

Cudham Church: 16th Jan 2022: John 2: 1-11

In John's Gospel he does not write about *miracles* but always uses the word *signs* to describe miraculous events. When we compare him to the other gospel writers we find he is very selective. Of the seven signs he writes about, five are original to his writing. In fact 90% of his gospel has unique content. John mentions no birth narratives, no temptations, no transfiguration, no appointing the twelve disciples, no parables, no ascension, no great commission.

Why did John write his gospel? Was it that he had a day off? There must have been a need in the church at that time which he wanted to address.

He tells us in:-

**John 20:30–31** “But these [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.” John selected seven startling signs of Jesus to convince his readers that He was in fact the promised Messiah.

John wants to show us, when he identifies the seven signs, that whatever problem we have in our lives Jesus can meet our need, because he has power over all areas of life. He shows that Jesus has power over nature, sickness, evil and death. We are never alone, He is always there to help us whatever the situation.

Weddings at the time of Jesus were large community events, often lasting for a week, with extended families and neighbours invited. This was not a poor family celebration. This wedding family was important in their town. They had servants to wait on the guests, and were responsible for the six large jars for religious purification. Jesus and some of his new disciples are invited. At this point he had only just been baptised by John. He had not performed any miracles or given teaching to the people. He turns up, an ordinary guest with no expectations from anybody. John is showing us that Jesus is not a boring party-pooper and is more than happy to take part in social events and celebrations in a normal way.

We are not told details about what is going on at the wedding, but Mary the mother of Jesus, seems certainly aware of what is happening with the food and drink. Tradition tells us that Joseph was dead by that time, and as the oldest son Jesus was head of the household. Naturally Mary would turn to him for help in difficult situations. She comes to Jesus and tells him they have run out of wine. Strangely, John never mentions Mary by name but throughout the gospel only refers to her as the mother of Jesus. She is there at the beginning of his public ministry and also at the end, a nameless mother standing at the foot of the cross.

Mary does the right thing and comes to Jesus as soon as she realizes there is a wine shortage, which could have caused immense embarrassment and shame to the wedding family. Forever to be remembered in their community as the wedding where the wine ran out.

At this point, we come to a quotation which many commentators find difficult to explain. Jesus does not deal with the problem right away and tells his mother, "My hour has not yet come". She accepts this and does not go off in the huff saying, "after all I have done for him and he won't help me with this one request" as some of us may have done. She did not understand what Jesus was going to do, but trusted him to do what was right. When we believe in Jesus there can be situations where we cannot see a clear solution to a problem, but we must continue to trust that he will work out everything in the best way possible. She turns quietly to the servants and just instructs them to do what Jesus tells them.

Why does John mention the stone jars?

They were used by the Jews to ceremonially wash their hands and faces, to cleanse themselves before going to pray. Combined, the six jars contained over 120 gallons. In biblical times, if you wanted to make wine it had to be matured in wooden vats or wine skins, not stone jars. Jesus at the wedding changes the water into wine which turns out to have an amazing quality. The best wine was kept till last! The Jews had been living for hundreds of years washing with water, trying unsuccessfully to purify themselves, according to the Jewish Law.

But now Jesus has come along, and has started a new and better way to have a relationship with God. This is symbolised by the new wine in place of the water in the stone jars. When He is invited into our lives as he was at the wedding things will change. We will never be alone again, we will never feel unloved and we will never feel useless or neglected because, if we commit our lives to Jesus, and try to follow his example, he will be with us always.

In conclusion:

What does John want us to learn from this sign?

- We do not worship and follow a small god, but one who can bless and help us more than we expect.
- We should follow Mary's instruction **and do what Jesus tells us to do.**
- Mary gave up what she knew and turned it over to Jesus.

The servants gave up what they knew and did as they were told,  
and the disciples gave up what they knew and believed in Jesus