

# IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Reverend David J. Powers  
Sunday, December 16, 2022

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## **John 2:1-11**

Our second scripture lesson this day comes to us from the Gospel of John. This is our lectionary gospel text for the day. It's the second chapter verses one through eleven. I'll never forget five years ago. It was the first day of what would end up being a 10-day hike across the holy land. Good buddy of mine, Andy Cook, who was here not but two months ago preaching my installation; we had set off on that trek together. We would hike what is known there as the Jesus Trail. We were following the book. We had the trip planned for a really long time. We started at a small hostel in Nazareth. It's the first day of our hike. We'd hike some 13 and a half miles that day, but the day began with a small group folks in their 20s joining us for the travel for the trip.

The way the Jesus Trail begins, you are giving guides for the first day, and so we walked with a wonderful group of young people. They helped make sure that we didn't miss the signposts along the journey between Nazareth and Cana. We stopped for ice cream halfway along the line, and then we started listening to some music. We had talked about as much as we needed to. I asked Amir, who was walking with us, an Israeli Muslim. I said to him "what music do you want me to play on my phone?" And he said, "Do you have any George Strait?" And I said, "Do I have any George Strait?" So, I put on my Bluetooth speaker and attached it to my backpack, and we listened to George Strait for about two hours walking from that ice cream spot into Cana. And then we we crested this hill, and it was the first time we had this view of the city of Cana. And he turned to my friend Andy, Amir did, and he said "you know, I've walked this journey many times. I've probably led dozens upon dozens of people just like you from Nazareth to Cana. I've never asked why do you want to go to Cana? My people are from Cana. There's not a whole lot there. Why is it that this is the first leg of your journey?" Somewhat astonished, Andy said, "Well because of the wedding at Cana." Amir turned to him and said, "the wedding at Cana. Never heard of it." And so, Andy quoted from the Gospel of John this second chapter verses 1 through 11. He paraphrased, but it was something like this:

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So, they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

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With George Strait echoing in the background, Amir walked with more purpose as we made our way into town. We stopped at the little chapel just a hundred yards into the city. We paused. It made more sense to him now why we wanted to begin our journey here; why so many others did as well, why the Jesus trail would start here. It's where the Gospel of John begins to tell of the miraculous works of Jesus at a wedding and a celebration.

This story is certainly about a wedding. It's about what it looks like for Jesus to come in the midst of celebration. Any of you who have ever done wedding planning know what goes into it. You know that there is countless checking and rechecking of the list supplies and whatnot. You make sure that you've got all your guests covered. Well, it's not too far into this wedding that the wine runs out, and the mother of Jesus speaks up. "They have no wine," she says to her son. "What concern of that is to you or to me?" he says back to her. "My hour has not yet come." Ignoring Jesus altogether, she turns to the servants and says, "do whatever he tells you."

John places us at a wedding, but the story is not just about a wedding. This wedding, this story is more microcosm of life, and the question that we are left to ponder in the midst of it is what happens what do we do when the wine runs out? Because the wine runs out more often than we might expect. I've seen the wine run out in many different places. I've seen the wine run out in marriages and in jobs. I've seen it run out in friendships and in parenting. I've seen it run out in finances and the church and faith, even in our work for justice. This story is not about wine. It's about when the demands of the world overwhelm our resources; when we are no longer equipped in the ways that we hoped that we would be to be a husband or a wife or a friend or a mother or a father or a co-worker, what happens when the resources that have been provided for us they don't take us far enough.

What's interesting about this particular story is that no one looks to Jesus until the wine runs out. John doesn't say that he's breaking down on the dance floor and celebrating with everyone else. He's not garnering very much attention. Not until the wine runs out. Nobody seems to care that he is around until the wine runs out, but when the wine runs out Mary, speaks to Jesus, pointing out to him that the demands are not met by the resources that they have fallen short.

Now here's the key. Ignoring Jesus altogether, Mary tells the servants do whatever he tells you. Mary does not know how Jesus will supply the need. Mary does not know what he will require in order to do it. Mary does not know when he will act. The critical issue, it turns out for Mary, is not what or when or where or how.

For her the question that is most important is who. So, there are these tall jars that hold gallons upon gallons and Jesus instructs those who are there to fill them with plain water. Fill them to the brim. He doesn't give them any other instructions and they are called to do nothing else besides to listen to his voice, and so they do. And then he draws. He instructs them to draw from those jars and to pour out and to take what they have pulled from the jar and give it to the

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chief steward; and when he tastes it, he is amazed. No longer is there water; instead, there is wine. Where there was a lack of resource and supply there is provision.

Now they know the secret of what has just happened, but the chief steward doesn't. So, he goes to the bridegroom, and he exclaims "everyone else they serve the good wine first. Everybody gets drunk, then they serve the crappy wine. Not you, though, you're you've held on to the good wine."

Yet for a minute we thought that we had run out. We thought we had gone through all the good stuff, even some of the stuff that wasn't all that good; but then, miraculously, there is provision here, and it's even better than we might have imagined. At the heart of this story is a mother who believes in her son. Mary who believes that Jesus will do something. Also at the heart of the story, are a handful of servants who are willing to obey his calling even when they don't understand.

Beloved, this day as we sit in the midst of the celebration of worship, what I imagine is that each of us has something in our own lives that we are carrying with us where we do not feel that we have the resources to meet the needs. It might be in a relationship; it might be a question of faith. There is a part of our lives, or maybe even our families or people that we love, that has run dry.

So, the question for us that we must ask this day is what do we do when the wine has run out? Do we worry about the what and the when and the where and the how? Or do we have the resolve of the mother of Christ who says 'do whatever he says'?

This story, beloved, was never really about wine. This first miracle in the Gospel of John has always been about people and about the power of Christ at work in the world. It has always been about the good news that God meets each of us our neighbors and the world in the midst of our deepest needs, when we do not have the resources to meet the needs of the world, when our resources have been overwhelmed by the demands of the world. It is in that place that Christ meets us and provides.

Later that day, Andy and I ended up sitting in the back of the pews of that chapel in Cana. We watched a couple exchange vows with a small group of family around. I imagined it would be a pretty normal occurrence that weddings would happen regularly in this chapel in Cana. Turns out it's not so. We sat quietly in the back, and after the couple had left and the family had departed, Andy turned to me and he said, "do you think we can crash the reception. I want to see what happens?"

Beloved, this first miracle in the Gospel of John situates our savior in a place of our deepest need, and we can trust the good news of the gospel that in the midst of that need Christ meets us. It was true two thousand years ago. It's true once again this day. So let us proclaim it and let us live it. In the name of the Father, and the Son, the Holy Spirit, One God, Mother of us all. Amen.