

There’s something we do before every wedding ceremony we celebrate here at church: We have a wedding rehearsal. We walk through the whole service two - maybe three – times, and practice every detail: Who comes in when, how they come in, where the bridesmaids and groomsmen will stand. Bride and groom practice their vows, putting the rings on each other’s fingers. We don’t leave anything to chance or improvisation. You know why we do that. Because nobody wants any slip-up or mishap to detract from the joy of a wedding day. Everybody, especially the bride and groom, want that day to be as perfect as possible.

But you know what? As much as people rehearse, I have yet to see a perfect wedding. Something always goes wrong. Maybe it’s something small – the instrumentalist misses a note, or a groomsman is standing too far to the left. Sometimes it’s something big – a bridesmaid faints, or a groom stumbles through his vows.

But in all the weddings I’ve seen, I’ve never seen a slip-up quite like the one in the gospel today. Just imagine heading to a wedding reception, only to have the groom stand up half-way through and say, “Uh, excuse me. They just ran out of food. If you didn’t get any, sorry. There’s a McDonald’s across the street.” Talk about embarrassing! But it was even worse for wine to run out at a Jewish wedding. It was a social blunder of the first order.

But it was that blunder that provided Jesus the opportunity to perform his first miracle. It wasn’t one he did just to help the bride and groom save face – John tells us he did it as a sign, to share important truths about himself. To reveal his glory, so his disciples would put their trust in him. That’s what we pray God would do for us, too, as we learn about this miracle today – help us to see how an imperfect wedding reveals a perfect Savior.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”

⁴ “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.”

⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”

They did so, ⁹ 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 ¹⁰ 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.”

¹¹ 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.

So, you gotta know when this took place. Jesus had just begun his ministry. In the two days before this, he just called his first disciples – John, Andrew, Peter, Philip Nathanael. Next day, they head to Cana in Galilee to attend a wedding.

Stop right there for a second. Does that seem strange to you? Think about it. This is the almighty Son of God in the flesh. He's on an all-important mission to save the world from sin, death and hell. He calls followers, and says, "All right, guys, here's what we're gonna do first: Some friends of the family are getting married. Let's go celebrate with them." What?!? Doesn't he have bigger things to be doing than attending a wedding? More important places to be than a village so small John has to tell us where it is, in Galilee? More important people to be spending time with than some friends of the family who aren't even named in John's gospel?

But he went. And in doing so, he revealed his love for this couple – and his love for you. You may be unimportant by the world's standards, but you mean everything to Jesus. He isn't just concerned with the "big things" like saving you from sin and death – he's concerned with the "little things" of your everyday life, too. They aren't little to him! When you love someone, every detail of their life matters to you – and no one loves you more than Jesus. Every detail of your life matters to him. He's not distant or disinterested. He's with you in your joys, your sorrows, and everything in between. At an imperfect wedding, Jesus shows himself to be the perfect Savior.

But back to that wedding. In Jesus' day, weddings were a bigger affair than they are today. We have a service with a reception to follow. They had seven full days of celebration. And that was part of the problem. At some point during those seven days, the wine ran out. Maybe the couple didn't plan properly. Maybe there were more guests than they expected. Whatever the case, this wasn't a problem they couldn't fix. Someone was gonna have to tap the mic and say, "Uh, sorry. We're out of wine. Celebration's over."

Mary knew. Maybe she was even helping with the celebration. And she wanted to save the couple from this embarrassment. So she brought the problem to Jesus. **When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."**

We've gotta admire Mary's faith here. She brings an unfixable problem to Jesus, because she trusts he can fix it. She knows that he's God's Son, and he can do anything. So she presents the problem to Jesus: "There's no more wine." And you hear the request implied there, don't you? "So, won't you do something about it, please?"

She asks in faith. Which is why Jesus' answer surprises us: **"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."** That might sound a bit harsh at first! If you call your mom "woman," it's not gonna go over well. But in Jesus' day, this was a term of respect. He wasn't being harsh or impolite here at all.

But he was being firm. See, Mary wanted Jesus to fix the problem - and now would be a good time! But Jesus had to gently but firmly remind her that how and when he used his power – that was up to him and his Father, not her. "Dear woman," he says, "my time has not yet come."

That can be a tough lesson for us to learn, too. We're not too unlike Mary. We believe Jesus is who he says he is, God's Son – that he can do anything. And so we do what Mary did. We bring our problems to him – the little ones, the big unfixable ones that crush us – and say, "Won't you do something to fix this?" And that's good. That's what Jesus wants us to do.

But then he doesn't use his power how or when we want. He says, "No." Or, "Not yet," and lets us carry the problem a while longer. That can be hard to swallow, can't it? And we try to say, "Okay, your will be done," but a part of us is frustrated and thinks, "but your will better be my will soon." And pretty soon our prayers can turn from humble requests into us telling Jesus what's best for us and when it's best for us.

And that's when like Mary, we need Jesus to take us aside and give us a firm but loving rebuke. To remind us how this relationship works. "Dear child," he says to us, "if you believe I am who I say I am, the Son of God, are you really gonna tell me what's best for you? When it's best for you? Maybe, just maybe, don't you think I have your best interests in mind? That I'm gonna do what's best for you?"

Jesus has to point us to the cross and say, “See what I did for you there? I chose not to use my power there. And it was because I love you. It was the absolute best thing for you – it paid for all your sins and won you life with me forever. Don’t you think that the same is true of how I use my power now? That if I tell you “no,” or “not yet,” it’s not because I don’t love you...but because I do? Because it is the absolute best thing for you?”

At an imperfect wedding, Jesus shows himself to be the perfect Savior. The one who always answers our prayers and takes care of our problems at just the right time and in just the right way for you.

He did in Cana. Back to that wedding. Mary heard Jesus loud and clear. He hadn’t told her no. He said, “Not yet.” So what does she do? She calls some servants aside, and says to them, “Just **do whatever he tells you.**” And then she and the servants wait for Jesus’ time to come.

They didn’t have to wait too long. Jesus went to the servants and pointed to some big stone jars – Jews used them to wash before meals. Jars that hold 20 to 30 gallons of water each. And Jesus says to the servants, “Fill them up with water.” So they fill them to the brim. Then he says, “Draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” And you know what happens next. The water changes into wine. The master of the banquet tastes it and is shocked. He says to the groom, “Usually people put out the best wine first – you saved the best for last!” And I’d imagine the groom is shocked, too! Because suddenly he’s getting credit for something he didn’t do, and he has no idea what happened.

It’s shocking to me, too. Not so much what he did – Jesus is God. Turning some water into wine is absolutely no problem for him. But more why he did it. Compare this to Jesus’ other miracles. Healing the sick. Raising the dead. Driving out demons. Those are big things. Those are life or death situations that Jesus is rescuing people from! But in Cana, a couple ran out of wine on their wedding day. This is no life or death situation. It’s embarrassing, sure, but they would have gotten over it.

But Jesus cared. He cared for this couple enough to save them from disgrace. Turn their folly into honor. Supply what was lacking. And boy did he do it generously! He didn’t just give them enough wine for everyone to have a sip – he gave them 150 gallons! And not just palatable wine – the best they’d ever had! Jesus shows himself to be the perfect Savior.

But John tells us this miracle was a sign. **This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee.** It wasn’t just to show how much he cared for them, but how much he cares for you. It wasn’t just to save a couple...it was meant to point to something greater. It was to show he was the One who had come to save you.

From a folly far worse than not buying enough wine for the wedding – from all the foolish, sinful decisions we’ve made over the course of our lives. From a disgrace far worse than some faux pax – from the everlasting shame and contempt we deserved for our sins. We were lacking something far more important than wine – we were utterly lacking righteousness, holiness, the one thing we needed to be right with God now and forever.

But Jesus cared. He showed how perfectly he cares even in the smallest things in Cana, but he showed how perfectly he cared in the biggest things at the cross. He paid for all your foolish sins and won you the honor of being called God’s child. He suffered your everlasting contempt and won you everlasting glory. Where he gave his life and perfectly supplied what you were lacking – made you holy in God’s eyes and fit for heaven. Like that day in Cana, he did all the work – and he gives you the credit for it.

And like that day in Cana, he didn’t skimp. Forgiveness for all your sins. Life that lasts forever. Love of God that Paul says is so wide and high and deep it surpasses knowledge. Every blessing you need for life with all its problems, big and small, and he never fails to give it. He who did not spare his own Son, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Not everyone saw what Jesus did that day in Cana. Master of the banquet didn't. Bride and groom didn't. But Mary and Jesus' disciples did. So have we. How an imperfect wedding revealed a perfect Savior. God grant that our response be the same as theirs: **He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.** Amen.