

Celebrating The Wedding Of Cana.

Text: John 2:1-11

Suggested Hymns:

341, 164, 397, 47, 793

1) The Wedding at Cana Appears To Be
An Ordinary Wedding

2) The Wedding Of Cana Tells Of A Miracle
Setting Forth The Glory Of The Lord Jesus

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 2:1-11, ¹ *On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.* ² *Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.* ³ *And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."* ⁴ *Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."* ⁵ *His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."*

⁶ *Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece.* ⁷ *Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim.* ⁸ *And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.*

⁹ *When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.* ¹⁰ *And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"* ¹¹ *This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

All texts for the Epiphany season contain epiphanies of the Lord Jesus. They are manifestations of Jesus as the Lord God and the Redeemer and Helper of mankind.

For this purpose the Church of old has selected for this Sunday the familiar story of the marriage at Cana. Our theme for today is *Celebrating The Wedding Of Cana*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Wedding at Cana Appears To Be An Ordinary Wedding.

Our text tells us of a wedding. That in itself is inviting. In all lands and among all peoples, a wedding ceremony and a wedding feast are occasions of joy and gladness.

Immediately everyone shows interest. So was the marriage at Cana. Let us today have an after-celebration of this wedding which will continue in our homes and hearts. The term after-celebration means that friends of the bridal party meet once more, either in their own home or in the home of some friend, to celebrate once more.

Here we are this morning as wedding guests, every one of us. The Lord wants all of us to get into the spirit of a wedding feast. At a marriage feast is where all is well, faces are smiling, eyes are shining, and hearts beat faster because of the occasion.

We must think of this wedding at Cana as a marriage in the Jewish manner. The engagement was at an earlier date, in which the bride and the groom were publicly, i. e., before their parents, pledged to each other in a way that made them man and wife.

We still have public engagements. Yet a longer or shorter interval intervenes before the two live together. At the end of this period the wedding takes place.

The groom, with his chosen companions, proceeded to the bride's home, where she, with her chosen friends, awaited him. In festal procession the groom brought his bride to his own home. There was a feast of seven days or more, and so the marriage was consummated.

No rabbi or priest functioned either at the engagement or at the wedding feast. No vows of any kind were exchanged at the wedding. Our wedding customs are different, but neither the ancient Jewish custom, nor our own today are prescribed in the Word of God.

At Cana we do not have the engagement, but the wedding feast. It is not stated how long it lasted. It was an ordinary wedding celebration. We want to observe the anniversary of this wonderful occasion.

In doing so, let us think chiefly of the outstanding features. In the first place, Jesus attended the wedding. He was formally invited, probably because He, as well as His mother, had special connections with the groom or bride or both. His disciples were also present. At that peculiar time Jesus had only six disciples.

We remember at this time that the Jewish weddings were occasions of gladness and feasting, a time of cheerful decorations and processions, in brief, days of special rejoicings, just like weddings today. And it was not unusual that they lasted for an entire week. Economic conditions were entirely different. In our days of working 24/7 young people scarcely get sufficient time for a brief wedding ceremony. In our own hectic and strenuous life we can hardly conceive such ease as those Jewish people enjoyed.

Jesus was there, perhaps for the entire seven days. Jesus at a wedding! Should Jesus show Himself at such occasions of joy and gladness? Even when a twelve-year-old Boy, he said, ***“I must be about My Father’s business.”***¹ Shortly before this wedding Jesus had entered upon His public ministry. He knew the enormous task that was before Him. And yet He took time out to go to a wedding.

How about the other guests? Jesus was surely more or less known to them by this time as more than the son of Joseph and Mary. How did they react to His presence? Would they put on the soft pedal in His presence, as some people do in the presence of a minister? We have reason to believe that, rightly understood, Jesus in no way was a joy-killer at this occasion.

Nothing is in the text to indicate that the people were made to feel strange or ill at ease because of the presence of Jesus. Are we to think that the children at the wedding would hide for fear of this stern, rigorous, austere man, called Jesus? There is no sign of that in the text.

Let us never be afraid of Jesus. Let all our festivities and in particular our weddings be true after-celebrations of the Cana feast with Jesus present. The young couple’s one desire should be to have Jesus present, not only on the wedding day, but on every day of their married life; not merely, as a matter of

mere formality, in a church wedding with a fitting hymn like “*Jesus, Lead Thou On,*”² and a wedding address, but also at the wedding reception and on every day.

It would be the greatest pleasure to them to have Jesus sit at the head of the table. So far as these young people are concerned and perhaps also the parents of the bridal party, Jesus could hear every word spoken, every toast to the bride and the groom, every yarn told and every song sung for the entertainment of the wedding guests. Let us realise that today Jesus is also actually present, even though not visibly, at our celebrations.

There is also a word of warning also in place today at this after-celebration of the Cana wedding. People know how to conduct themselves in the presence of Jesus. They know what is right and what is wrong. They know what is proper and what is improper. It is not a matter of the head, but rather of the heart and the will, and the power from on high to do that which they know to be right, and to avoid what they know to be sinful and improper.

Friends, let us never be afraid of Jesus, the best Friend we have. May that be one of our primary aims really to learn at this after-celebration that Jesus never comes to spoil, but to bless.

Let us teach our children the true picture of our Lord Jesus. Let us never get the idea that to be good Christians we must have long faces. Jesus said in John 15:11, ¹¹ *“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”*

To be sure, it is His joy, not the joy of the sinful flesh. Christians will be on their guard at all times. A Christian life is never a gloomy life. A forgiven life, a faith-filled life, a love-filled life, a hope-filled life, a kindly helpful life, is never a gloomy life. At this seemingly ordinary wedding Jesus manifested forth His glory by performing His first miracle.

2. The Wedding Of Cana Tells Of A Miracle Setting Forth The Glory Of The Lord Jesus.

Suddenly there was great excitement in the dining room of the wedding feast. The wine had run out. It was discovered in time. Somebody might have blundered or miscalculated.

Mary, a close relative of the young couple, seems to have had charge of the dining room. She immediately turns to Jesus. Obviously she expected Him to provide in some miraculous way.

Then followed Christ's loving rebuke. We understand today that she was talking out of turn. *"Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?"* Woman, not mother. Never mind; that is not your business, but Mine. We understand the term "woman." Here Jesus is present as the promised Messiah. The old relation of mother and son that had continued so long in Nazareth is now at an end. He is no more the dutiful son in that sense.

His hour for relief of the embarrassment had not yet come, but it will come in His own time. Mary, the woman, learned her lesson, and learned it fast. *"Whatever He says to you, do it."* No if or but about it. And now Jesus quickly performs the great miracle and changes water into wine.

There were in the house six waterpots of stone, each with a capacity of twenty or thirty gallons. Much water was needed for frequent Jewish cleansings prescribed by the Ceremonial Law. Jesus commanded that these waterpots be filled to the brim.

From the contents, the servants were directed to fill smaller vessels and carry them to the steward of the feast whenever wine was needed. The ruler of the feast would call, *"Bring more wine!"* then these servants according to the order of Jesus were to bring from these jars filled with water.

We wonder what remarks those servants made among themselves, in the first place, when they carried in all the water, and now, when they were to serve water instead of wine. But the order was obeyed. They brought it.

The miracle had taken place. Just at what moment we are not told. It was wrought solely by the will of Jesus. The head waiter tasted the water that had become wine and was, of course, greatly disturbed.

He took the bridegroom aside and informed him of the social blunder he had made. It was custom to serve the good wine first. What was he to do now? For some unaccountable reason this best wine had been reserved. Now what? What did the bridegroom say? No answer.

Here ends the text as far as our own curiosity is concerned. Not a word from the bridegroom. Not a word from the guests. Not a word from the servants. Not another word from Mary.

Jesus had manifested His glory. By this time everybody knew that Jesus had performed a miracle. This was not merely an act to cause wonder and amazement, but more than that. It was a sign, a work that signified something; in this case it signified the almighty power of Jesus.

And this was the first of such signs Jesus performed, followed by many others. *And His disciples believed in Him.* Because of the wine which had been water they regarded Jesus as their Saviour and omnipotent Helper.

Now, Jesus who manifested Himself at Cana's wedding feast is the "*same yesterday, today, and forever.*"³ Oh, let us not overlook the fact that Jesus manifested forth His glory in this home by bestowing a blessing upon it, even in what might be termed an embarrassment.

At our after-celebration of Cana's wedding feast we again learn to look at Jesus with new eyes of faith. To be sure, we know this story. We learned it at home, in Sunday school, and heard it in numerous sermons. But the present world is out of joint, and Christian hearts are in need of special strength these days.

At this after-celebration we have an advantage over those first six disciples, and also the other guests who were eyewitnesses to the miracle. We know now many more signs of the Lord Jesus; we know His whole life and His whole work. We know that Jesus is no more in the state of humiliation, when only now and then He let rays of His divine glory shine forth. Now, at this after-celebration and every day, Jesus sits at the right hand of His heavenly Father.

Therefore so much more this miracle impels us to believe in Jesus as our Saviour and omnipotent gracious Helper. That is our greatest need. We need Him who can and does change water into wine. That is the wonderful something about the blessings of the Lord that they change, or transform, so many things. Our earthly means in our homes for our families and the church reach so much further when the Lord blesses them. There is an abundant supply.

The newlyweds at Cana had sufficient wine for months to come. It was an abundant supply of wine. That is the reason the evangelist reports how much each jar held.

Oh, that we might allow this Lord Jesus to enter our homes, not to journey through, but to abide with His rich supply of blessings! The jars have not been made smaller. And there is so much water in our homes that needs to be changed to wine. The waterpots so often are full to the brim.

Much of it is bitter water, briny water from tearful eyes, Marah water. Bitterness, discord, petty bickerings, and violent outbursts prey upon domestic love and harmony. So many unnecessary things help to fill the water jars with Marah water. Add to this the daily toil and drudgery which causes the water to become flat and stale.

So often Christians find the Marah water so bitter that, like Israel of old, when they taste it, they cannot drink it. But when there is an Epiphany in our homes, a manifestation of the Lord, all such waters are changed into wine.

That is the Epiphany lesson at this after-celebration: Jesus can do it, and He does do it when He is invited to abide with us. Remember what Jesus said to Zacchaeus, *“Today I must stay at your house.”* Remember also that it is not merely a beautiful figure of speech that Jesus changes water into wine, but a living truth and reality. Not only on festive occasions, but also in everyday life and particularly in times of need.

Do you not see and feel how this ancient, familiar Gospel story draws you, like the disciples, with divine power to believe? So this morning you have had the privilege of celebrating a wedding, and such a wedding which at first appears to be just an ordinary wedding, but then turns out to be a great manifestation of our Lord and King.

Friends, to have such a Saviour and King, what joy! What assurance! What salvation! But not to have Him, what a loss! What lonely and lost life! What hope destroyed!

Look at His glory. Believe. And some day there will come an after-celebration, an Epiphany, not here on earth but in heaven above. Then no more believing but seeing. With unveiled countenances we shall then see His glory.

May the Lord Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, grant that we may all be there as His heavenly guests to share in this His glory. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 2:49

² Hymn 341

³ Hebrews 13:8