

Glory Revealed – John 2:1-12
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis
Union Baptist Church – 3/25/2018

I. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever hesitated to bring a problem to God because it seemed insignificant from an eternal perspective or perhaps something that you thought would be unimportant to him? Have you ever struggled with thinking that God's not concerned with the small struggles and challenges of your life or with the things that have no obvious spiritual significance? Have you ever categorized things in your life as: 1) These things I can take to God and he'll be interested in helping me with; while 2) these things are probably of no concern to him so I shouldn't even bother him with them?

Well, I'm here to tell you today that there's nothing in your life that is beyond God's concern. There's nothing you're facing today or will face in the future that God wants you to keep to yourself and try to handle without him. In reality, everything and every detail in our lives have spiritual significance. God wants us to share them all with him and allow him to help us deal with every part of them with his wisdom, perspective and power. And he knows exactly what it's like to walk through life as a human in a broken world, because his Son, Jesus, walked this earth and experienced all the joys, struggles, temptations and pain that we experience from day to day. And God's deep love for us motivates him to take action on our behalf when we share what we're facing with him and persistently call for his help and wisdom.

We're going to see a picture of how this is true today as we continue our study of the Gospels in John chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. Turn there in your Bibles, if you would. John chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. Our message today is called: *Glory Revealed*. Let's begin our study by reading the whole passage:

1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this

have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. 12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word and prepare our hearts to understand it.

II. THE CONTEXT, THE SITUATION AND MARY'S REQUEST (Vs. 1 to 5)

Let's begin by focusing on verses 1 through 5, which I've labeled in your sermon notes: *The Context, the Situation and Mary's Request*. In the opening phrase of this passage we first notice a statement about the timing of this memorable event: ***"On the third day..."***, it says. This is taking place on the third day after Jesus had begun traveling to Galilee with his new disciples. The day they started traveling was first day. The next day of traveling was the second day. And on the third day they were at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. SHOW POWERPOINT.

If you look back into John chapter 1 and take note of the various timing statements, what you'll find as well is that this wedding was taking place just 6

days after John the Baptist had been questioned by representatives from the Pharisees about his true identity. The very next day (day 2), Jesus had arrived after his 40-day temptation in the wilderness and John said of Jesus, ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”*** Then on day 3, John again, when seeing Jesus, told two of his disciples: ***“Behold, the Lamb of God!”*** At which point, Andrew and most likely the apostle, John, then began following Jesus, and Andrew right away found his brother Simon and introduced him to Jesus. Then on day 4, Jesus, and probably Andrew, John and Simon Peter, began traveling to Galilee, on their way to this wedding in Cana to which Jesus and his disciples had been invited. Somewhere on the way, probably on day 5 in Bethsaida, Jesus found and called Philip, and then Philip found Nathanael, probably on day 6 when they got to Cana, and introduced him to Jesus. John 21, verse 2, tells us that Nathanael was from the town of Cana. Is that all clear as mud now?

Well, at this wedding celebration, we find Jesus, his mother, Mary, and his disciples, which at this point seems to have been: Andrew, Peter, John, Philip and Nathanael. Most commentators, by the way, believe that Nathanael was also known as Bartholomew. In the lists of the 12 disciples of Jesus, Philip and Bartholomew are always listed together and there’s no mention of Nathanael. So most have concluded that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person.

Now as we think about this wedding celebration, we first need to remove from our minds what we envision as a typical American wedding celebration, and transport ourselves back to a first century wedding in a Jewish context, which was quite different from American weddings in the 21st century! My good friend in understanding the culture of biblical times is the *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*...a very hand tool, by the way! What I discovered there is that a Jewish wedding feast in the first century typically lasted for “...seven days, and hosts invited as many people as possible...Many guests would come for only part of the time, however, making the [necessary] resources harder to predict. **[And]** to run out of wine at a wedding was a social *faux pas* that could become the subject of [a] village’s jest for years; the host was responsible to provide his guests with adequate wine even if the feast lasted for seven days.”

So you can imagine the incredible cost and pressure hosts of a wedding celebration were under, and to run out of wine and food would bring great shame

and embarrassment on the bridegroom and his family for a long time to come. Aren't you glad our weddings don't work this way anymore?! Well, all this background helps us understand why Mary's statement to Jesus, "**They have no wine,**" was such a big deal. Mary out of love for this family was concerned about the great shame and embarrassment and awkwardness that would come on them if they ran out of wine.

But Mary knew that there was one person who could easily solve this problem and save the family's honor, and that was her Son, Jesus. While most of the world was still oblivious to the true identity of Jesus, Mary knew exactly who he was and what he was capable of doing. And so she made that loaded statement to Jesus, which he clearly understood as a request for him to *do something about it*. You've heard those kinds of statements before, haven't you? Usually they come from our spouse or some other family member and it's quite easy to pick up on the deeper meaning and the hidden request behind them, even though they're not in the form of a request.

As I think about Jesus' initial response to Mary in verse 4, I find it quite interesting how the Father and the Spirit used this situation to lead Jesus into the understanding that now was the time to begin performing the miraculous signs that would begin his long road to the cross. We've talked in past messages about how both John the Baptist and Jesus received the information and guidance they needed to accomplish the Father's will *as they walked through life*. In other words, they didn't have all the details exactly lined out for them ahead of time, but lived in dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide them and give them what they needed as they communicated with God and put one foot in front of the other, just like us. And as Jesus first responded to Mary here at this wedding, we notice that he's initially skeptical that this is the right time to begin performing miracles. He says, "**Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.**" Perhaps providing additional wine for a wedding feast seemed like an odd way to begin his miraculous signs, and the Spirit doesn't yet seem to have prompted him that now was the time.

But don't you love Mary's persistence and the complete confidence she placed in Jesus? She had no doubt whatsoever that Jesus could take care of this problem and didn't give up requesting it of Jesus even when faced with what could have seemed like a "no" answer. You see, Mary knew the Son of God well; probably

better than anyone else. She knew his deep love and concern for people, his heart for moving people from shame to honor, his commitment to honoring his own mother, and the great power of the Spirit that flowed through every part of his being. Seemingly oblivious to Jesus' initial reluctance to involving himself in this issue, she told the servants: ***"Do whatever he tells you."***

While it was true that Jesus' "hour," *the cross*, had not yet come, yet Jesus soon concluded, under the direction of the Spirit, that the time to begin performing miraculous signs had come.

III. JESUS' RESOLVES THE SITUATION BY TURNING WATER INTO WINE (Vs. 6 to 10)

Well, let's examine how Jesus resolved this situation as we focus now on verses 6 through 10, which I've labeled in your sermon notes: *The Situation Resolved*. We see that as Jesus assessed the situation and determined how best to handle it, he noticed six, quite large, stone water jars that were being used for ceremonial washing purposes. The Pharisees and other religious leaders at this point in Jewish history had developed elaborate traditions about ceremonial washing of hands before eating and even about washing cups and pots and copper vessels and, would you believe, *dining couches* (see Mark 7:1-4). This meant that devout Jews would have had these types of water pots in their homes to enable them to follow these religious traditions and rituals.

Jesus, at a later time in Mark 7, verses 1 through 8, called out the Pharisees for these extensive traditions about ceremonial washing which they had developed apart from God. He called them hypocrites and applied a Scripture from Isaiah to them, saying: ***"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."*** So it's quite interesting that even here at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, he doesn't hesitate to offend these man-made traditions by employing pots that had been set aside for ceremonial washing to serve a much different purpose. Telling the servants to fill them up to the brim with water, Jesus repurposed these pots for a more important use.

Well, imagine the surprise of the servants when Jesus told them to draw out some of that water they themselves had just put in these pots, and take it to the master of the feast. They were probably preparing themselves for a verbal beating when the master tasted it and found out it was just water. Nevertheless they obeyed Jesus' command and took the liquid out of the pots to the master of the feast for a taste test.

Picture for a moment the drama for these servants. Notice that Jesus didn't tell them to sample it first, but just said, "Take it to the master..." Wouldn't you have been a bit worried? And then when the master actually tasted it and called for the bridegroom, do you think they were wondering if they were about to get fired or severely disciplined for trying to pass off water as wine? Certainly some of those thoughts must have been running through their minds. But imagine their surprise and awe when the master instead commended the bridegroom for breaking with tradition and saving the best wine until last!

Jesus does all things well, doesn't he? He could have created some mediocre wine and no one would have been the wiser and no shame would have come on the bridegroom. After all, mediocre wine was expected at this point in the wedding celebration. But, no, Jesus created really good wine that brought extra honor onto the bridegroom and his family. And he did it in an instant...no fermenting or aging or special care of the vines necessary. That's just a small glimpse of the awesome power of God over all his creation! And he brought it to bear at this ordinary wedding feast out of deep love for people who called on his name and because he was ready to start revealing the glory of his only Son.

Now some people have struggled to comprehend why Jesus would have contributed to drunkenness by turning water into wine at this feast. Has that question ever crossed your mind? Well, again we need to remove ourselves from our own cultural context and understand first century Jewish culture. First of all, one of the primary duties of the master of a Jewish wedding feast "was to regulate the distribution of wine to prevent excess that would (especially in a Jewish context) ruin the party...Sometimes at Greek parties drunkenness was induced through less dilution [of wine] ['Jewish custom was generally two to three parts water to one part wine']..., but Jewish teachers disapproved of such practices;...that drunkenness [was] part of the celebration at Cana is unlikely. Yet it normally made sense to serve the better wine first because, drunk or not,

guests' senses would become more dulled as the seven days of banqueting proceeded" (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*). So again, understanding the Jewish culture helps us realize that Jesus was not in any way encouraging drunkenness, which Scripture clearly teaches against.

IV. THE GLORY REVEALED (Vs. 11 to 12)

Well, let's finish out this morning with verses 11 to 12, which provide a good wrap up and lead us into what God wants us to take away from these verses. I'll read verses 11 and 12 again for us:

11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. 12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

In verse 11 we see that this was the beginning, the first, the opening act of the miraculous signs Jesus was going to be performing over the next three years on his way to the cross. The Greek word translated, "signs," here means "miraculous acts as [evidence] of divine authority and power" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). As Jesus had just predicted to Nathanael, the amazing signs he would see through the ministry of Jesus...signs that would authenticate that he truly is the Messiah, the Son of God...would be much greater than anything he and other people had ever seen before. And already here at this wedding in Cana, perhaps even on the same day Jesus met Nathanael and made that prediction, God's power working through Jesus was already accomplishing mind-blowing miracles that could be explained in no other way.

And isn't it interesting that only a few select people were even aware of the amazing miracle that had just happened? Jesus' mom, his disciples, and the household servants seem to have been the only ones who knew what had happened. As continued to be the case throughout his ministry, Jesus revealed himself and his glory here to the humble, in this case the servants, who would have been well aware of their need and ready for a Savior. And Jesus didn't call everybody to attention to watch his miracle so he could impress them with the fullness of God's power working through him. Instead he quietly and humbly took care of the issue, lovingly saving the honor of the bridegroom and his family with

no concern for getting credit or being thanked or getting something out of it for himself. Secure in his identity and unconcerned with proving himself or getting payback, Jesus followed the Spirit to quietly accomplish the Father's will in this situation and then moved on, leaving the results to God. Is that how we function as we serve others and work to accomplish God's will by the power of the Spirit? Or do we need credit and a thank you or some sort of payback? May we learn to be like Jesus in the way we serve and accomplish God's will!

And finally, notice how Jesus disciples responded to what they had seen Jesus do. As Jesus revealed a glimpse of his glory by turning the water into wine, the disciples responded in the way God calls us all to respond to Jesus: *they believed in him and they followed him*. They put their full trust in him and kept seeking and following him. The apostle John at the end of this gospel actually reaffirms that this is the response to which God is leading all of us as we encounter Jesus and his miraculous signs. In John 20, verses 30 and 31, he says:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

By believing in Christ we find life. And isn't that really all Jesus is asking from each of us today. *Believe in me with your whole heart and walk through life with me, learning to live life like I lived it*. If you will, prepare to experience love and life like you've never experienced before, and see the glory and power of God revealed through you in ways that will draw many others to do just what you've chosen to do: ***Believe in Jesus and walk through life with him***. *And the cycle repeats*. This is how God's kingdom grows and how countless broken, sinful, ashamed, fearful human beings are moved from guilt to forgiveness, from shame to honor, and from fear to trust in God's power.

V. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

And as we think about what we've studied today, isn't it amazing how Jesus meets us in the everyday challenges and problems of normal, human existence? Even the seemingly insignificant problem of running out of wine at a wedding is something he concerns himself with in our lives. There's no challenge or problem

or concern of our lives that's too insignificant for Jesus to help us face and work through. Nothing that concerns the ones he loves with his whole life and being is too insignificant to be of concern to him. But he does need us to look to him and ask and be persistent.

Now the solutions he provides when we do so may be quite different from what we would hope or expect, and he might show us that what we're desperately concerned and consumed with is really a distraction and something we can just let go and not waste our time with anymore. He might lovingly let us fail in some area, so that we'll turn our eyes back to him and release our hold on worldly things or priorities to which we've become enslaved. But more often, Jesus, like he did at this wedding, simply blesses us and protects our honor and meets our need as we call on him for help and guidance and his miraculous working. Above all, no matter what his solution, Jesus is always good to those he loves and is always working for our good no matter what we're going through. He just asks us to trust in him and seek him and become like him as we walk through life following him...and as we do so, his glory is revealed powerfully through us to a lost world.

Do you have a heart of belief and trust in Jesus today? Do you really believe that he is who he says he is; that his love for you is as deep and wide as the ocean; that his power and wisdom is available to you at all times as you seek him; that he wants to be with you and walk through life with you and give you the help you need; that his way of living is truly the best for you and the most satisfying and fulfilling way to live in this broken world? These are the first questions we all need to honestly answer. If you find that you don't truly believe these truths with your whole heart, may I suggest that you humbly call out to God to help your unbelief. And keep asking him to do it. Be persistent like Mary. This is a prayer God loves to answer.

But let me tell you as well that there's a pre-requisite to this kind of belief and it's this: *true humility*. That could be a better place to begin focusing your prayers if you're in a great or even a small struggle with unbelief. We simply can't conquer unbelief until we can reach that point where we're willing to stop sitting in judgment of God; where we're willing to recognize that we as finite, created, fully-dependent, time-bound human beings are not qualified and do not have

nearly enough information and perspective to judge God and his ways. True humility is when we can simply come to God and say:

God, I need you desperately. You're my only hope in this life and the life to come. I don't understand you and all your ways. There are things in your Word that are difficult and hard to accept. But I'm finally ready to stop trying to judge you and simply trust you. I'm ready to give up thinking I know better than you and that I'm qualified to judge my Creator who is even now giving me life and breath and all the blessings I continue to enjoy in life. You've shown me enough through creation, through your Word, through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, through the evidence of your work in my life and the lives of those who've trusted you...Through these and so many other things you've shown me that you're real and that your good and that you love me deeply enough to actually die for me. Jesus, I believe in you with my whole heart and I want to walk through life with you as your disciple and your friend. I don't want to waste my time anymore questioning your ways and making excuses for why I can't actually learn to live life like you and walk into the purposes you have for me. I'm finally ready to follow. Lead on!

Are you ready, like the disciples were, for this kind of humble surrender and belief in Jesus? This is where he's calling each of us day after day, and when you're finally ready to go there with all you have, seeking and following him with your full focus and energy, get ready for God's glory to be revealed powerfully through you to others, as you and Jesus go everywhere together and handle everything in your life together by his great power and wisdom.

SERMON APPLICATION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE
Glory Revealed – John 2:1-12 – 3/25/18

Read John 2:1-12, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read. Look at the surrounding verses, take your time and talk to God as you read and meditate on it. Think through the following, writing notes and thoughts and looking up related Scriptures as needed:

Write down from the passage or from what was shared in the sermon: 1) a truth that stands out to you; 2) anything you believe God is showing you or telling you personally through it; 3) any related Scripture that comes to mind; 4) any questions you have.

What can we learn from Mary's interaction with Jesus at the wedding in Cana that will help us in our own interactions with Jesus?

What are some truths Jesus demonstrates about himself through the sign he performed in this passage?

What do you think are some of the reasons Jesus performed this sign quietly in the background, rather than openly for all to see? Why is it significant that the servants got to be firsthand observers of the miracle?

Upon seeing Jesus perform this miraculous sign, the disciples responded by believing in Him and following him as he traveled to his next destination. Where in your life and attitudes do you most struggle to believe in Jesus? In what areas of your life do you most struggle to put into practice Jesus' ways of living life?

Jesus demonstrated here his willingness to involve himself in and bring his power to the ordinary circumstances and challenges of life. Is there any area of your life or challenge you're facing that you haven't invited him to speak to and guide you through? If so, what's keeping you from doing so?

Summarize below anything God is calling you personally to believe, any actions God is asking you to take, or any attitudes He wants to change. Repent where needed and enjoy God's mercy. Then pray over these items and make a plan for change by the power of the Spirit.