January 24, 2016

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

A Wedding in Cana

MINISTRY INVOCATION
“O God: We give thanks to You for the manifold blessings to us. You did not have to bless us but You did. We shall remain eternally grateful. Amen.”

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW AND UNDERSTAND
Jesus didn’t let His personal moment, His knowledge of what He was to soon endure get in the way of doing something which might seem inconsequential that He could do.

THE APPLIED FULL GOSPEL DISTINCTIVE
We believe in Jesus Christ as the baptizer with the Holy Spirit, who bring as men and women at salvation into relationship with Himself and His Body, the Church.

TEXT:
Background Scripture – Key Verse – Lesson Scripture – John 2:1-12 (NKJV)

Christ Changes Water to Wine
2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” 4 Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” 6 Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. 7 Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” 8 And they filled them up to the brim. 9 And He said to them, “Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.” 10 And they took it. 11 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. 12 And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!”

The Disciples Believe
11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.
After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

COMMENTARY
Verses 1–12.—(1) The first sign, the beginning of signs. Mastery over the old creation. Sign of love and power. Christ had not yet given any “sign” of the invisible and eternal glory which the evangelist in his prologue had claimed for Him. He had not in His own person “manifested” the unique majesty of His Will, nor revealed the direction in which the power He wielded would most freely move. John, by this statement,

(1) puts down a positive disclaimer of the whole cycle of portents which, when he wrote, had begun to hover in romantic and exaggerated fashion around the infancy and minority of Jesus.

(2) He shows that his purpose was to bring back from forgetfulness the primary and most impressive events which did in reality characterize the earliest ministry of Christ.

(3) He emphasized the scene of some of these manifestations as restricted to a spot which, however difficult actually to identify, was nevertheless in Galilee, in which prophecy had foretold a great manifestation of Divine light.

(4) He lay stress on the fact that the prime object of it was to convey to His disciples, to men who knew that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, something of the power which He had for meeting any emergency that might arise. He did not seek to promote, nor did He succeed in exciting, the village wonder at a magical entertainment; nor did the bridegroom, nor the governor of the feast, nor so far as we know even Mary herself, fully apprehend in the event what “the disciples” saw. They believed on him. This is all we are told of the effect of the “sign.”

(5) The entire originality of the sign, one for which the previous narrative and prologue do not in the least prepare us, is one of the continual surprises of this Gospel.

(6) All this is, moreover, highly accentuated by the peculiar character of this sign. It was a creative act. The idea that it was merely a hastening by His will of the natural processes by which water is always being transformed into wine by the vine, seems contradicted by the fact that the vine does not transform water into wine, but combines with the water other substances, cunningly and wondrously mixing with it the organic compounds which it subtracts from the air and soil, and which are necessary for the purpose. Water which has become wine is not transubstantiated into wine. The water is still there; but there are added to it other elements and compounds. The lesson is undoubtedly taught
that He, who performed this, called certain elements and forces into being by the simple fiat of His will.

Verse 1.—**On the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.**

_The mother of Jesus was there._ Since Nathanael of Cana was summoned as a friend, and since the first group of the disciples were familiar with each other and him, the inference is that the bride or bridegroom was an intimate friend of the entire party. The presence of the mother of the Lord at Cana makes it also probable that she had, after the death of Joseph, removed from Nazareth to Cana. We may suppose it to be called “of Galilee” to distinguish it.

Verse 2.—**And both Jesus was called**—after his return from Bethany—**and his disciples to the marriage.** Jesus had no disciples before the events recorded in the previous chapter. These men may have been friends of each other and of the bridal party, and received such an invitation before their visit to the banks of the Jordan; but it is far more probable that these individuals already mentioned, or that some of them, and that most certainly John his near relative, were invited because they were in the society of Jesus.

Verse 3.—**A large accession of guests in such a humble home might easily be supposed to make a famine in the provisions, and so we read, And when the wine failed**—either

“They had no wine, because the wine of the marriage was consumed” from this cause, or from the poverty of the hosts, whose willingness and welcome were larger than their means, or by reason of an advanced stage in the festival—the **mother of Jesus saith to him, They have no wine.** The simple presence of the Lord and of His mother, of such guests as these, at a wedding-feast, is a Divine rebuke of that false pietism and fancied purity which made marriage a contamination and exalted virginity to an unnatural elevation. The tender-hearted interest felt by the blessed mother of the Lord in the condition of the hosts, and her tone of authority, are eminently natural; her tacit request for help, though she does not specify the way in which the help should be given, implies on her part something of presumption in indicating to our Lord the course He should adopt.

We are expressly told that this is the beginning of signs, and therefore we have no right to conclude that, previous to this, in the home at Nazareth, Jesus had been as accustomed to conquer fate and master poverty and compel circumstances by miraculous powers for his own or for his mother’s support. We know that it was a temptation of the devil that he should perform some such miracle for His own sustenance, and that He had sternly suppressed the suggestion of the evil one. The mother must have known His powers, and must
have known His mind on this very matter. She supposed that a moment had arrived when He should, by some royal act, assert His imperial rights, and give an order which would be obeyed as that of Sovereign Prince. Precisely the same spirit prevailed always in his home and among his disciples—an eager desire that he should manifest himself to the world.

If this was the real meaning of the remark, “They have no wine,” it becomes singularly interesting to observe the method of our Lord. The request for a supply of additional solace and refreshment was complied with. The suggestion to show himself to the world was as resolutely withheld. There was no pomp, no claim, no self-assertion; there was quiet, boundless, affluent love. The glory of Divine love was manifested, the need was satisfied; but the impression was not intended to go beyond the hearts of those beings who would partially understand it, at the right time.

Verse 4 What is there to me and thee, O woman? Mine hour has not yet come. The appellation “woman” was used by him upon the cross, when he was concerned most humanly and tenderly with her great grief and desolation, and therefore had no breath of harshness in it. Almost all commentators seem to suggest that our Lord refused to be guided by a mother’s direction; that He wished her to understand that He was breaking off from her control and from that silent submission which He had willingly yielded. He said. “Mine hour is not yet come.” It would have come if the provision of wine was the ground of divergence of sentiment; if the moment for the supply of these temporal wants were the point of difference between them. The “hour” for Christ to tell the world all that Mary knew had not come. The hour of the full revelation of his Messianic claims had not come, nor did it come in the temple, or by the lake, or in the feast-day. The hour would come when rivers of living water would be supplied to all those who come to him; when the blood he would shed would be a Divine stream, clear as crystal, for the refreshment of all nations; when at another marriage-supper of a saved humanity the precious blood should be an ample supply of costly wine for all the world.

Moreover, the link at the present moment between our Lord and His mother must begin to shade into something more spiritual. It was not possible that He should be holden by it. A sword would pierce through her maternal heart when she became gradually alive to the fact that they that do the Will of his Father, the same were His “brothers, sisters, and mother.”

Verse 5.—His mother saith unto the servants The mother of Jesus clearly understood by the gentle rebuke she received that Christ, her Son, had read her heart, and was going in some way, not to gratify her darling wish, but at least to take her hint for the consolation of her young friends and to attend to her suggestion. Whatsoever he saith unto you do it. Though in some sense slighted
or reproved, she exhibits the most entire confidence in her Son and Lord. She encouraged the servants to do whatever he might command. The faith of Mary was not depressed by the discovery that there were depths of character in her Son which she could not fathom. Obedience to Christ will always be our duty, even though we cannot penetrate the reasons of His command.

Verse 6.—**Now there were** (set, or) **placed there** six water-pots of stone, after the Jews’ manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece. Stone was often used for these receptacles, as more calculated to preserve the purity of the water. This large number of jars of considerable magnitude was doubtless due in part to the number of the guests, and to the scrupulous attention to ceremonial purity that was enjoined by the oral law. The jars may have differed in shape, according as they were adapted for different purposes; and we cannot evade the enormous capacity of the jars, and the abundance of the gift provided.

Verse 7.—**Jesus saith to them,** **Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them to the brim.** They had, therefore, been emptied already for the purifying purposes and processes of the large party, probably suggesting that the friends of the bridegroom were solicitous to obey the religious discipline which was believed to be in harmony with the Divine Will. The miracle took place between the filling of the jars and their being drawn upon. We are not permitted to look more closely into this mystery. The finger of God, the Will of the Creator, determines the result. The servants knew that they had filled the jars with water.

Verse 8.—**Draw forth** He did not say the “water” which you placed there, nor the “wine” into which it has been transformed, but simply, “Draw forth”), **and bear to the governor of the feast.** The traditional interpretation, that the water-jars were the source of the unwonted supply, and the measure of it, strongly commends itself.

**And they bear it,** conscious of a wondrous fact, which must have filled them with consternation.

Verse 9.—**When the governor of the feast tasted the water which had become wine.** If wine has taken the place of water, there has been added to the water that which was not there before. The vine, with all its wondrous processes—the vineyard, the wine-press, and other appliances—have all been dispensed with, and the same power which said, “Let there be light,” called these additional elements together, originated them by His Will. Here a new substance, with previously undiscovered attributes, presents itself. The uncompromising opponents of the supernatural will accept almost any interpretation but that which lies on the surface. It was one of many phenomena which accompanied His life as the “Son of man,” which helped to create the underlying
presupposition on which the Gospel was written. When the governor tasted wine
drawn from these water-pots, and knew not whence it was. He had known all
the resources of the feast, but this puzzled him by its novelty. “Whence has it
come? Where has it been stored? Whose is it?”

[But the servants who drew the water knew]; knew, i.e., whence it was and, it
seems to me, what it was. They knew the plain fact that it was not a wine-vat or
wine-cask, but a water-jar, from which they had drawn in order to fill the
chalices in their hands. They became, therefore, guarantors of the mysterious
sign. How much more than “whence” it was had dawned on their mind we
cannot say. The governor of the feast calleth the bridegroom. We may judge
from this that this responsible person was not in the room where the six water-
jars were placed, and that he either approached the bridegroom in his seat of
honor, or called to him from his own, and expressed, by a convivial boast and
equivocal compliment, his sense of the excellence of the wine which had thus, at
the end of the feast, been lavished on the guests, who had been hitherto kept
strangely ignorant of the resources of the host.

Verse 10.—And saith, Every man at the first setteth on the good wine, and
when men have drunk deeply, then that which is worse (literally, smaller): thou
hast kept (guarded) the good wine until now. The best wine is appropriately
given when the senses are keenest, but when the climax of the festival has come,
when they have drunk too deeply, or are intoxicated, then the weaker, poorer,
and less fragrant wine is acceptable. The whole saying simply asserts, by an
outsider, the concrete reality of a wonderful change that had occurred. He knew
nothing of a miracle. He merely guaranteed unwittingly the phenomena that
came within the range of his senses. This becomes more impressive because he
knew nothing of the cause, and was profoundly ignorant of the claims of his
strange and wonderful Guest.

Verse 11.—Jesus made this beginning of signs in Cana of Galilee, and
manifested his glory.

The few disciples admitted that, by His penetration of their character and
hidden inner life, His wisdom was of a different kind from that of men. Now,
however, they see a manifestation of His glory as power. He has unlimited
resources at His disposal, and his disciples believed on him to that extent. “The
disciples” who came with him “believed” more than they had done before. They
apprehended the “glory,” and entirely trust themselves to him, and followed him
with an added momentum. There were new and wonderful suggestions made in
this passage which unveil the glory of the Divine love and power now wrought
in man. By manifesting His Divine sympathy with marriage, with human life
and fellowship, with innocent gladness, He proved himself to be the same Christ
of whom the synoptic tradition speaks, the same Jesus who took the children to
His arms, and constituted a “marriage-supper” the great type of the eternal union between God and man in the gospel of his love.

Verse 12.—After this he went down—from the high lands of Galilee to the borders of the Sea of Galilee, depressed as we now know it to be below the level of the Mediterranea—to Capernaum. He, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples. They may have returned home to Nazareth. The fact that Joseph is not mentioned induces the common assumption that he was already dead.

RELATED DISCUSSION TOPICS

CLOSING PRAYER
My God: I am grateful to have found You and kept You in the forefront of my being. Bless us continually with Your grace and mercy. They represent bountiful blessings for all of us. Amen.