Jesus Changes Water into Wine

John 2:1-11

Key Verse 2:11 “What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.”

Last week we had Bible symposiums on two campuses, Wash U. and SLU, titled “Cosmic Fingerprints” based on Dr. Hugh Ross’s video lecture. Is creationism scientific? Is creationism testable? These two questions were answered while we heard the lecture and discussed about it. The answer for both questions is ‘yes’. There is much evidence and proof for God’s creation and his intervention in human life and the formation of the universe. We exist on this earth because the earth was created in the right time and at the right location where God designed it with perfect conditions for human life. The earth belongs in the solar system. If the solar system lies too far from the Milky Way, we can’t survive. If it is too close to the Milky Way, we can’t survive, either. The earth is located in the right spot for life on this earth. Nothing in the universe came by chance or by nature. All things on earth and in heaven were wonderfully and perfectly designed and operated by the Intelligent Designer, the Almighty God.

Do you believe in miracles? Are miracles scientific? Miracles are not related to science. They do not violate the law of nature, either. Miracles are God’s intervention in the middle of the law of nature. For example, an apple should fall to the ground by gravity. But, if you reach out your hand to catch the falling apple, you don’t violate the law of gravity, but you intervene. Miracles are like catching the falling apple by your hand. In today’s passage Jesus performs his first miracle in John’s gospel. By changing water into wine Jesus revealed God’s glory. Let us study why Jesus’ transforming water into wine revealed God’s glory and how we participate in God’s transforming work in our lives. We learn several secrets of participating in God’s work.

First, Mary’s prayer (1-5) Look at verses 1-2. “***On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.”*** A wedding is a joyous occasion for all peoples of all nations. The Jewish wedding lasted for a week - much longer than modern weddings in America. This wedding must have been for one of Mary’s relatives or a close friend because Jesus and even his disciples were invited. Jesus’ disciples must have been very happy because they could eat as much as they wanted to. But in this joyous wedding banquet something unexpected happened. The wine ran out. According to the Jewish wedding custom a bridegroom must provide enough food for his guests. If not, they might be disgraced or even sued by the guests. Wine was an integral part of a wedding banquet. But the wine was gone. Maybe Jesus’ disciples had been drinking too much wine.

Look at verses 3,4. “***When the wine was gone. Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” “Woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.***” Mary realized the shortage of wine and brought it to Jesus. But Jesus’ response to her request is surprising to us. Jesus was not willing to answer her request because his hour hadn’t come. Here the word, ‘woman’ (*gynai*) is a polite calling for a woman. Jesus used the same word on the cross to Mary who was weeping (Jn19:26). What did he mean that his hour has not yet come? In the past Jesus lived as a son of Mary. Now Jesus lives as a son of God the Father. Since he began to work as the Messiah, he worked and lived by the Father’s schedule, not by any other human’s desire. In John’s gospel Jesus often said about God’s hour and God’s time. (Jn 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1)

How did Mary respond to Jesus’ gentle refusal? She didn’t get mad or weep in sorrow, saying, “Son, how could you treat me in this way? I am your mother.” What did she do? In verse 5 she said to the servants, “***Do whatever he tells you***.” She didn’t feel sorry for Jesus. She didn’t give up. She prepared an environment for Jesus to work. This is her prayer. This is what she could do for the work of God. Through Mary we learn about prayer. Prayer is bringing problems to Jesus by faith, whether the problems are ours or not. Mary could have ignored the shortage of wine because she was not a host. But she initiated to solve the problem through Jesus. Bringing others’ problems to Jesus is our intercessory prayer. Prayer is also lets Jesus get involved. Jesus was not ready to answer her request. Jesus was not willing to get involved in that matter. But Mary had Jesus get involved. This is the act of our prayer: Let Jesus get involved in our problems, troubles, difficulties, and so on. Prayer is also preparing the environment for Jesus to work. Mary didn’t give up. She asked the servants to obey whatever Jesus told them. She prepared an environment for Jesus to work. We must not wait by opening our mouth until an apple falls and drops into our mouth. We must get up and shake the tree. God answers our prayer in his best time and with his best way. Our prayer is not denied, but delayed.

Second, the servant’s obedience (6-8) Look at verses 6-8. ***“Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so***.” In the wedding banquet servants were the busiest people. They had to arrange tables and chairs, deliver food and wine, clean the tables and floor, and satisfy all the guests’ requests and demands. Jesus told these servants to fill the jars with water. These six stone water jars were not for drinking, but for ceremonial washing. According to the Jewish custom, all the guests had to wash their hands before they ate. It was unnecessary for the servants to fill the jars with water. Each jar held from twenty to thirty gallons. The wells in the Middle East are deep. It took quite a long time for them to draw water from the well and fill the jars. Despite this unreasonable request from Jesus, the servants obeyed him. They filled the jars with water to the brim. They fully obeyed Jesus’ word by filling the water to the brim. It might have been okay for them to obey Jesus’ first order, but not the second one. Jesus asked them to bring some water to the banquet master for taste. What? Let the banquet master drink the water for ceremonial washing? The servants might have been punished when the master came to realize where the water came from. The servants might have gently rejected Jesus’ order saying, “Sir, we just can’t.” But the Bible says that they did. They obeyed Jesus’ word and brought the water to the master.

Obedience is to do what God says. Obedience is to simply trust in God and entrust the result into God’s hands. The servants didn’t calculate Jesus’ command. They didn’t wait with Jesus, asking for the reason. They just trusted in Jesus and did whatever Jesus told them to do. People don’t obey God because they calculate and make excuses with many reasons. We can’t experience God’s miracles when we live on our own idea, calculation, cleverness, and so on. When we deny ourselves and submit ourselves to Jesus, we see God’s miracle.

Third, Jesus changes water into wine (9-10) Look at verses 9,10. “***and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.***” A miracle happened! While the servants were bringing the water to the master of the banquet, the water was changed into wine. We don’t know how it was changed, but we know who did it. Jesus changed the water into wine. The banquet master did not know what happened, but the servants knew it because they obeyed Jesus’ word. Mary also knew how the water was changed into wine because she prayed. Those who prayed and those who obeyed Jesus’ words only knew the secret of the miracle.

In the same way we can’t taste the choice wine unless we pray and obey. We can’t experience the power of transformation by our speculation and calculation. We need participation through prayer and obedience. I will ask you a simple question. Prayer + obedience = miracle. We want to see change for better: Better country, better relationship, better situation, and so on. For change for better we must pray. Prayer seems to be insignificant and wasting of time to some. But prayer is the most powerful and effective way for us to see miracles. Jesus said that if we have faith in God and pray, we can even move mountains. (Mk 11:23) We have been praying for America to be changed into a kingdom of priests and holy nation. When we do not give up, but keep praying, we will see God’s miracle for this country.

In the Old Testament when the Israelites obeyed God’s word, they crossed the Red Sea and conquered Jericho. Crossing the Red Sea on foot and conquering the invincible fortress Jericho was impossible by human calculation. But when the Israelites simply trusted in God and obeyed, miracles happened to their eyes. Obeying Jesus’ world mission command in this generation is not easy. It seems to break a rock by throwing eggs. But when we simply trust in Jesus and obey his command, the rock will be broken by our eggs. We can’t break the rock with eggs, but God can do. Nothing is impossible with God.

Changing water into wine teaches us that Jesus can change all things completely and fundamentally. Jesus changes our inner being into a completely different person. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here.*” Jesus’ changing water into wine has not only spiritual meaning, but also theological significance. In fact, Jesus brought new era in human redemptive history. The era of the Law of Moses is gone; the new era of grace and truth has come. (1:17) Jesus not only changed the era of God’s redemptive history, he also fulfilled the law and prophecies of God.

Fourth, Jesus revealed God’s glory (11) Look at verse 11. “***When Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him***.” How did Jesus reveal God’s glory through this miracle? What is a relationship between changing water into wine and revealing God’s glory? First of all, by changing water into wine God proved that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah. Who could change water into wine, except God alone? Of course, people might one day change water into wine in a laboratory after certain processes and hours. But the instant transformation was only possible with God who created everything out of nothing, and who raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus’ disciples believed that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah through this miracle. The purpose of all miracles performed in the Bible was also for people to believe in God.

Second, Jesus revealed his glory by blessing the wedding. Suppose the wine ran out and there was no more wine in the banquet. The bridegroom and the bride might have been embarrassed and troubled. It could have been a nightmare for them instead of a honeymoon. There might have been great turmoil in the banquet, not only for the newly-wed couple, but also for the master of the banquet, Mary, Jesus, and even Jesus’ disciples, who were suspected of consuming of all the wine, must have been troubled. But Jesus made the nightmare into a happy ending. Jesus changed the worst into the best. Jesus saved not only Mary, the couple, the master, but also all the guests who came to bless the couple. In the same way Jesus came to save this troubled world. Jesus came to change the troubled world into the heavenly kingdom. Jesus came to change sinners into saints. Jesus came to bless our lives for better. Jesus came to change our lives from tasteless, meaningless, cheap water into tasteful, meaningful, and expensive choice wine. Amen.

Third, Jesus revealed his glory so that his disciples might believe in him and have eternal life. The purpose of writing John’s gospel is written in John 20:31, “*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*” God’s name is glorified when we believe in Jesus. God’s name is glorified when the name of Jesus is exalted. Let us reveal God’s glory by living by faith. Let us glorify Jesus’ name through our prayer and obedience.

In today’s passage, we learned how Mary’s prayer and the servants’ obedience brought Jesus’ miracle. Do you want to see miracles in your life? Bring all your things to Jesus. Pray by faith and wait with patience. Invite Jesus into your life and let him get involved in all aspects of your life. And you will see the great work of transformation. You will see one miracle after another in your life. You will see American become a kingdom of priests and holy nation. May God bless us when we reveal God’s glory through our prayer, obedience, and faith. Amen.