

Sermon – 11/04/2004 am

Water to Wine

Study Text: John 2:1-5

You are driving along the highway and see a large sign on which is pictured a hamburger. Do you stop, go over to the sign and start munching on that hamburger? Or you see a sign displaying a new car – the latest model, just the car you would like. Do you stop to get that sign and take it home with you? No! The sign is there on the roadside to inform and direct you to where you can get a tasty hamburger, or where you can get a real car to drive in.

This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee Jesus turned water into wine as a sign. They had run out of wine at this wedding and the bridegroom faced major embarrassment. Jesus' mother told Jesus, expecting that he might help get them out of trouble. Jesus did not see it as his concern, but did, under divine direction, perform this miracle of turning water into wine. It did save the wedding but it was done as a sign to reveal his glory.

Remember when Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed the 5000. The crowd at that time realized that it was Jesus who did a miracle – here it was only the servants and disciples who knew. That crowd followed Jesus – he said to them *you seek me not because you saw the signs but because you ate of the loaves and were filled* (6:26). What did he tell them they must do? Believe in Him!

A girl I know went to a healing meeting and her arm was healed. She was telling me about this and I said that is wonderful. I believe the Lord can and does heal. But what are you going to do about it now. Are you going to find out about the One who healed you and believe in him? She did believe and joined the fellowship of Christian students.

'None of the miracles Jesus did were kind actions to alleviate human distress *and nothing more*. They were signs displaying the glory of Jesus and the wonder of his redeeming love'. Signs which John wrote of here in this gospel *that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in his name* (20:31).

This miraculous sign then revealed his glory – but how did it do this we might ask. After multiplying the loaves he declared *I am the bread of life* (ch6). In opening the eyes of the blind man he declared *I am the light of the world* (ch.9). No such explanation is given here but there are clues within this passage indicating what the miracle signified.

Water

What did Jesus use to make the wine? Water. Was it just any water – just water from a well? No. It was water from stone water-pots. Just any stone pot? No. These water-pots were *according to the purification of the Jews*. This was water used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. They used this water to wash their body – their hands particularly before eating. It was used to wash utensils.

This water was symbolic of the Old Covenant. It cleaned only the outside. Jesus often pointed this out to the Jewish leaders who were so particular about this ritual washing (see Matthew 15:2) – *you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside are full of extortion and self indulgence* (Matthew 23:25). Blind Pharisee he said *first cleanse the inside*.

There were six of the stone water-pots there at the entrance to this wedding banquet. In Scripture 7 is often used to indicate perfection, and 6 for imperfection. Does the number 6 have any significance here? Symbolism of imperfection, imperfection of the Old Covenant would be appropriate. Perfection was not possible under the Old Covenant because of sin, sin residing in the heart of man.

Each water-pot held 20-30 gallons – Greek 2-3 measures. That means a total volume of around 150 gallons or 600 litres. For water, water for washing, maybe not a lot, but for wine this represented abundance, a over abundance. There would be no shortage of wine at this wedding any more.

Wine

Jesus instructed the servants to fill the water pots to the brim. His mother had told them to do whatever he said, hoping he would do something to rescue this wedding. *Fill the pots with water* he said and they did so. Why bother with such detail? Well he did not want to do things by half measures. He was going to provide ‘fullness’. He was going to satisfy them completely. Moreover, there would be no room left for the old. All the old water of washing would be changed – there would none left. In 1:16 we read *and of his fullness we have all received grace*.

Jesus told the servants to draw *some from the pots and take it to the master of the feast* – this was supposed to be water for washing and they were taking it for him to drink! What he tasted was wine, and a very fine wine at that. He was surprised that the host had kept the best wine till now rather than giving it at first.

What does wine signify? It signifies different things in Scripture but in the context here it is wine that *gladdens the heart* as the Psalmist said (Psalm 104:15). This wine is a symbol of life, of gladness and joy. Isaiah spoke of the kingdom of God as wine, milk and honey (Isaiah 55:1). Jesus also spoke of the kingdom of God as new wine – even as he referred to himself as the bridegroom. *No one puts new wine into old wineskins* (Matthew 9:17).

This wine then signifies the New Covenant, the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ. Behold I make all things new. *If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new* (2 Corinthians 5:17). This verse is a good commentary on this miracle. The old water for purification had been changed into wine. Wine of course enters into the body, wine gladdens the heart. The old water cleansed only the outside of the body. It did nothing to gladden the heart.

The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin (I John 1:7). This word *cleanse* is the same as in our text where it refers to the outward washing. The blood of Jesus is powerful to cleanse the inside, to cleanse our heart from sin. With a cleansed heart or a new heart, we are called a new creation in Christ Jesus. The old has gone, the new has come.

This was the message Jesus tried to get across to Nicodemus. *You must be born again* he said. Not outwardly of course, but inwardly. The Holy Spirit affects this new birth. He does it through the blood of Jesus, blood that was shed when he was lifted up and nailed to the Cross.

This wedding was on the third day. What is the significance of this day, if any? John has been taking us day by day through this amazing week in which Jesus Christ was revealed on earth. The third day after finding Philip and meeting Nathaniel was now the 7th day. Is John making an association with the days of creation? In the introduction or prologue we were told that the Word created all things and that in him was life (1:3, 4).

Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine then signifies the new creation. Jesus has come to make all things new. Ezekiel told of this time when he said *I will give you a new heart and put my spirit within you* (Ezekiel 36:26). It is the blood of Jesus, and only his blood, that can cleanse your heart, that can *cleanse your conscience* that you may serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

Glory revealed

This is the glory that was revealed in this sign of turning water into wine. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory*. The disciples of Jesus beheld his glory when they saw this sign. Remember in Ezekiel we read that the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city. The glory departed from Israel.

The glory of God came down in Jesus Christ. He revealed the glory of God in this sign and in all his works but supremely in the Cross. The Cross was the hour of his glory. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven. His glory is now in heaven and we await his return from heaven in glory.

His glory was revealed but who saw it, who understood this sign? The Master of Ceremonies was amazed at the quality of this wine – as were the bridegroom and the guests. They enjoyed the provision of new wine but *did not know where it came from*. They did not see the sign pointing them to the One, the Son of God. Their joy lasted but a moment.

The servants knew where the wine had come from – they drew it from the water pots as Jesus told them to. They knew it was a miracle which Jesus performed. But they did not respond by believing in him. He was wonder worker but not their Lord.

The disciples however, saw this miracle as a sign and they believed in him. *His disciples believed in him*. They saw beyond the sign to the reality of who Jesus is. They were not content, not satisfied just with drinking the wine. They did not simply stand there gazing at the sign. They saw where the sign was pointing. They saw the glory of God revealed and they believed in Jesus.

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures. This is the glory revealed whenever and wherever the gospel is preached. His glory is revealed today as we look into this Scripture. Do see his glory. Do you believe in him? Are you a new creation in Christ Jesus?

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon