

Feasting With Jesus: The Master of the Feast
John 2:1-11

December 2, 2018

SI: Between Thanksgiving and Christmas we do a lot of eating together.

That's one of the significant activities of the holidays.

In the Gospels, Jesus does a lot of eating with people.

It was one of the significant aspects of his ministry.

In fact, Jesus himself makes the point that he did not come to fast but to feast.

He says about himself: The Son of Man came eating and drinking.

So the way Jesus eats with people, and the how and why of his eating with them is an important part of his message.

Over this Advent Season we're going to look at Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, on four occasions where food and drink were being served.

Once at a big wedding reception,

twice in people's homes, around their tables,

and once at a campfire eating breakfast on the shore of a lake.

And through these meals we're going to see who Jesus is and why he came and what a difference in can make in the lives of people who believe in him.

INTRO: I have a cousin named Holly who lives in North Carolina.

At her wedding reception they ran out of food.

And it wasn't as if they ran out after an hour or two.

It was gone in the first fifteen minutes. All the guests hadn't even arrived. People were showing up and there was nothing to eat.

The reception was at a nice venue in downtown Asheville and to this day, over two decades later, fingers are still being pointed at who was to blame.

But when family members and close friends realized what was happening, that the food was running out, they started trying to improvise and find something for guests to eat. Anything.

Holly says her worst moment was when she looked at one of the tables and instead of seeing a beautiful spread of hors d'oeuvres there was just a ripped-open bag of Chips Ahoy chocolate chip cookies. It was a catering disaster.

There's something about this miracle of Jesus that can't help but strike you as strange. John says that Jesus turning the water into wine at the wedding reception in Cana was his first miraculous sign and the revelation of his glory.

In other words, this was Christ's inaugural miracle.

With this miracle Jesus Christ steps onto the stage of redemptive history. With this miracle he announces he is the long awaited Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

And what is his inaugural miracle?

It's not walking on water.

It's not raising someone from the dead.

Jesus Christ uses his supernatural power to fix a catering disaster.

A famous Duke University professor, Reynolds Price, once wrote:

“If you were inventing a biography of Jesus Christ, you would never invent for your inaugural sign, a miraculous solution to a mere social oversight. The only logical explanation for this particular sign being the first one is it must have actually happened.”

Nobody would make this up. That's certainly true. But also, this miracle shows in a way that other miracles could not, the essence of what Jesus came to do.

So let's look at this account under three headings:

1. What Jesus came to offer

2. How he provides it

3. How you can receive it Credit where credit due: Dr. Tim Keller's sermon

MP#1 What Jesus came to offer

I made a joke about the wine running out being a catering disaster,
but it was really a more serious thing for this family.

In the Hebrew way of doing things, the groom's family provided the feast—
which is the opposite of our custom. For us it's the bride's family that pays.
But for them it was the groom's family.

If the groom's family failed to provide for the wedding feast and ran out of wine—
it was a mark of humiliation for the family in that honor and shame culture.

It wasn't just that people expected to have wine to drink, it was what wine
symbolized for the Hebrew people. What did it symbolize? Let's see.

Psalm 104 says

He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man . . .

Wine is a gift of God to gladden people's hearts.

Wine is not just prized for its taste, it's prized because of its effects on a person's
body and spirits. Wine makes you feel good. It gladdens the heart.

Ecclesiastes 9 says:

Eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart,
for it is now that God favors what you do.

Here's a hint of a bigger theme. Wine symbolizes not just gladness but joy in God.

The Lord promised to reward his people's faithfulness with wine.

Before they entered the Promised Land Moses told them:

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them . . . (the Lord) will bless the
fruit of your womb, the crops of your land, your grain, (and) new wine . . .

And the Promised Land itself was described as a land with an abundance of wine.

A land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

On the other hand, when the Israelites were unfaithful, one of God's punishments
was to take wine away from them, or make them drink poor wine. Isaiah says:

Your choice wine is diluted with water . . . though you have planted lush vineyards,
you will not drink their wine.

Wine was part of the tithes and offerings faithful Israelites were to offer to God,
and they were told to drink wine as part of certain celebrations. Deuteronomy 14:

Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the
presence of the Lord your God . . . buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other
fermented drink, or anything you wish.

Wine is important in for its role in celebration and happiness.

You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound—David

Wine also symbolizes love and delight in marriage. In Song of Songs woman says:

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is more delightful than wine.

And then he says in reply :

I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice.
I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.

Wine is the drink for fellowship, it's the drink for lovers, for times of plenty,
for feasts, for worship—wine is the drink for the best of times.

It's a symbol of happiness and divine blessing.

But perhaps the most important symbolism of all is that the prophets spoke of
fine wine and abundant wine as a symbol of the blessings the Messiah would
bring to the whole earth when he came to redeem his people from captivity.

The prophet Isaiah says:

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.

The prophet Joel:

In that day the mountains will drip new wine . . .

The prophet Amos:

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the
plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains
and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel . . . they will plant
vineyards and drink their wine . . .

Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet because he lived in bad times..

But when Jeremiah foresaw the coming Messiah, for once he got happy. He said:

They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion;
they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord—the grain, the oil, and the new wine.

Just one more. When Jacob blessed his son Judah in Genesis 49,

Jacob said that one day there will be a royal son from the tribe of Judah,
and when he comes, wine will be so abundant, you will wash your clothes in it.

Yes, Jesus preached a message of repentance from sin.

Yes, Jesus announced that God's law will never pass away.

Yes, Jesus preached self-control and taking up your cross and sacrifice.

And his followers understand all those things.

But wine is Jesus' calling card. Joy, God's favor, abundant life.

As his inaugural miracle Jesus provides 180 gallons of fine wine, 900 bottles.
He came so that people who trust him won't just know about God and about
salvation, but will taste and see that the Lord is good.

That brings us to another point. If that's what Jesus offers, let's consider . . .

MP#2 How he provides it—how Jesus provides joy, God's favor, abundant life

This comes to focus in the way Jesus gave the wine in this story. Vs. 3

When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

Mary sees this catering disaster unfolding. She's concerned for groom's family. At this point she certainly didn't know the fullness of who Jesus was.

But she did have a sense of his divine power, she knew he was a loving man, so she goes to him and says: Son, do something about this.

His reply to her is surprising. I intentionally read this morning from the NIV which has Jesus saying: Dear woman, why do you involve me?

But the most literal translation of his words would be something like:

What do I have to do with you, woman? He didn't say dear woman, or mother. The NIV is trying to soften his words. Make him not appear rude.

Of course Jesus wasn't rude in the selfish or sinful sense.

But there's no denying that this was brusque. Why do you involve me, woman? Clearly Jesus was troubled by something. What was it?

If you are young and single, what's on your mind at a wedding?

Jesus himself was 30 years old and single.

People were constantly saying: When are you going to get married, Jesus? When you're young and at a wedding what you're thinking about is your own wedding. When will it be? Will it ever be? Who will it be with?

If Jesus was thinking about his future wedding, that would explain why he was emotionally stirred and troubled. Here's why.

In the Old Testament, one of the ways Yahweh describes his relationship with Israel is as a groom to his bride.

It's a description of the intimacy God wants with his people, the depth of commitment and emotional connection.

The Lord calls himself the bridegroom of Israel.

There's a place in Gospels where people criticize Jesus' disciples for not fasting. Jesus defends them and he says:

How can the friends of the bridegroom fast when he is with them?

He calls himself the bridegroom. That's what God called himself. Jesus claims it. And if you just turn the page to John 3, told that John the Baptist's disciples come to him and say, Everybody is leaving you and following after this other man, Jesus. Doesn't that bother you?

John says: Of course not. The bride is for the bridegroom. I'm just the best man. There it is again. The bridegroom.

Jesus is probably at this wedding thinking about his calling as the bridegroom of Israel and what will look like for his people.

Here's how it's described in Revelation.

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

So Jesus and his people are together in a world where everything sad has been made whole. It's the consummation of God's redemptive plan. The new creation.

But if it's so wonderful, why is Jesus so obviously troubled?

That becomes clear in his next comment. My time has not yet come.

It might first seem like Jesus is saying, it's not time for me to do a miracle yet.

But then he turns around and does a miracle. So that can't be right.

He actually says: My hour has not yet come.

And every other place in John's Gospel where Jesus says my hour,

he's talking about the hour of his death. Now his strange response makes sense.

Mary says, Son, they have no more wine. He says, But it's not my time to die.

He's thinking about another wedding.

The only way there's going to be wine at my wedding, and lift the cup of joy with my bride, is by dying.

If you think that's not what's on his mind, then look what he does next.

He could have provided the wine any way, but told them to fill stone water jars.

Used for ceremonial cleansing.

When Jews went to worship they had to wash to symbolize their sin and

need to be cleansed if God would embrace them in love. Sacrificial system.

The only way my people will fall in my arms, the only way I will be able to embrace them and raise the cup of joy with them is if I drink the cup of God's justice for their sins.

This cup, Jesus says at the last supper, this cup is my blood.

Jesus Christ came so that through his death we can taste and see the Lord is good.

He did that because he cherishes us as a groom cherishes his bride.

So let's think about

MP#3 How you receive it, how you get and experience the wine of joy

Just three thoughts

1. Take credit for what Jesus has done.

There's this man in the story, the master of the banquet.

His job was to direct things and make sure a good time was had by all.
He sips the wine and he's blown away by it.

But of course he doesn't know Jesus made it, so he calls the groom.

The groom who has messed up terribly. Almost ruined the reception and brought humiliation on his family.

He says: This is incredible. I've never m'ceed a party like this.

You've saved the best wine for the last. This party will end on a high note.
Jesus does the work and the groom gets the credit.

That's a beautiful picture of how you become a Christian
and how you live as a joyful Christian.

Don't say, Lord, I've worked so hard, I've tried to live a moral life and obeyed
you laws and checked things off the religious list—accept me, love me.

You come to God and say: I've blown it. I've ruined the party. I've brought
humiliation and shame. I don't just need my cup topped of, I'm out of wine.

Give me credit for what Jesus has done.

Jesus has gone to the cross.

Jesus has provided the wine.

Jesus has shed his blood.

Jesus has lived the life I should have lived and died the life I should have died.

Now, for Jesus' sake. Love me. Give me credit for what Jesus has done.

That's how you become a Christian. That's how you live as one every day.

If you don't do this, you will never have joy. You'll be anxious.

Does God accept me? Have I done enough?

Take credit for what Jesus has done and ask God transfer it to your account.

2. As Jesus for everything

You know what I love about this passage?

It's that point I brought up at the beginning, that Jesus would use his divine power
to fix a catering disaster.

When you really love someone, you care about them, even the little things.

Little problems, little inconveniences, little quirks and pleasures.

If you really love someone, you don't just care about the big things.

Jesus Christ did not think it was a misuse of his divine power and his time to wipe
egg off the face of a disorganized groom and his family and his new bride.

Jesus doesn't say: I'm the incarnate Son of God, I'm here to save the world,

I have bigger fish to fry. Of course not, he loves them.

And if Jesus comes into your life with omnipotent care, but with that kind of detailed love, you don't have any reason to be afraid or shy.

Don't think, I can only come to him about the big things.

Because, honestly, it's often the small things that rob us of joy—the small concerns, the small worries—things almost embarrassed to mention to other people. Jesus wants to know. Ask him. Pray without ceasing.

And remember, he might answer you like he did Mary.

Might seem uninterested or brusque or give you a strange response.

But he's in control and he has the big picture in mind.

3. Remember Jesus' promises

A minister named Edmond Clowney summed up John 2 this way

Jesus sat amidst all the joy sipping the coming sorrow, so that today you and I can sit amidst all this world's sorrow, sipping the coming joy.

In the middle of all that happiness of that wedding, all the cheerful people,

Jesus was troubled. Why? Because he was thinking about the future.

He was thinking about the sorrow and pain he would have to suffer.

But he did that so that you and I can sit in the midst of sorrow and handle it—because we're sipping the coming joy.

We've got a stability now because of the future Jesus has promised us.

Every time you take the Lord's Supper and the Holy Spirit makes it real to you, you're getting a foretaste, an hors d'oeuvres of that incredible promised feast.

Let's apply this to one area of life: Marriage.

Here's Jesus at a wedding with thoughts of marriage in his mind.

There are some of you here who are unhappy because want to be married, aren't.

But some of you are unhappy in your marriage, because of troubles.

Marriage can be a source of great pain in this fallen world.

Sit in the midst of your sorrow, sipping the coming joy.

There is only one spouse who will give you all your heart needs, he awaits.

There is only one wedding feast that will fulfill you, and it awaits.

Only if you sit, sipping that joy, trusting Jesus' promises,

will you handle the disappointment of marriage.

And even those who are in good marriage, this is true for you too—

because if you don't trust Jesus' promises for your future,

you'll put too much weight on the marriage and on your spouse.

All your hopes, all your expectations, need for happiness will fall on the marriage, and that's impossible for two sinful people living together.

Every image God uses to describe his relationship with us tell us something about ourselves.

He's a Father, we are sons. We're going to inherit his estate.

He's a Shepherd, we are sheep. We're dumb and helpless.

He's a Groom, we're the bride. We're lovely in his eyes.

And when the groom sees his bride adorned on his wedding day—
he wants to give her the world.

That's what Jesus has in store for you.

On his holy mountain, a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.

Let's enjoy that promise this Christmas season.