

## January 15 Lesson

Today we read about Jesus' **first** recorded miracle and John's first **sign**. Remember, John's goal is to convince us that Jesus is the **Messiah**, the **Son** of God (20:30–31), and he does this by recording and calling our attention to various signs or miracles that Jesus performed (he records seven of them). And this is the first of those signs...

So, as we pick up the story, Jesus and His disciples (so far we have Andrew, John, Peter, Philip and Nathanael, just five at this point) are on their way from “Bethany beyond the Jordan” to Galilee. The journey took them three days, and John tells us that “on the third day a **wedding** took place at **Cana** in Galilee” (2:1).

Cana was located about 8 miles northeast of Nazareth, and around 13 miles west of the Sea of Galilee. The plain where Cana was located was apparently part of the royal domain of the Herodians, and it was cultivated by their tenants under the supervision of royal officials. According to John, Jesus' first two “signs” occurred at Cana: changing the water into **wine** (2:1–11) and **healing** the son of a royal official (4:46–54).

Now, I should point out that Nathanael, the last disciple to join the group, was from Cana, so it's likely that he knew the families involved in the wedding. And when Jesus and the disciples get there, surprise, surprise, there is Mary, Jesus' mother. She was already there! So, apparently, Mary was a close friend of the groom's family.

Not only that, but Mary seems to have a significant part in helping with the preparations for the wedding. Notice that John 2:2 says that Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding, but it doesn't say that Mary was invited; she is already there when Jesus arrives (2:1). Not only that, but she is closely involved with the work of serving; when the wine runs out, she seems to know about it before the steward of the feast (vv. 3, 9–10). She also speaks to the servants on Jesus' behalf, as though they knew who she was but not who Jesus was (v. 5). So it looks like Mary's friendship with the family of the groom is what makes her so concerned about the wine.

OK, so the wedding is going along and everything seems fine, and then suddenly, the wine runs out. Now, what's the big deal about running out of wine? Well, in those days a wedding celebration could last as long as a **week**, and the financial responsibility lay with the **groom** (cf. 2:9–10). To run out of food or wine would be a huge **embarrassment**, especially in an honor/shame culture which was very sensitive to stuff like this; there is even some evidence that this kind of problem could result in the groom being sued by the bride's relatives (awkward!).

Now let me just say that drinking wine in **moderation**, particularly with meals, was commonplace in the ancient Jewish world. At times it was **healthier** than the water that was available (no bottled water back then). Various Scriptures and intertestamental works considered wine a gift of gladness and rejoicing from God. Now, the wine of Jesus' day was much more **diluted** than our modern wines (I want to make sure you understand that), **but** it still could cause **drunkenness** if someone drank too much (the point being that you would really have to be trying to get drunk). However, Jesus did drink wine and so this is why later on you have people accusing Him of being a “glutton and a drunkard” (Luke 7:34). However, Jesus never got drunk and neither should we...and what's the easiest way to avoid getting drunk? Don't drink...

Alright, Mary comes to Jesus, and says, “They have no wine,” and Jesus' reaction is fascinating. It almost seems like an over-reaction, until you think a little more about what Mary said. Her words, “They have no wine,” are more than just a simple statement of fact. His reply makes this clear. My best guess is that

Mary's words also meant: "I want you to do something about it," (have you ever had this happen to you? maybe your mom or dad pointed something out to you, and their point was...do something about it!)

So, there was, I think, a certain motherly authority to her words, and maybe also a little bit of: "It's high time that people knew who you really are." Can you imagine how frustrating it was for Mary—Jesus is supposed to be the Messiah, and years and years go by and nothing. And it may well be that she was pushing Jesus to be more active and noticed, do something to get the message out there...

Now, does Jesus refuse Mary's request? No, he doesn't! He does, however, examine her **motives** and **expectations**. And so, I think that what we have here is Jesus dealing with the **nature** of his relationship with his Mother. And remember, Jesus has just begun his earthly ministry, he's just been baptized, he's just been led into the wilderness to be tempted and he's come through in victory. OK, let's look at the three parts to His response to Mary.

First, he addresses her as "**Woman**;" Now you're probably thinking, "There is no way I would ever called my mother Woman'. And yet we need to understand that in those days, the word was a polite title, like "Ma'am"; it wasn't rude like it would be today. And yet it was a definite statement about the current nature of their relationship. Let's stop and think about that. Why would Jesus called his mother 'Woman.' Well, for 30 years he has been her what? He's been her firstborn son, the pride of her life, the joy of her heart, he's been sinless, so you can imagine how wonderful it was to have child that is always kind, considerate, thoughtful, obedient...

Now if you've had children that have grown up, you know that the relationship changes at some point. It definitely changes when they get married, but sometimes before that, usually when they go off to college, there's a change—they're more independent and on their own, and you give them more responsibility. But there is always a tendency in parents to treat their children as what? You're still my little girl, you'll always be my little boy... And there is often a carry-over of authority, you just expect them to do what you tell them to do.... And Jesus is making a point here...He's saying, Mary, I'm not your little boy anymore; and yet He does it in a very gentle, kind way. Indeed, Mary now must **submit** to him as Messiah and Lord rather than leading Him as her "son."

Second, Jesus says, "What does that have to do with me?" [lit. "what to me to you"]. This is a common Hebrew idiom, roughly meaning, "What business is that of mine?" or "It's none of my business." Essentially, Jesus is asking Mary, 'Why are you trying to involve me in this situation?' And this really strikes at Mary's motive, doesn't it? Why was she coming to Him like that? Did she understand that he had begun His Father's **ministry**? Did she appreciate what **kind** of ministry that was going to be? It wasn't going to be flashy and loud and ostentatious. It wasn't going to be at all like others who had come before and claimed to be the Messiah. It was going to be quiet and subdued, and even though crowds would flock to Him when they realized that He could heal the sick, He rebuked the demons who shouted out who He truly was and told His disciples to keep their mouths shut about things he had said and done. So, Mary, do you really, truly understand what I'm here to do?

Finally, he says, "My **hour** is not yet come." In other words, "Mary, I'm very much aware of when I should do what I've come to do" (cf. Jn 7:6, 9). Think about this, Jesus' life was carefully planned, from when He was born, to when He was baptized, to when He began to heal, to all the rest of His ministry throughout Israel—all of it was **planned** and **timed** in order to lead to Calvary at just the right moment. So, the point is, Mary, the Father knows where and when and how I should carry out what He wants me to do, and I'm following that plan...are you?

Now, how did Mary respond? Did she get offended or annoyed or upset? No, she just turned to the servants and said, "Whatever he says to you, do it." Mary's response indicated that she still expected Jesus to meet the need. And actually, Jesus was always going to help! It's not that Jesus didn't want to help; he just wanted to make sure that she and his disciples didn't get the wrong ideas about his ministry,

especially from the beginning. And I'm sure that the look on His face and maybe the tone of his voice helped to convey this...This is the only command we know that Mary ever gave, she gives it here at the end: "Whatever he says to you, do it." Now that is good advice!

In closing, let's look at how John summarizes this story: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his **glory**. And his disciples **believed** in him." Now what does it mean when it says Jesus manifested his glory? Well, John began his gospel by saying that "No one has ever seen God" (1:18); not even Moses with whom God spoke face to face (Exod 33:11). When Moses said, "Please show me your glory" (Exod 33:18) God said, "I will make my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name...but you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Exod 33:19-20).

Yet when Jesus Christ came into the world, he brought a message of astounding grace: "He who has seen me has **seen** the Father" (Jn. 14:9). How can this be? Because Jesus is the only-begotten **God**; because "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (Jn. 1:18, 1:14).

This is the whole message of the Gospel of John—the glory of God, which is the glory of Christ, **manifest** among men. And it showed itself in various ways, from the transfiguration where the divinity within Jesus burst forth in brilliant light to the humble village of Cana where Jesus' power quietly saved a family from shame and disgrace.

"And his disciples believed in him." What does that mean? What were they believing? Don't miss this...John the Baptist has just said, only a few days ago: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! I have seen and have borne witness that [Jesus] is the Son of God." (1:29, 34). Nathanael, who asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" has just declared: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" So, already, these five disciples are beginning to recognize that Jesus wasn't just a prophet, he wasn't just some great teacher—Jesus was the **Son** of God! They believed this and we should too!