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Christ's First Miracle John 2:1-11

Philippians 4:6 tells us "**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**" What is praying with thanksgiving dependent upon?

Being able to pray with thanksgiving is dependent upon us believing that the Lord is both able and willing to bring about the perfect outcome.

I did not say the preferred outcome, but the perfect outcome. In January of this year, my PSA levels became elevated and I committed this concern to the Lord in prayer. I asked Him as I went to have my biopsy for cancer, that the results would be negative for cancer.

But the results were not negative for cancer, the results were positive for cancer. Was this the preferred outcome? No! But was it the perfect outcome? Yes!

Through my subsequent surgery and recovery period I have had the opportunity to get to know Jesus better. Was this the way that I would have chosen to get to know Jesus better? No! But it was God's way. It was the best way. From God's standpoint at this time and place in my life, it was the perfect way

Can Christians who pray one thing and get another thing be tempted to think that God somehow has shortchanged them in their prayers? Certainly! They could think it! But they would be wrong! God never shortchanges those believers who have needs who come to Him in prayer.

This will come alive for us this morning as we continue on in our study of the Gospel of John. This weekend we will be considering John 2:1-11 which contains for us the story of Christ's first recorded miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. The question we will be asking is this: What do we learn about the wedding in Cana of Galilee from John 2:1-11?

My hope for our study this weekend is that this story would stimulate our prayer life. I would hope that we would see prayer as the vehicle God uses to bring blessings into our lives that will far exceed our expectations. And certainly we will see these things if we would be given the grace to see His work clearly.

What is the question we are asking? We are asking, "What do we learn about the wedding in Cana of Galilee from John 2:1-11?"

We learn that the response to the wedding invitation apparently went very well (John 2:1-2). Let us begin by looking at **John 2:1, "And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there."**

When John speaks of the "**third day**" he is speaking about the third day after the events described for us in **John 1:43-51**. In other words, three days had past since Philip and Andrew had embraced Jesus as the Messiah. So what had Jesus been doing during those three days? Apparently He had

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been traveling, in order to get to a wedding. What does the verse say? "**And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee.**"

Now we know at least a part of the reason why he had purposed to leave the wilderness area on the eastern side of the Jordan River where John was baptizing in order to cross over to the western side of the Jordan River. He was going to a wedding ceremony.

Who was getting married? We don't know. But we do know that Mary was there. Let me read for you the rest of the verse, "**And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there.**"

Does this mean that Jesus was going to the wedding simply because He knew His mother would be there and He wanted to visit with her, or had He actually been invited to the wedding? Let us read verse 2, "**and Jesus also was invited.**" Obviously Jesus was not going to this ceremony just to see His mother. He had a personal interest in being at this wedding. He had been invited. But not only had Jesus been invited to this wedding, but certain disciples of Jesus had been invited as well.

What did **verse 2** say? "**And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding.**" Who might these disciples have been? I believe based on what we have already seen in our study of this gospel in John that we would have to conclude that the disciples that accompanied Jesus to this wedding were John, Andrew and Peter based on **John 1:35-42**, plus Philip and Nathanael based on **John 1:43-51**.

When people are planning a wedding there is always a question about whom you should invite. But even after you get past this hurdle of deciding whom you should invite, you are never quite sure exactly who is going to show up. Will everyone show up or only a percentage of the people whom you have invited show up? It is somewhat of a guessing game. But in light of the fact that Jesus, Andrew, Peter, John, Nathanael and Philip were willing to travel three days, most likely by foot to get to this wedding in response to the invitations they received, it would have in this case proven prudent for those organizing this wedding to plan for everyone who they invited actually coming.

In fact, that would not be a bad rule of thumb for anyone planning a wedding. Airlines might choose to overbook airplane flights as a matter of company policy but this can cause serious problems at a wedding where the number of invited guests somehow outstrips your capacity to accommodate them.

What is the first thing we learn about the wedding in Cana of Galilee from John 2:1-11? We learn that the response to the wedding invitation apparently went very well based upon the response of Jesus and His disciples. What else do we learn about the wedding?

We learn that the response to the invitation went so well that it *threatened* to become an emotional and financial liability to the bridegroom's family (John 2:3-5).

Let us read **John 2:3**, "**And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.'**" How could this have happened? We are not told.

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But it might have largely revolved around economics. Where was this wedding taking place? It was taking place in Cana of Galilee. Cana of Galilee was not only a small town, it was a poor town. There was not a whole lot of difference between it and the neighboring town of Nazareth that was fifteen miles away. Those organizing this wedding most likely had limited funds and were hoping that everything would simply work out. Obviously it didn't.

How big a deal was this? Let us consider for a moment what was entailed in a typical Jewish wedding during that time period?

A Jewish wedding ceremony would begin when the bridegroom and his friends would make their way in a procession to the bride's home. This was often done at night so that the light from the torches could be clearly seen. When they got to the bride's home people would publicly wish the couple well. After this was done the bride and groom would then go again in a procession, very likely under a canopy, to the house that the groom had prepared for his bride where most likely a religious ceremony of some type would take place along with a wedding banquet.

Who was responsible for this banquet? The groom's family was responsible for the wedding banquet and was legally required to provide a feast of a certain standard, and of course that would include wine. And if this standard was not met they could actually become financially liable for their social faux pas.

Wine was considered by the Jews to be a *staple* article of food (Gen. 14:18; Num. 6:20; Deut. 14:26; Neh. 5:18; Matt. 11:19). It was a staple article of food because it was plentiful and safe to drink. And because it was a staple of the Jewish diet there was no way that anyone could put on a wedding feast without *wine*.

Certainly we could all imagine the apprehension the groom's family and those helping them with the wedding must have felt when they realized that the wine had given out. It would appear that in this case that one of those people who may have been helping this family with the wedding was Mary the mother of Jesus.

We see her helping role in the wedding first of all by the way she approached Jesus with the news that the wine had given out. She was not simply approaching Him with information that she felt that He would find interesting, she actually approached Him in a way that would indicate that she wanted Him to do something about the problem. How do we know this? We know this because of Jesus response. Listen to the response of Jesus in **John 2:4, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come."** Mary may have been vague in the way she approached Jesus, but Jesus was not vague in terms of His response.

Jesus first addresses His mother as "woman." The term "woman" (GYNAI) was not a term of disrespect. This form of address was thoroughly courteous and is translated "dear woman" in the NIV. But even though it is a respectful and courteous term of address it is unusual for a son to address his mother in this way. Jesus chose the term "woman" to indicate to His mother that there is a *new* relationship between them as he enters His public ministry

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The new relationship that Jesus now sees Himself having with His mother is further highlighted by His question. And what is the question? "**What do I have to do with you?**" Christ's response takes on the form of a mild rebuke. Jesus, in responding to His mother's request, used a Semitic idiom to ask a question that can be translated in numerous ways, but always *distances* the two parties.

Why is Jesus putting distance between He and His mother? When Mary, the mother of Jesus, told Him, "**There is no wine,**" she apparently was trying to take advantage of her relationship with her Son. She most likely had heard about His recent baptism by John the Baptist and the events that had accompanied that baptism. She apparently had heard about how John the Baptist had begun to identify Him as the Lamb of God. And she certainly was aware that certain disciples of John the Baptist had embraced Him as the Messiah and had begun to follow Him. She was excited about the possibility of Jesus publicly disclosing Himself as the Messiah and she wanted Him as the Messiah of Israel to disclose Himself as such now in the midst of this problem as a favor for her.

Apparently she thought she could approach Him very much in the same way that she had always approached Him in the past and that she could have an influence on what He would do. And in this case it appears that she wanted to use that influence to get Him as the Messiah to act in respect to the present need. This is why Jesus responded as He did. This is the reason why Jesus is making it very clear to her that their relationship had changed.

This must have been very difficult for Mary to hear. She had given birth Him, nursed Him, watched Him as he took His first steps, but now that He had entered into the purpose of His coming, everything, even family ties, had to be subordinated to His divine mission.

Obviously when Mary approached her Son and told Him, "**There is no wine**" she had an agenda. Jesus, in his response to His mother's hidden request to come to the aid of their hosts, wanted her to understand that He was not operating according to her *agenda* anymore.

If He is not operating according to her agenda, if He is not operating according to His agenda, then what is the agenda that is guiding His life? He is now operating according to His Father's agenda, which would culminate with Christ offering Himself up on the cross as God's sacrificial Lamb. But Jesus could not do this at just any time, there was an appointed time. Let us go on to the next phrase, "**My hour has not yet come.**"

When Jesus spoke of His hour having not yet come He spoke about the appointed hour of His *death* (John 7:7-8; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1). We know this because repeatedly throughout this Gospel He will say this very same thing. My hour has not yet come. My hour has not yet come. He does this in **John 7:6-8; 7:30; 8:20** but then as the hour of His death on the cross is approaching He says in **John 12:23; 13:1; 17:1** "**The hour has come.**"

But apparently though Jesus makes it clear to Mary that their relationship had changed, and that His decisions are now being directed by His greater mission given Him by His heavenly Father, He obviously must have indicated to her that He would in fact do what she wanted. How do we know this?

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Look at the next verse, **"His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."** What we suspected was true by her question is now confirmed. She does in fact have some responsibility for this wedding. If she hadn't she would not have spoken to the servants in this way. And certainly somebody in some position of authority would have had to say something to the servants if the servants were going to take directions from simply one of the guests. Especially if that guest asked to do something that would seem rather bazaar. This leads us to the third thing we learn about the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

We learn that the threat of embarrassment to this Jewish family became an opportunity for Jesus to perform His first miracle (John 2:6-11). And as we consider Christ's first miracle, I would hope that we could take encouragement in respect to our everyday lives. How can we take encouragement from this miracle? When we ask the Lord for help, His provision will be more than adequate (Philippians 4:19). Certainly the apostle Paul believed this. Hopefully you remember his instruction to the Philippian Church in **Philippians 4:19, "And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."** God is not in the business of shortchanging those who come to Him for help. We may not get exactly what we asked for, but what we do get will always be better.

The Lord does not shortchange those who come to Him in time of their need, and certainly Mary was about to learn this. Let us continue to read.

Look at **John 2:6, "Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each."** Somewhere in the vicinity of where the feast was being held there were six stone waterpots that could hold approximately 120 to 180 gallons of water. The water in these pots was not meant for drinking but rather for ceremonial washing.

We see a reference to this in **Mark 7:3** where it says, **"For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders."** Now this might seem like a lot of water for washing but we must bear in mind the continuing need for ceremonial purification if the feast went on for a number of days, which a wedding feast would normally do. Therefore it would not seem at all out of place that there would be this kind provision for ceremonial purification at a wedding.

And apparently these six stone waterpots that potentially could provide so abundantly for the Jewish custom of purification caught the attention of Jesus and He therefore instructed the servants to fill them. And to their credit the servants did not fall short in respect to His request. What does **John 2:7** tell us? **"Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.' And they filled them up to the brim."**

At this point in time we might wonder what the servants were thinking. They perhaps may have heard that some people at this wedding feast actually believed that Jesus, the son of Mary, was the Messiah and in that regard they may have been curious about why He may have asked them to do this.

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But on the other hand and probably more likely, they did not have any clue about who Jesus was. And believing that this was the more likely scenario I believe they would have had to find his request to fill the waterpots rather puzzling? Why would they be puzzled? Because these servants probably knew that the wine had given out and that the wedding banquet would be coming to an end. And if this were true, there would be no need for additional water. But whether or not they were curious or just simply puzzled nothing could prepare them for what happened next.

Let us read **John 2:8**, "**And He said to them, ‘Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter and they took it to him.’**" Who is the headwaiter? The headwaiter had the *primary* responsibility for the wedding feast and may have been either a servant or one of the guests. When the servants were asked by Jesus to draw out some of the water they must have been thinking why in the world would Jesus ask them to do such a thing. But even if they were somewhat perplexed by what they were asked to do, I am quite confident that when they drew out what they thought would be water, and it appeared to be wine, their consternation would have had to be replaced with amazement and with a sense of anticipation. We certainly can understand their amazement but what about their anticipation?

Why would they be filled with anticipation? They would be filled with anticipation because they were taking the water that they had been drawn out of pots, which now appeared to be wine, to the person who was in charge of the feast where they fully anticipated that he would taste it. What would it taste like? Would it meet his approval? Would he find it totally unacceptable? Talk about waiting with baited breath; these servants certainly were doing that. What was the verdict?

Let us read **John 1:9-10**, "**And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom. (10) And said to him, ‘Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now.’**"

This was a very good day for the headwaiter. He, I am sure like the servants, knew that the wine had given out. And I am quite sure that he was not a happy camper. But out of the blue comes this wine that he had no knowledge even existed. But not just any wine, but rather a wine of a very high quality. This headwaiter I am sure was thrilled.

But though I am sure he was thrilled, he was also puzzled by the fact that the groom’s family had followed the common practice of putting out the best wine first which he made very clear when he said to the groom, "**Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer.**" Was his remark to be taken as a criticism or as a compliment we really don’t know. But we do know that he was in quite a state of astonishment. But certainly he was not any more astonished than the bridegroom and unbeknownst to the headwaiter probably had no clue where this wine of extraordinary quantity and quality had come from. But we know how all of this had come about. It came about because Mary took her need to Christ.

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CONCLUSION

Did Jesus shortchange Mary when she came to the Lord in the time of her need? And of course the answer is absolutely not. He never shortchanges those who come to Him in prayer.

Do you believe this! Then hopefully you with a trusting heart will come into the presence of God with your needs and enthusiastically and excitedly sit back and watch the hand of God do marvelous things. And though He may not give us our preferred response when we pray, He will give us the *perfect* response.

How does John conclude this section of Scripture? Let us read **John 2:11 "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."**