

**OPENING:**

The standard advice for brides at weddings is:

*Something old*  
*something new,*  
*something borrowed,*  
*Something Blue.*

It could be changed for the Wedding at Cana to be read:

*Something old*  
*something new,*  
*something borrowed,*  
*Something Blue.*  
*something goes wrong,*  
*something now askew.*<sup>1</sup>

And not just anything going askew. I have been to weddings where the preacher forgot the sermon or where the toasts go on too long. At my sister-in-law's, Hurricane Sandy knocked the power at the reception for the longest 45 seconds ever. You can probably come up with your own examples.

But at the Wedding at Cana, it's not just askew, it's teetering on disaster.

"There is no wine."<sup>2</sup>

The cultural expectations were such that this was beyond a social *faux pas*, it was a grave deficit in hospitality. I read somewhere that even legal action could have been taken against the family for this error.

Into that breach steps Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and she gives the report:

"There is no wine."

That statement has tremendous implications, not just for this event, but for the relationship between mother and son and, indeed, the fate of all the world. But before we get to that, it's again important to think about the drama, and the comedy, of the situation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Wedding Mishaps and the Cross: Reflections on John 2:1-11- Alyse McKenzie](#)

<sup>2</sup> John 2.3

## WEDDING:

Imagine the rumors and snickering going to and fro' at this event.

“There is no wine....” (They ran out..... who was responsible?)

Imagine the potential embarrassment in a culture where honor and shame were paramount. Imagine, if you wish, although the text does not really support it, that Jesus' disciples themselves, uninvited and boisterous, were the reason that there was no wine.

Imagine the hurried solution that Jesus comes up with to replace the wine. I love the familiar plotline in a story where a character has to replace a possession with another one that *looks like* an exact replica, so that the owner doesn't know the difference. Sometimes it's a prized keepsake like a family watch, or even a pet. And it never works out, the failure to replace is always revealed as foolhardy

Notice what Jesus does: he replaces the wine, but not with similar wine to maintain the *status quo*. He is not trying to keep everything the same, but rather to fill the jar with new wine. That's the Kingdom work going on, taking something flawed and broken (no wine), taking the 6 jars (the number being important because it's not 7), taking the lowliest and most marginalized (the servants) and making the wine flow freely, and out of proportion to the problem.

The funny part occurs when the Steward then shows up and gives credit to the Bridegroom, who is none the wiser. That's really funny, and we all know people like that, that don't need to be inebriated to take credit for something that they did not do.

Meanwhile, the servants must have been thinking “What is going on here?” and the disciples must have been thinking the same thing, this being Jesus' first miracle. They must be thinking this is amazing, and what a strange situation to decide to reveal oneself, to accomplish this manifestation of his true self, this revelation and Epiphany. Not in a moment of serious need, like his other healings and feedings will be, but at this wedding.

The Kingdom of God is like that? This miracle is as intriguing as one of Jesus' most mystifying parables.

## PSYCHOLOGY

And then Mary. What was brunch like the next morning between the two of them? Let's go back to their exchange the night before.

Mary had said: "There is no wine" and Jesus responds with this statement: "Woman, what concern is that to you and me?"<sup>3</sup> That seems harsh, but then he fixes the problem.

I see the exchange as more like collaboration than confrontation. I won't go into how when Jesus calls her "Woman" that that is a term of respect in its Greek and Semitic contexts, or how the question "What concern is that to you and me?" comes off more sharply translated in English.

But we would do well to remember that, 30 some years prior to the scene, that an angel appeared to a teenage Mary and told her that she would bear the Son of God, that his name would be Jesus, and would be the Savior of the World, because with God nothing is impossible.

So if you take that as a datapoint, and fast forward 30 or so years, it's hard to imagine Mary getting too worked up about the absence of beverages at a wedding, regardless of the cultural context. I don't see how a teenage Mary could have the trust and faith in God to do this one big thing, and how then an adult Mary would get in too much of a conniption about wine at a wedding.

So instead of seeing that moment as a one of confrontation where Jesus has to remind Mary of his divinity, as if she would need that reminding, or telling her that he has bigger fish to fry and dismissing her. Rather than seeing Mary as the overwrought wedding planner who is looking to Jesus as an "ace up her sleeve,"

I see them as ministry partners that are figuring this out as they go along. One wedding, one funeral, one healing at a time.

I think that the interaction goes like this: Mary says "There is no wine." And Jesus responds by transforming water into wine, in the same way that Jesus transforms weddings into marriages, wedding couples into wives and husbands—transformations just as profound as water into wine.<sup>4</sup>

Fear into hope, scarcity into abundance, death into life.

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<sup>3</sup> John 2.4

<sup>4</sup> [Weddings and Marriages- If I were Preaching Epiphany II](#)

## **THEOLOGY:**

And again, with Jesus, it's the way that he goes about solving the problem. It's the manner by which he performs the miracles, less so than the miracle itself, that deserves our attention. Like I said before, he does not perform this miracle to return the world to where it is. He performs this miracle and shows us what the future will look like, what God's kingdom will look like.

We want quick fixes, even with Jesus, we want to snap our fingers and be done with it. We want an "app" for it, so to speak. But Jesus shies away from that easy solution, which would be magical but not truly transformative, and instead shows a new way.

In other words, it would have been amazing if 2000 years ago a prophet had performed a miracle such that the water turned into wine and this family in Cana had blown the roof off with their wedding party. But this is the Gospel truth, because we are still tasting that wine today. Because we experience that abundance in our own lives somehow.<sup>5</sup>

God incarnate here, with us. That's the love story, a "match-made in heaven" if you will.

The best weddings are stressful, they are fun and funny, and they can be a little bit sad. I am sure this one was for Mary because it points to the Cross where Jesus again calls her "Woman." Where Jesus again gives of himself, this time for the whole world. The outpouring of that gift is beyond our deserving and making. We place ourselves in the story by asking ourselves how we can be less like the steward or the bridegroom?

Instead, how can we make that transformation happen, how can we understand and identify the empty jars and help transform the world around us? How can we be like Mary and the disciples and, having seen this miracle occur, help to see it through, to turn "water into wine" today?

**AMEN.**

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<sup>5</sup> Cooper, Karl T., "The Best Wine: John 2:1-11," *Westminster Theological Journal* (197): 377-8