

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each and every one of you this day.

St. John leaves little doubt as to what today's Gospel lesson is all about. He tells us very plainly. "This [turning water into wine] was the first of Jesus' signs/miracles, which He did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory." That's it. This first miracle of Jesus was intended to make His divine glory known. It was, and His disciples believed in Him. Okay...so what, exactly, did they believe in? "Wow! Jesus can do very cool and powerful tricks! He can turn plain old water into awesome wine! Think of the possibilities!" Do you think that's really the message John is trying to teach us here? Do you think that's really what Jesus was going after here? As cut-and-dry as the miracle itself is, there is a whole lot we are missing here.

First, consider the simple fact that this first miracle of Jesus takes place at a wedding reception. There's reason for this. You see, God says very plainly throughout the Old Testament that the Bride of Christ (Israel) will unite with her Messianic Groom. This is what Israel had been looking forward to: her Bridegroom's arrival. Jesus wasn't just going to a family wedding. He's very purposefully coming to His people—His beloved—as their Messianic Bridegroom.

There's also the fact that the wine had run out at this particular wedding feast. Again, this was no accident. Again, the Old Testament is filled with the language of a super-abundance of wine with the arrival of the Messiah. We hear it in today's Old Testament lesson very plainly.

Now, with all this in mind, we can begin to better understand what Jesus is doing here with this particular miracle. This was all planned. "But... what about His own response to His mom when she asked Him to do something? What about the whole 'My hour has not

yet come’?” Again, this is where we’re going to let Scripture interpret Scripture. We’re going to let the Scriptures explain what this means. Looking ahead to John 12 & 13 (right before the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday), Jesus states very plainly, “Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” John will go on to tell us that Jesus was speaking of His death on the cross; that moment/hour in time when God fully revealed Himself to all of humanity as the all-redeeming sacrifice for sin; that moment/hour in time when He would manifest God’s righteous wrath against sin and His unconditional love for His fallen and sinful creation.

This is the hour Jesus was referring to when He tells His mom that it’s not time yet. Contrary to popular belief, Jesus didn’t capitulate to His mom’s worried demands, as if Jesus knew it wasn’t time yet and He wasn’t going to help out, but mom guilted Him into helping and showing some of His divine power ahead of schedule. But...this wedding and the miracle He was going to perform wasn’t the end-game. This miracle—from the very beginning—was designed to point to something far greater; to the fact that the Messianic Bridegroom had come to His bride. This miraculous wedding gift was designed to point to that specific hour when the Bridegroom would give the greatest gift of all: the gift of Himself as He laid down His life for His bride.

One final point that needs to be fleshed out: Jesus makes a super-abundance of wine. “Duh, pastor, we already know that. That’s the whole point of the lesson.” Yes...but still we miss what’s right in front of our faces. I know that even the elementary schoolers can do the basic math associated with this lesson; i.e., Jesus used the six stone purification jars, each jar holding approximately twenty to thirty gallons, and each jar filled to the brim, meaning that Jesus turned 120-180 gallons of water into wine. I don’t care who you are: That’s a SUPER ABUNDANCE of wine!

What about the fact that Jesus worked this miracle with the same jars of water that were used to “baptize” in order to make ritually clean—ritual purification commanded by the Law? What about the fact that Jesus commanded these jars to be filled to overflowing; that is, no room left in the jar? More than that, Jesus used the very means these people needed for purification. If those jars are all filled to the brim with wine, what are they going to use to get pure? There’s no water left. Folks: That’s the whole idea!

By way of this miracle, your Messianic Bridegroom was making crystal-clear the fact that all the demands of the Law were being fulfilled in Him. The Bridegroom, who in His last hour, would make full atonement for all the sins of all mankind for all time, left nothing for us to do or to even worry about doing. “It is finished!” He said it and He meant it. NOW was the time to rejoice! Let the abundance wine flow!

The same goes for us today. Your heavenly Bridegroom still comes to you today, and He brings the over-flowing abundance of His victorious love and grace. All the demands of the Law; all the demands and requirements for your righteous purity before God have been totally and completely fulfilled in Him. God’s righteous wrath was poured out in abundance on Him, all so that you wouldn’t have to taste a single drop of it; not now and not ever.

Our Bridegroom has come, and He continues to come to us, bringing to us His over-flowing abundance of grace, mercy, and peace. Let the wine of rejoicing flow! Our Bridegroom is here, and—just as He has promised—He will be with us to the very end of the age. I pray that this means something to you. I don’t know what you’re struggling with. I do know that everyone struggles with something. We all have our crosses to bear. We all have our worries and anxieties, stress and

griefs. But... we have our Bridegroom. We have our Immanuel. He is with us now, and He will be with us always, just like He has always said.

And at the end of the shadowy valley we call “life,” there awaits our heavenly wedding banquet. No more tears. No more worries. No more sorrows. Only joy; super-abundant, over-flowing wine and joy and peace that surpasses all understanding. That’s how God describes heaven—a never-ending wedding banquet, where the very best wine flows in never-ending abundance. You can’t even begin to wrap your brain around how awesome this will be! That’s what awaits you and all those who live and die in the faith; faith that holds fast to the Bridegroom’s victory. When understood in this beautiful, Christ-centered light, it tends to put everything else in proper perspective, doesn’t it? What’s the very worst thing that can happen to you? You’ll wake up in heaven, seated at the feast table with your Groom? Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow!

May this manifest glory of your Bridegroom give you everlasting and abundant joy and peace, now and all your remaining days and into all eternity.

In His name and to His glory...AMEN.