

John 2:1-11 Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. ² Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My time has not come yet." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Six stone water jars, which the Jews used for ceremonial cleansing, were standing there, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." And they did. ⁹ When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, he did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew). The master of the banquet called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have had plenty to drink, then the cheaper wine. You saved the good wine until now!" ¹¹ This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.



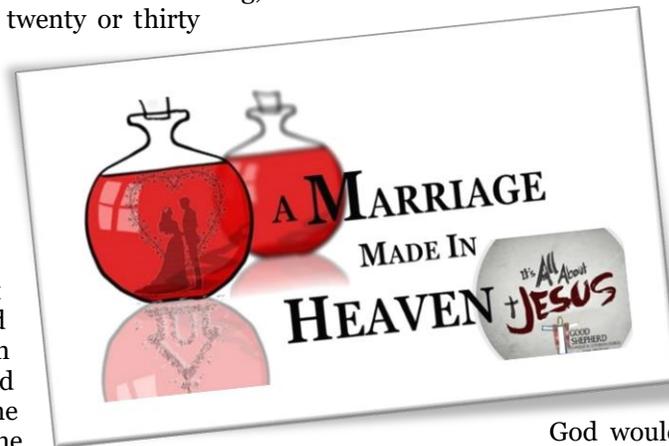
There is nothing very remarkable about God changing water into wine. He's been doing it for thousands of years. He causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine and the vines to grow and produce fruit. He causes the crushed grapes to become good wine that makes glad the heart of man, as the psalmist says. (Psalm 104:14-15) What is remarkable is not God's power to change water into wine. Rather, it is the manner in which He did so. He did not choose to do so according to the laws He set down to govern what we like to call "nature." Instead, he chose to do so by means of a miracle. It was not just any miracle; it was the very first miracle Jesus did.

It was thirty years after the Word became flesh that He first revealed His glory as the only begotten Son of the Father. Today's Gospel Lesson concludes with these words: "This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him."

Jesus chose not to reveal His glory for the first time at a gathering of the high and mighty political leaders. He chose not to reveal His glory for the first time at a gathering of illustrious clergymen or renowned scholars. He chose to reveal His glory for the first time at a wedding of one man and one woman.

Why did He wait so long? Before the wedding at Cana, Jesus lived a sinless life as the holy child of Mary, but he gave no other evidence that He was God. Fraudulent Gospels that weren't really written by Christ's apostles laid claim to all sorts of bizarre miracles done by Jesus as a boy. But our Lord's miracles were never done for cheap

entertainment or just to show off. Yes, they did prove his divine power and glory, but they showed much more than that. Jesus' miracles showed His divine concern for those who benefited from them, and not just for them, but for us as well. The fact that Jesus chose to reveal His divine glory for the first time at a wedding tells us much about what God thinks of marriage.



In the beginning, God made them male and female and He blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it." Even after the fall into sin, God blessed marriage. The very fact that God promised to destroy the power of Satan through the birth of a Child shows us that God has always honored the holy vocation of Christian motherhood. Every Christian woman from the time of Eve onward knew that

God would bring salvation to the world by bringing a holy Child into the world through a virgin woman.

Mary approaches Jesus and urges him to solve the problem of running out of wine. He replies to Mary, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." Here in our text and again while suffering on the cross Jesus addresses his mother as "woman." To our ears this may sound less than respectful. But it is actually an expression of profound respect. When Jesus calls His mother "woman" He is honoring her as the one to whom Elisabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, said: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke 1:42) Jesus honors Christian motherhood by honoring marriage. And He honors marriage by honoring motherhood.

But Jesus also answers her real intent. Mary was urging Jesus to take this opportunity to come out into the open as the Son of God after 30 long years of hiding His divinity. But that wouldn't happen for three more years. When it did come, Mary wasn't going to like it one bit, because the true manifestation of Jesus before the world as the Christ wouldn't be in a victorious display of majesty. It wouldn't be a welcome or glorious sight at all. It would be in being rejected, in suffering and dying for the sins of the world. That was the true, public epiphany of Jesus as the Son of God.

Before we go on, let's pause here a minute. Some people are taken aback by the amount of wine Jesus made. Those six waterpots contained between 120 and 180 gallons of water. That's a lot of wine. Drunkenness was virtually unknown among the Jews. Public drunkenness was considered disgraceful behavior. But it was equally unthinkable to have a celebration without wine. With the wine gone, the wedding celebration could not continue. The bridal couple did not just face a mild and temporary embarrassment. They faced a heart-breaking personal disaster.

Also realize that even though a wedding reception would last several days, not all of this wine would have been consumed. Some would be kept for other occasions, and some would be sold to help the newly weds get stable. Remember God never causes someone to sin or provides the means to sin.

There is a spiritual meaning here that we should consider. Jesus is the heavenly bridegroom and the church is his holy bride. He is her Savior. He gave His life for her, shedding His blood for her, purchasing her as His own. He continually cares for her until the end of time.

Jesus gives us, his church, his bride, good wine, the best wine - His grace and forgiveness through His holy precious blood by which He once and for all redeemed His church from all her sins and washed her clean to be His holy, pure, radiant church.

True the church looks ugly at times. We see her ugliness as God's people refuse to live as they should. The church's holiness is hidden underneath sin and weakness.

And so it is also with the marriages and homes of Christ's people. There is ugliness. Honor, respect and devotion can often be thin. Criticism instead of compliments, selfishness instead of self sacrifice infect even the best homes. On top of these daily failings, we see marriage attacked within our increasingly godless culture. Unmarried folks live as if they are married when they are not. Married couples live as if they were single. If we can see all this, think of what God can see!

Yet Jesus insists on blessing marriage. He brings the forgiveness He purchased by His blood into our homes and makes it ours. He who changed water into wine can surely change our cold hearts to love Him and one another. And He does. He made good wine, plenty of it, more than enough to meet the needs of that wedding celebration. And He does that for us today. There is no need He won't fill. There is no sin He won't forgive. There is no loss that He won't replace with the riches of His grace. Jesus has joined Himself in permanent and unbreakable union to His Holy Christian Church. That is a marriage made in heaven and consummated on earth as He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.

We are the bride of Christ, the Communion of Saints, the children of the heavenly Father. The sins that bring suffering into our church, our marriages, our homes, and our personal lives are the very same sins that our Lord Jesus has washed away by His blood. In sanctifying our marriages and homes, Jesus provides us with a foretaste of the marriage feast in heaven. There, as we are confirmed in the holiness of God Himself, we will forget all of the sins and failures of which we were guilty.

Today we trust in the forgiveness of sins while we live under the shelter of the cross. In heaven the grace of God will shine clearly and forever. The joy of that eternal celebration will never diminish as Christ and His holy bride will rejoice in each other throughout eternity.

It truly is a marriage made in heaven.

Amen.