

July 27, 2008

“Lessons from a Wedding” John 2:1-11

FCF: Problem of trust/disappointment

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because of who Jesus has revealed Himself to be,
(anchor) we must not only trust but turn to Him in every arena of our lives.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

A man was walking along a path, not paying attention to where he was going. Suddenly, he slipped over the edge of a cliff. As he fell, he grabbed a branch growing from the side of the cliff. Realizing he couldn't hang on for long, he called for help. “Is anybody up there?” A voice answered, “Yes, I'm here!” “Who's that?” “The Lord,” said the voice. “Lord, help me!” “Do you trust me?” “I trust you completely, Lord,” the man said. “Good. Let go of the branch.” “What?” “I said, ‘Let go of the branch.’” There was a long pause. Then the man then cried, “Is anybody else up there?”

Amusing story driving a pointed question. Are we willing to trust God? Or are we only willing to go with what can be measured and fully explained? Trust is hard to come by – even here. Has what we've seen, heard, or experienced so jaded, so jarred, so scarred us that we are unable to trust even God? Can we trust Him? And, if so, how far?

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 2:1-11](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Brennan Manning, in Ruthless Trust, recounts a conversation ([READ quote, IV2](#)):

When the brilliant ethicist John Kavanaugh went to work for three months at "the house of the dying" in Calcutta, he was seeking a clear answer as to how best to spend the rest of his life. On the first morning there he met Mother Teresa. She asked, "And what can I do for you?"

Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him. "What do you want me to pray for?" she asked.

He voiced the request that he had borne thousands of miles from the United States: "Pray that I have clarity."

She said firmly, "No, I will not do that."

He asked her why. She said, "Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of."

When Kavanaugh commented that she always seemed to have the clarity he longed for, she laughed and said, "I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God."

Mother Teresa showed in that moment remarkable insight into a very real need – not just of visiting ethicists but every one of us – the need to turn to, the need to trust in God.

The Apostle John, through the ministry of John the Baptist and the calling of the disciples, has set out in these first chapters to reveal Jesus. Jesus, in the events recorded for us here in that Gospel, clearly reveals Himself – who He is and what it is He has come to be and to do. All of which shows us not only we can trust Him but we must. We must trust Him. “But how far?” you ask. All the way – in each and every arena of our lives.

We can and must trust Him in each and every arena of life. We see this at three levels in the text, each getting closer to the fuller significance of these events. We see it in Jesus' support of marriage, His power over nature, and then His fulfillment of the law. Three points, three levels, each getting closer to the fuller significance of these events.

I. JESUS' SUPPORT OF MARRIAGE

First, Jesus' support of marriage ([READ John 2:1-5](#)). This passage is often alluded to in the context of wedding ceremonies. And that's certainly appropriate.

A) A Dire Situation

John is describing here what would have been in that culture a dire situation.

1. The background

The “also” (v.2) implies Jesus was there through His mother who may have had a coordinating role. Weddings lasted a week. Hosts invited as many guests as possible. To run out of wine would have been a major embarrassment, even grounds for a lawsuit.

2. The plea

So when Mary comes to Jesus, she is not just passing on information. She is pleading with Him to do something, likely relying on Him as always – as a loyal, resourceful son.

B) *Jesus’ Response*

And what is His response?

1. Concern

We’ll talk about His words to her later. But towards the couple, He shows great concern.

2. Intervention

So much so, He intervenes. They and their circumstances meant something to Him.

Marriage means something to Him. Which stood as a real contrast to the disdained view of marriage held by some ascetic groups of the time. Jesus not only supported the institution of marriage in His presence but in His response to the situation.

Application:

Think of it this way. That couple needed Him in their marriage. So do we. And if you don’t know that, you don’t know your need. And you don’t know Him.

In marriage, He loves us enough to expose our idols. He is there working to teach us lessons we’re hard-pressed to learn any other way – teaching us to honor, serve, persevere, forgive, love, and the need to pray. Showing us the immensity of the task, driving us to our knees and then, with the immensity of the resources, keeping us there.

Jesus shows Himself truly in support of our marriages. And we need Him there.

II. **JESUS’ POWER OVER NATURE**

That’s the first level of significance in these events. But you may say at this point, “Well, that’s nice. That’s very inspirational.” But it’s far more than that. For we see not just His presence in marriage but His power over nature (**READ John 2:6-10**).

A) *What He Did*

What, after all, did Jesus do at this wedding? He turned water into wine.

1. Side issues

Now, at the risk of getting sidetracked, let me address a side issue here. This was wine. It was not grape juice. Likely it was watered down somewhat but not so much it didn’t have some effect. Remember the surprise of the master of the feast. The command to avoid drunkenness still stands. But those who want to abstain must still let the text speak.

2. Main issue

That said, that’s really a side issue. The main issue is this. Jesus took this ordinary thing and did something extraordinary with it. It was a miracle. He changed water into wine.

B) *What It Showed*

He changed water into wine. Now, think with me. What did that show?

1. Who He is

Who is He? Just who John told us in his prologue (**READ John 1:1-3, 18**). Jesus is God.

2. What He can do

He is God come in the flesh, the God-man, fully divine and fully human.

He can do with His creation what He wishes because He made it. He brought it into being. The “laws” of nature are not binding upon Him. They are merely the typical ways we observe that He governs and holds all this together. Jesus is God, the God-man.

Application:

And we see that in His power ruling over nature. Now, some read texts like this and say, “Look, obviously we know things like that can’t happen. This has to be some sort of myth.” But what’s behind that statement? The belief, the faith, that such things can’t happen. But who says? You? Me? To disbelieve it because you think it can’t happen or to believe it because you think it can – either is a belief based on faith position.

Which brings us to this question. If John is being truthful, who is this Jesus? He is God. He is God. Which means we can trust Him. Which means we must trust Him.

III. JESUS’ FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

But that then brings us to the third point where we see most clearly what John is after here (**READ John 2:11**). Jesus’ miracles were never simply raw displays of power. As John notes here, they were “signs” – events pointing to realities beyond themselves. And their purpose? (**READ John 20:30-31**) Which is just what we see here.

A) The Old Has Gone

This sign signified that, with the coming of Jesus, the old has gone.

1. The place of the stone jars

By Jewish law and custom, these stone water jars were used for purification, for rinsing guests’ hands and the various vessels of the feast. They stood for the whole ancient order of Jewish ceremonies, an order that was passing away, an order Jesus was replacing.

2. The filling of the stone jars

Again, this is alluded to in the prologue (**READ John 1:16-17**). So Jesus had the jars filled to the brim to show their appointed time had run its course. There was now no more need for sacred spaces – sanctuaries where God would meet with His people. No need for sacred people – priests to mediate God’s presence with His people. No need for sacred times – prescribed seasons and festivals. No need for sacred acts – sacrifices meant to picture our need of atonement, forgiveness, propitiation, and redemption.

Jesus, the Coming One now come, was to fulfill all that. The old has gone.

Illustration:

The old order was obsolete, not worthless but no longer needed. Their time had passed. Something like how the latest gadget of today will push on out the craze, the need, for the latest gadget of yesterday. With all the new offers, why bother with the old?

B) The New Has Come

Bring in the new. We want, we need, the new. With Jesus, the new has come.

1. His words to His mother

Which brings me to His words to His mother (v.4). “Woman” – the very term He will use with her while He is hanging from the cross, courteous but not endearing, indicating a distancing needed. “My hour has not yet come.” He had a work that must be done, the importance of which trumped all others. So there’s a distancing and a preparing here.

2. His drawing of the wine

But still too an acting. He seizes this moment as an acted parable. He drew wine (by the word used, likely not from the jars but from a nearby well) indicating the Messianic age had come, a time of flowing and abundant wine (**READ Hosea 14:7; Amos 9:13-14**).

The day for rituals, for ceremonial cleansing, is now gone! The Messiah has come with the full and long-awaited restoration! All things are finally and fully to be set right – disease removed, starvation and all want gone, a season of plenty surely coming.

Application:

But let's not look down on those old jars. Not to say we should ever want to go back. Not at all. But think of the richness of those images, pointing to our multifaceted need and Jesus' multifaceted work. John is not playing down those images. He is playing up their fulfillment in Christ. They stood for so much. And all realized in Him.

The sacred spaces – a tabernacle on the move, in the midst of the people. Later the beauty, glory, permanence of the Temple. The sacred people – the awe and respect for the individuals, the requirements for serving, the diligence to the tasks. The sacred times – the drama and the pageantry, the community fostered as the people gathered. The sacred acts – the gore and the blood, the sacrifices picturing the ugly reality of sin and the need for it to be dealt with. These things were not pointless. They pointed to the greater reality that was to come and has come now in Jesus! Water now changed to wine, a new age dawning and coming in the full. Surely then we can trust Him to the uttermost!

CONCLUSION:

Now, you say, "Well that sounds great!" But it can be threatening. We are talking about a new age. And that can be threatening, unsettling. Keep reading through the Gospels and you will see the religious establishment responded with hostility to Jesus. "What do you mean I'm not made right with God by what I do? You're going too far. Stop changing everything!" "What do you mean I'm not really loving God, not really loving my neighbor? You're pressing too hard. Stop convicting us!" For some, it was just too much and, hence, the hostility. It was all so threatening, unsettling, humiliating.

It still is. Which is why it's all so absolutely vital to keep right out in front of us all the time. Ever saying it to the world and ever reminding ourselves as well. Jesus has revealed Himself to us. And He calls us to trust Him. Not ourselves or anyone or anything else but Him alone and to do so completely. True story ([READ 1500](#)):

It was a bright, clear morning. A large crowd had gathered at Niagara Falls to see the famous Blondin walk over it with a tightrope. The sun glistened on the cascading torrent as it rushed over the precipice. From below came the ceaseless thunder of the plunging cataract.

The world's greatest tightrope walker briefly tested the taut strand that reached across to the opposite bank. Then he took his long pole and, balancing himself expertly, started across. The crowd followed every movement tensely. Step by step he moved forward. The people on the shore reacted nervously to every sharp motion of the balancing pole. But their fears and forebodings were unnecessary. The great Blondin not only went across safely, but returned as well – to the great relief and admiration of the spectators.

Turning to the audience, he then made a sensational offer. He would cross the falls again, this time with someone on his back. Who was willing to go? No one rushed forward to accept the offer. Picking a man at random, Blondin asked, "Do you believe that I am able to carry you across?"

"Yes, sir," came the unhesitating reply. "Well, then, let's go," Blondin urged.

"Not on your life!" – and the man withdrew into the crowd.

And so it went. One after another expressed great confidence in the tightrope walker, but no one would agree to let Blondin take him across. Finally, a young fellow moved toward the front of the crowd. Blondin repeated his question: "Do you believe I can carry you across safely?"

"Yes, I do." "Are you willing to let me?"

"As a matter of fact, I am." The young man climbed onto the expert's back. Blondin stepped onto the rope, paused momentarily, then moved across the falls without difficulty.

The point? There were many in that crowd who believed Blondin could do it. But their belief had limits. There was only one who was really willing to trust him to do it.

Jesus has revealed Himself to us. And He calls us to trust Him without the limits – to get on His back and let Him carry us across it all. The question is, "Will we?"

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because of who Jesus has revealed Himself to be,

(anchor) we must not only trust but turn to Him in every arena of our lives.