

“Wedding Bloopers”

John 2:1-11

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I could tell she was not feeling well when I looked into her eyes. It was the same expression I had seen on patients in the hospital but hoped I would never see at a wedding altar. Somewhere between the promises and the vows, her knees buckled. Her soon to be husband caught her and kept her from falling completely to the floor. I told him to carry her to the first pew and lay her down. I instructed the best man to go get a glass of water and wet cloth.

After a couple of tense moments, she came around and began to talk. I told her that we could finish the ceremony with her sitting on the front pew and everything would be fine. All her guests would be able to see and hear her repeat her vows.

She quickly responded by firmly stating that she was going back to the altar. I could tell that it would do no good to try to talk her out of it and let him guide her back up the steps. I think she lasted about two minutes this time. When she started going down, I told him to hold her tightly while I fanned her and swiftly wrapped up the ceremony. To this day, I don't recall how he got her down the aisle and out of the church, but somehow he did.

Later, I discovered that she had not eaten all day and had taken some medication for an infection. I'm surprised she even made it down the aisle now that I look back upon it.

This is just one of many interesting things that have happened in weddings I have conducted. After presiding over weddings for thirty-five years, I have no shortage of wedding bloopers I could share.

The couple whose wedding Jesus attended also experienced a major problem. They ran out of wine which was one of the most embarrassing and humiliating things that could occur in that culture. Hospitality was sacred in the East, especially at a wedding. Couples that ran out of wine could even be sued by the wedding guests for a lack of hospitality. That's how important it was to have plenty.

No wonder Mary went to Jesus to request his help. She was probably a server or maybe the person in charge of arrangements and felt a responsibility to do something to solve this problem. However, when she approached Jesus with her dilemma, he appeared to be less than sympathetic. “Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come” John 2:4.

Mary doesn't argue or plead with him, but says to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” John 2:5. Evidently she felt confident that Jesus would do something and he did. He instructed the servants to fill six stone jars with water. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet” John 2:8. When he drank the water turned to wine he was astonished at the quality. It was the best wine he had tasted throughout all the celebration and told the groom so.

What's the purpose of this story? Why did John use it to introduce Jesus to his audience? He tells us at the end. “This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him” John 2:11. What's the message for us today?

I think it is this. Jesus used the plight of a humble Galilean couple to reveal his identity and power and he wants to use us, especially in our times of need, to do the same for those around us. Let me elaborate.

Our world is full of people that wonder who Jesus is and what he can do. There is no shortage of God-talk in our world, even among skeptics. People hear a lot about Jesus but many know him only from a distance. Who is he and what difference can he make in their lives? This is the question on their minds.

And how will that question be answered? By taking a seminary course or listening to a debate? By reading the latest best seller or going to a movie about his crucifixion? Perhaps, but the best way to find out about Jesus is by examining the lives of those that follow him and seeing firsthand how he helps them with their problems.

John told his readers that the primary purpose of the first miracle Jesus performed was not to help a wedding couple avoid humiliation, but to reveal his identity as God's Son and begin his public ministry.

You cannot read this story and overlook the importance of timing. Jesus' response to his mother's request for help was plain, "My time has not yet come." Time for what? Time to begin his public ministry and reveal his identity to the five disciples he had chosen and the seven others he would soon select.

This miracle, as with the other six in John's Gospel, were used by John as "signs" to point to a truth about God that the people needed to understand. For John, the miracle was not as important as the message it revealed. And the message behind this miracle was that Jesus was the Son of God sent into the world to connect us to our heavenly Father, the source of abundant and eternal life.

God still wants to use us to reveal the nature and ability of His Son, Jesus. I know of no better way for this to be accomplished than through the way we handle our problems with God's help.

Last Monday, we said goodbye to one of our sweetest members, Shelby Prescott. She was the five year-old daughter of Faith and Bruce and Steven's sister. For three years, she struggled with nueroblastoma cancer. She fought valiantly and died peacefully in her parent's arms.

At her funeral, I complimented Faith and Bruce and told them what inspiring role models they had been for all of us. I thanked them for showing us how to persevere under adverse circumstances, turn moments into memories, accept limitations without letting them paralyze you, recognize and grant the wishes of a sick child when your own have not come true, put your life on hold when what you want most is slipping out of your grasp, trust God when your heart is broken and walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil.

How were they able to do all these things under the most difficult of circumstances? I asked them last weekend in their home and they quickly told me, "It was due solely to the power of God in our lives." Faith said, "I never really understood what it meant to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit before Shelby got sick. Now I know what it is all about. God gives you the strength to go where you have never been, do what you have never done and face what you never thought you could. I'll never wonder about the reality and power of the Holy Spirit anymore. I know firsthand what it is."

I think this is the meaning and purpose of Jesus' first miracle. God wants to use us during our most challenging times to show the world who His Son is and what he can do. I hope you will make yourself available to him today. The world, your world, is full of people that want to know.