

Who Is The Real Jesus #4 “Lord Of The Wine And Lord Of The Whips” John 2

(With apologies to Tim Keller for stealing his sermon title)

Introduction: We come here to Jesus' first sign and at first appearance it seems like a pretty minor miracle for Him to choose as His inaugural sign. Why didn't He pick something more impressive like walking on water or raising someone from the dead? But we need to look more closely at what is going on, to see why John says that this sign revealed Jesus' glory (vs. 11)

I. Jesus Is Revealed As The Lord Of Wine *We see this by asking several key questions:*

1. What is the problem? They have run out of wine at the wedding feast.

- **This was a big deal and would have brought tremendous social embarrassment** (especially in a shame-based culture like this one) and could even be the grounds for a lawsuit by the bride's family.
- **The fact that Mary gets involved suggests that this was the wedding of a close friend or even a relative.**
- **But the guy who is really in trouble here is the “master of the banquet.”** The "master of the banquet" was like a caterer and master of ceremonies all wrapped up into one. He was a hired "life of the party" and was supposed to monitor the wine consumption and he has blown it. By picking this time to perform His 1st miracle Jesus is saying I am the true Master of the Banquet! He provides what "Mr. Party-Guy" can't!

2. What does Jesus say to Mary? And why? “Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come!”

- **Jesus is being quite abrupt with her.** The NIV adds “Dear” to soften the abruptness, but it is not in the Greek text. This is *not* the way you would address your mother. While it is not exactly rude, it is close to that.
- **“Why do you involve me?”** These words imply distance or even hostility. In Jesus' response we actually see Him mildly rebuking His mother! He is declaring at the beginning of His ministry that He is “free of any kind of human advice, agenda, or manipulation.” (Carson) And Mary shows that she gets this by her words to the servants “Do whatever He asks.”
- **“My time (literally “hour”) has not yet come.”** *But who said anything about His hour? How does His response connect to her request?* What we see here is Jesus with His mind somewhere else. When you are single and you go to a wedding, what are you thinking about? --- Your wedding someday! So too with Jesus, He's thinking of *His* wedding. Jesus is the bridegroom (as we see in the next chapter, John 3:27-30)
- **But Jesus is not just thinking about His wedding, He is thinking about what it will take to provide wine at His wedding.** In this gospel His “hour” always refers to His death (see 7:30, 8:20, 12:23.) Jesus' response shows us that He is thinking about His death. How He changes the water into wine proves this.

3. What does Jesus do?

- **Jesus has the servants fill up ceremonial washing jars. Why? Because He is showing that the old way of purification is over!** The jars were used to ceremonially wash people to teach about their need for cleansing from sin. Jesus says, water won't do it, you need wine, the wine that I will give you, my blood of the New Covenant shed for you!

4. What does this reveal about Jesus' glory?

- **He cares for people deeply.** Notice that at one level He does this miracle to save a guy from social embarrassment who screwed up and doesn't deserve it! Grace is always for the ill-deserving. But it would be cold comfort if Jesus saves people from social embarrassment if He can't rescue them from their sins.
- **He is changing everything! The old has gone and the new has come.** The old way of washing is not enough – but yet the new way seems unclean! Wine was not proper for cleansing – but then no one thought that a cross was a proper way to redeem the world either! [Actually this “old/new” theme runs all through John 1-4. Jesus is the new purification, and the new temple. He is the new teacher and gives the new birth (John 3). He brings the new and living water and a new way to worship in spirit and truth (John 4.)]
- **To drink the cup of joy with us, He must drink the cup of God's wrath to the dregs!** For Jesus to feast with us, He must die for us. As Keller said, *“The only way Jesus gets to His wedding day is through His hour.”* And He is willing to do this! As one writer said, *“Jesus is sitting in the midst of all this joy, sipping the coming sorrow, so that we can sit in the midst of sorrow sipping the coming joy.”* Wine is meant to be tasted, and so is the coming joy!
- **Jesus makes tons of great wine! He is neither stingy nor opposed to great parties.**

II. But Jesus Is Also The Lord Of The Whips! On the surface these 2 episodes seem like opposites but they are linked by vs. 12 ("after this") because the real Jesus is revealed by both, and more clearly by seeing both *together!*

Consider the contrasts between the two events: 1) At the wedding Jesus acts privately to keep the party going, but in the Temple He acts quite publicly to make things stop! 2) At the wedding Jesus is asked to help, but at the Temple He butts in. 3) At the wedding He comforts the disturbed but at the Temple He disturbs the comfortable. 3) At the wedding He brings joy, but at the Temple He upsets everyone. *But John is saying these events are only different on the surface – in fact in both of them Jesus is showing us His authority, revealing what He came to do, and giving us a glimpse of what He is bringing - sometimes He does it by comforting and sometimes by disturbing.*

1. Jesus Shows Us His Authority:

A. At the wedding: We see it in His response to His mother. In effect He says, "*Mom, I'm not on a leash. I'm not at your beck and call.*" We don't see His authority so clearly in this episode because He does what we want Him to do!

B. In the Temple: 1) We see this by considering what kind of whip He used (vs. 15) He makes a whip not out of leather but out of cords (literally "rushes" -- a plant used to make baskets and parchment.) In other words, His "whip" didn't hurt anybody! So why did everybody get up and run? They felt His inherent authority and they fled. That's why they ask Him to explain where this authority that they *felt* came from (vs. 18.) 2) And we see this in how Jesus responds to them. They want Jesus to perform for them, to give them a sign on demand, and an explanation for what He has done. But Jesus doesn't tell them why He does what He does, He responds by affirming His authority to do what He wants. He says basically, I have a right to do this because this is my Father's house!

Application: How often do we say, "*God I could obey you if only you would tell me why.*"? But look at this passage. Jesus disrupts things first, the explanation comes later. Jesus has authority to turn our lives upside down without asking our permission or even explaining why. Job is a great example of this. Do you realize that for all of Job's questioning "why" he never gets an answer? Job never knows as much as the reader of the book! God has authority and He doesn't have to explain it to us. When Jesus overturns your table, the 1st lesson is, He has a right to do it. If He has the ability to fill your table then He must have the right to overturn it. (Keller)

II. Jesus Reveals What He Came To Do – He Came To Die On The Cross!

In the wedding episode we see this in His words, "My hour has not yet come (a phrase which always refers to the cross in John's gospel.) How do we see this in the temple episode? We must ask, why does He get mad?

A. Is it because the merchants are ripping people off? There is absolutely no evidence for this! They were providing a service to those who had to travel a great distance to come and worship and couldn't bring an animal with them. Don't import the idea of Jesus being a sort of proto-communist revolutionary into this text!

B. It is because the temple was to be a place of sacrifice with reflection that enabled people to commune with God in worship and prayer! All the noise is distracting people from praying and reflecting on what the sacrifice is all about. Thus the sacrificial system has been reduced to a merely mechanical process. The sacrificial system was supposed to teach about the gospel, by showing the Jews how bad they were and giving them hope that their sins could be dealt with. But how can they reflect on what they're doing with all the noise? And how can they pray?

Application: Most of us stay busy so we won't have to listen to our noisy consciences and use noise and confusion to keep from reflecting. But God is out to get our attention. Sometimes He does this by filling our table and sometimes He does it by turning our tables over.

III. Jesus Gives Us A Glimpse Of What He Brings: A Restored Relationship With Our Father. It was what the ceremonial washing jars were about at the wedding, and it's what the sacrifices at the temple are about.

A. Jesus is the Temple! (vs. 18) The temple authorities come to Jesus and basically say, "*What right have you to do this? You stormed in here like you owned the place.*" Jesus says, "*Own it? I am it!*" Jesus says I don't own the temple, I am the temple! This is what His reply means in vs. 19, though nobody understood Him at the time (vs. 20-22)

B. Beware of getting so busy that you miss the point. Jesus didn't die so you could fill your life with religious duties and programs. He didn't die so that you can keep yourself so busy that you neglect prayer. Are you too busy? Jesus says, "*Get it out of here! That stuff has got to go!*"

C. Inviting Jesus into your life means He gets to re-arrange things. As Keller puts it, "*In Eastern cultures where the path to spirituality is through self-denial, they can understand the temple Jesus but not the wedding Jesus. In our selfish, me-first, narcissistic culture we can understand the wedding Jesus but not the temple Jesus.*" But He's both! Let Him be who He really is! Jesus fills your table and turns your table over for the same reason, because He loves you! Worship Him!