomew’s at the Kibbutz on the Sea of Galilee called Magaan Holiday Village. The wine from Cana was used for the service. It is very sweet. I much prefer the Port that we use, but, when Jesus makes wine – no one is going to complain!

The wedding in Cana probably involved the whole village, and there were people from neighboring ones too, which is why Mary, her Son Jesus, and His friends were invited. Running out of wine would have been a total social disaster and disgrace. That family would have to live with the shame of it for a long time to come; and the bride and groom might see it as bringing misfortune on their married life. Jesus shows a true compassion which comes where people are in need and Jesus deals with that need in an unexpected way. The transformation from water to wine signifies the effect that Jesus can have, can still have today, on people’s lives. This event also shows Jesus’ love and obedience to His mother Mary.

With the huge amounts of food and wine consumed, there was concern for the hosts – because running out of wine would be a huge “black eye” upon them. And so Mary, Jesus’ mother, asks

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for His help. Jesus tells her in John 2:4 "*Dear woman, why do you involve me?*" Jesus replied. "*My time has not yet come.*"

Mary, Jesus' mother knows better than to argue with God, she simply tells the servants "*Do whatever he tells you.*" (John 2:5) She knows that His power is going to be demonstrated; she doesn't know how or why, and I think it is interesting for us to know that as Jesus tells them to go and fill the jars, He doesn't touch them - that is the power that He has! Mary has faith in Jesus, and so she tells these servants to "*do whatever He tells you.*"

Jesus exhibits two things here in this Gospel reading: one and most importantly, is obedience to His mother's wishes. He was a good Jewish boy; you don't cross a Jewish "Momma!" The second is compassion for people in need. What happens next is evidence of both obedience and compassion.

In verses 6-10 "*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.*" "*Then he 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. Then he 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."*" (John 2:6-10)

The transformation from water to wine shows us the effect that Jesus can have (and still has today) on people's lives. Mary's faith and the obedience of the servants allow each of us to see the faith that is necessary for miracles to happen and transformations to take place in our own lives.

Verse 11 gives us more: "*This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*" (John 2:11) They put their faith in Him, they had seen that this was a Man who not only walked the walk, but He walked the talk. What Jesus said – He did!

There is a moment of hesitation after Mary's impassioned plea to her Son, Jesus. During that brief moment Mary looks into her son's face and sees a decidedly different man than the one who has lived with her and who she cared for the last thirty years. Let us just look back at what has happened to Jesus: if you recall, last week was the Baptism of Jesus. After Jesus was baptized, near Jericho, He went into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. He was tempted by the devil, and He did not sin. After that, He returned to the Galilee region and started to call His disciples. Then He returned to Nazareth, and as we read today He was invited to a wedding feast. The man that Mary looked at bears chiseled sculpting from his forty days in the wilderness, after His Baptism in the Jordan. He is leaner now, more serious, and much more intense. Jesus hesitates because He knows that if He meets this need by "supernatural means," His life will never be the same. No, after this one wedding, the small-

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town seclusion of His life would be behind Him forever. For the next three and a half years, His only time alone to Himself would be moments that He would get away in an olive grove before dawn or brief moments of quiet that He could steal away on a barren hillside after dark. Fellowship with His Father would come only at the expense of His sleep, because the needs of the people were so very, very great!

I am sure Jesus thought about the embarrassment this couple would experience would be no way to start a honeymoon, let alone a new life together in that community. You see when people got married, they didn't build a house or go move away, but they built onto the father's house. And so, the Father's house had many rooms: sound familiar? They needed help. Jesus was compassionate and so without a word from His lips, without a touch from His hand, Jesus simply wills the water to become wine.

The way Jesus revealed His glory, was with a quiet miracle; there was no fanfare, just the mighty hand of God working silently behind the scenes in an hour of need. This would be the very first miracle that was ever recorded by Jesus, and the purpose of this miracle was not to quench His own thirst, but to satisfy the needs of others. The unveiling of the glory of God must have enlarged the disciples' faith. Can you imagine them watching as this takes place? They would see so much more in the next three years – between here and Calvary. I pray that this first miracle would touch our hearts today. Jesus knows our needs, and awaits our seeking His glory and mercy. Jesus told us, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”* (Matthew 7:7-8) As for us, I think we need to follow Mary's instructions, *“Do whatever He tells you.”*