

Picture of Wedding at Cana

The Gospel of John is the most read and loved of all the Gospels. After Jesus is baptized three of the Gospels send Jesus out into the wilderness. You may note that John doesn't have any account of this. Jesus is now ready to begin public ministry. This means he is going to go out and be Jesus in the world. He is going to do the stuff we expect of Jesus. He is going to heal, he is going to teach. He is going to do miracles. Each Gospel begins with some kind of action that particular Gospel deems important. For Matthew it begins with a sermon. The Sermon on the Mount. There Jesus teaches us what it means to be blessed. For Mark, a demon is cast out. For Luke, it begins with a visit to his home town where Jesus quotes the book of Isaiah about himself. So now we come to John. Why oh why is this story in the Bible? Sometimes we find that the writers of the Bible could have benefited with an editor. There is simply too much of this story with questions. Why is Jesus at this wedding? Usually the whole town is related to each other but along comes Jesus. You will note that John says Jesus and his disciples attended. Did they crash the wedding? Are they the reason they ran out of wine? Secondly, this is one of the strangest conversations in the Bible. We read this conversation in John 2:3-5

³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ ⁴And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ ⁵His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’

Why is this a concern of Mary? It is the host of the party that must make sure they don't run out of food or wine. Notice also how Jesus addresses Mary. He doesn't say mother. He calls her Woman. What did she really expect Jesus to do? Jesus was dirt poor. He wasn't going to run down to Total Wine and purchase a case. It makes you wonder. When times were hard in the Jesus household, when they ran out of food or wine, did he help in the process. I could see Mary saying to Jesus, Jesus we are having fish tonight, we could use a good Pinot for dinner. Seriously, Jesus never used his power for himself so I doubt that happened. But what on earth is going on here? And the deeper question, why does it matter to us today?

Picture of Wedding

Mary identifies the problem. They have run out of wine. This is not a simple matter of food running short at a potluck. By the way, that has never happened in the history of the Lutheran church. Churches may fold up for running out of money, but we never run out of carrot salad. There was a process of weddings that took up to two years. Running out of wine would be considered a social taboo. I can't tell you how many times I have done weddings where the anxiety and tension is quite high. It just has to be perfect doesn't it? There is this sense that perfect weddings lead to perfect marriages. That is a bunch of crock. But imagine the social implications of what is

happening. The couple gets married. They go through a rough spot and are having trouble producing children. This is what Jewish couples are supposed to do. Someone would remark, well what do you expect, they ran out of wine at their wedding. It would be like some kind of curse.

Mary knows this. Jesus knows this. But the whole story really doesn't make a lot of sense. And the Gospel writer leads off with this story. Maybe that is the point. Jesus is going to do unexpected things. Jesus is going to trouble and confound Messiah's after all, they sit on thrones, not on crosses. I want to remind you of a very important verse found in John. This verse is an important one and is well worth remembering. So let's read together John 1:16

“From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace”

Grace upon grace. Abundance. Unexpected blessings. The Love of God. Joy and Peace.

John wants us to know that God is coming. When God comes the blessings are going to be beyond anything we can expect. Whatever we might hope for from God, God is going to give us something way beyond our wildest dreams.

So what does Jesus do? He produces 125 gallons or so of wine. That is a lot of wine. But it just isn't any wine. This is God infused, God inspired wine. When they bottle it, it is going to read, Wedding Wine, and the year 30. It was a good year for wine. So who gets blessed with this event?

- 1) Wedding Couple
- 2) Wedding Party
- 3) Jesus
- 4) Jesus's Mother
- 5) The Wine Steward
- 6) Disciples
- 7) Us

Picture of the Bridge

There is a short film called the Bridge which is a Christian parable. I would show it to you but the detail is a bit graphic for Sunday morning. Essentially the father is a bridge operator. He opens and closes the bridge over a river. A train is coming. He must close the bridge. He sees his young son lose a ball or something down a hole on the track. He suddenly is faced with a very hard choice. Keep the bridge open and save his Son. Close the bridge, lose his son, and save the people on the train. He makes a very difficult choice and closes the bridge. What is interesting about the movie is the people on the train. You have business people reading newspapers. You teenagers laughing and talking. You have young families going on a trip. All of them are clueless about the grace upon grace, the gift of the train operator. They do not see or even understand the gift that has been given to them.

We too are too often unaware of the grace upon grace that is around us. Some have used this story for prosperity Gospel. This means, love Jesus, and you will not only get wine, you will get riches as well. Getting wine is not the point. The point is the extravagance, the abundance of blessings that this Jesus is going to do. Can we see and appreciate grace upon grace from Jesus Christ? Can we see how blessed we really are. Grace upon Grace will be demonstrated throughout John. As we journey through John keep looking for that Grace in the stories, and more important, keep looking for the grace that you have right now. Amen.