

## “Water to Wine”

### *The Joy of Jesus – part #1*

John 2:1-11

[46] (Words of welcome, opening prayer, sing “I’ve Got The Joy Joy Joy”.)

I want to begin with a simple request: Name one thing that brings you joy.  
(Allow time for answers.)

[47] Comic strips bring me joy, like this one by Cuyler Black in What’s That Funny Look on Your Faith? (Jesus is asked to turn a handful of sticks into a set of bath towels in Cana.)

[48] Joy seems to be in short supply these days. I have found preaching in the pandemic much harder than I expected. It’s not a for a lack of material, but rather for a lack of energy. Something about the constant stream of bad news in this world makes it hard to focus on good news. Each day seems to bring a new set of challenges. That’s why I am so thankful for this congregation who prays and supports my family. In the last few weeks, I have received several unexpected gifts and notes of encouragement, which have reminded me that God is still about the business of blessing us.

Do you ever wonder if the joy is missing from our churches? Is it possible that Christians, in general, have forgotten that God wants to “restore our souls”? (Psalm 23:3.)

[49] Think about that as we ponder these verses:

- John 10:10 - “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
- John 15:11 - “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”
- 1 John 1:4 - “We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.”

When I look at Christianity in general and North American churches specifically, it seems to me that we have forgotten that the gospel is Good News. We often look around in our congregations and find churches are not consistently filled with joyful people. In fact, we look scared, anxious, lost, and even burned out. Now, it is a good thing that we still keep coming to worship, because this place is a hospital for sinners, not a club for saints. Yet there is a part of me, and

hopefully a part of you, that wants this place to rock like a dance club for Jesus, even as we meet the deepest needs of our souls with God’s grace.

[50] Does anyone recall the late Robin Williams’ movie, “Patch Adams?” In this film, Williams plays a medical student who doesn’t just want to heal the body but the soul as well. My favorite scene shows the spiritual awakening of a man, stricken in bed with cancer. This man has the worst demeanor of all the patients, constantly yelling and complaining to everyone about everything. One day, Dr. Adams learns that this patient regrets that he never got to go on safari in Africa. So Adams creeps into his room with a few other staff and an armful of balloon animals – the kind a magician or clown would make: giraffes, elephants, lions, hippos. They hand the patient an air pellet gun, and chaos breaks loose. Meanwhile, the nurse in the hallway just pretends everything is normal. The doctor found a way, without medicine, to bring joy to the man’s soul.

[51] I submit to you, that is exactly what Jesus wants to do for each and every one of us. Make balloon animals? No. Jesus wants to bring us joy that spills over in abundance. Jesus claims in John 10:10 that he has come to bring us life to the full.

[52] The longing for joy is as old as humanity. Look at this cry in Psalm 4:

<sup>6</sup> Many, LORD, are asking, “Who will bring us prosperity?”

Let the light of your face shine on us.

<sup>7</sup> Fill my heart with joy

when their grain and new wine abound.

A different translation puts verse 7 this way: “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound.” (Psalm 4:7, HCSB)

The Bible teaches that joy is the result of a loving relationship with God. To be clear, joy is different than happiness. Happiness is an emotion resulting from circumstances around us. I’m happy that my team finally won a game. Biblical joy, on the other hand, is a choice resulting from trusting in God.

[53] The story of the wedding in Cana illustrates biblical joy. Jesus, his family and his disciples are invited to a wedding feast to celebrate the new couple. Everything is supposed to be perfect. Do you know that feeling? You hired the wedding coordinator who guaranteed this would be the happiest day of

your life! Can I just tell you as a pastor, I’ve never seen a perfect wedding, and every wedding I’ve officiated was beautiful and was the happiest day of the couple’s lives – so far.

[54] The first hint we have of a problem in Cana actually comes from Jesus’s mother, Mary. “Son, they’ve run out of wine.” Sort of a funny thing to say to Jesus. And his answer isn’t exactly helpful. “So what?” I can imagine Peter standing next to Jesus and elbowing him in the ribs. “Dude, it’s your mom!”

Yet Mary’s response is very insightful. “Whatever he tells you, do it.” That is a statement of trust. That is also a statement of letting go. It’s one thing to ask Jesus for help. It’s another thing to take your hands off the wheel, so to speak. How often in our prayers do we act like we are there to help Jesus, not the other way around? “Jesus, I have this problem, so if you could just help me a little bit, I’ll take care of it.” Jesus must smile and think, “OK, if that’s the way you want it. I can wait.” Jesus is never pushy, but I can just see how desperately he wants to say, “When are you going to let me actually do my miracle in your life?”

Mary says, “Do whatever he tells you.” Remember that.

So the servants comply. Jesus asks them to fill six large jars of water – each about the size of a rain barrel. Then they draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet – the coordinator who was supposed to oversee the celebration. The miraculous new wine tastes better than anything the banquet master ever had before. He goes to the groom and compliments him. “This wine is great! I can’t believe you saved it for now.”

If we were running the banquet, we would get out the good stuff early and the cheap stuff later. In fact, I wonder if the guests, when they arrived and took their first drink, thought, “It probably won’t get any better.” Maybe their hopes were diminished. Maybe they had been to other wedding feasts in this village, and their expectations were low.

[55] Jesus changes all of that. He doesn’t just refill the wine caskets with something cheap, he brings the best. I mean, he really brings it. Based on my calculations, this miracle would result in 100-150 bottles of new wine. When we let Jesus really work, the results are outstanding, even unbelievable. And the

whole town gets to enjoy it. Jesus brought the joy to the celebration, and it overflowed.

[56] Do you see Jesus in the same light that this miracle reveals? The story ends with this note: "Because of this sign, the disciples believed in him." Jesus never does a miracle without an explicit purpose. His signs always point to the truth of who he is. Jesus is the glorious new wine that brings healing, salvation, and joy to our lives. Jesus is better than we ever expected. Perhaps we have forgotten, in the midst of our troubles.

[57] In our world, we often encounter a mindset of scarcity and pessimism. We think we are running out of time, out of money, out of materials and other resources. We are running out of patience. Our joy runs out from constant bombardment of bad news. We've been invited to the party, but we are not really enjoying it, because our focus is on the trouble without an obvious solution. Our joy is stolen, and our expectations are low.

[58] It's time for us to reconsider our faith, to think differently about church and salvation, starting with Paul's advice in Colossians 3: "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things....Rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips....Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." (Colossians 3:2,8,10, NIV.)

God is ready to restore our joy, to restore our souls with his grace. Walt Disney may have claimed to build the "happiest place on earth," but we should act as if that describes this place, the Christian Church. We must "do whatever Jesus tell us" and restore the joy that Christ longs to bring us.

[59] Let us refuse to let the mindset of scarcity, the irritations of life, and the disagreements and conflicts of society control us. Instead, let us expect an abundance of joy that flows from our Savior, who shed his own blood to save us for a joyful life. Let's fill this place with joy again, for we are the recipients of the most amazing gift ever – eternal life.

Let's pray.

Memory Verse: Psalm 4:7 (HCSB) "You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound."

Reflection Questions:

1. What things bring you a sense of joy and fulfillment?
2. What things or circumstances take that joy away?
3. Why do you think Mary was bold enough to ask Jesus for help?
4. In what ways do you need God to help restore your joy?
5. Whom can you pray for and serve to help restore their joy?