

JESUS INVITED TO WEDDING PARTY: GETS INTERESTING WHEN THE WINE RUNS OUT

By Richard Whitaker

Wedding announcements are typically prepared with great anticipation and delivered to guests weeks or months in advance. They herald the joining of a couple in marriage on a specified day and time so everyone can save the date and prepare for the celebration.

Even with the best of plans, sometimes weddings don't turn out as expected.

In one first century wedding, a shortage of wine creates an embarrassing episode for the groom - whose responsibility it was to provide for all of the guests. What happened next turned out to be way more than expected.

This is how the apostle John saw the event unfold back then,

"On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.' So they took it. 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 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.' This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. (John 2:1-11)"

I imagine that Jesus and his first followers were fun to be around. They did, after all, receive a wedding invitation. But, what Jesus does to remedy a social faux pas goes beyond typical banquet etiquette.

Before we take a closer look at the bigger picture, what can we say about the nature of Jesus' conversation with his mother, Mary? Jesus' use of the first century term "Woman" does not indicate a lack of affection on the part of Jesus toward his mother. In fact, it's the same wording the affectionate Jesus used while hanging on the cross to arrange for her care after his death. (See John 19:26)

Now, with the wine gone and guests still gathered, Jesus miraculously transforms six, full water jars into approximately 150 gallons of wine! In doing so, Jesus kindly spares the concerned groom the embarrassment of running out before the celebration ended. What joy and relief the host and guests must have felt at this abundance of new wine!

But, there's more to this scene than meets the eye. In the same way as a wedding invitation announces a coming marriage, this first of Jesus' miracles announces a pivotal point in God's plan to rescue mankind.

We learn more about this astonishing announcement by connecting wedding imagery to prophetic markers from the Old Testament. For starters, wedding banquets are associated with the *coming time of the Messiah* (See Isaiah 25:6-8, 65:3). The presence of wine is also pictured as *accompanying the coming age of salvation* (Jeremiah 31:12, Joel 3:18). Finally, the abundance of wine is associated with *blessings that accompany the arrival of the Messiah* (Genesis 49:11-12).

Like a signal beacon shining through the darkness, Jesus changing gallons of water into gallons of wine revealed his glory and introduced the coming of God's kingdom on earth. In a stunning moment of clarity, the disciples make the connection and respond by believing in the glorified Jesus.

In the same way, we pattern our lives after Jesus when we announce the coming kingdom to our neighbors, coworkers and friends. How, you may ask? We announce the Kingdom of God when we:

- Host parties and invite our neighbors to receive unconditional love and hospitality.
- Accept our neighbors' invitations to joyfully celebrate birthdays, weddings, and national holidays.
- Give in abundance to serve our neighbors, team families, coworkers, and friends.

Jesus explains that a faithful follower is one who makes plans to "*let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" (Matthew 5:16). When we combine a clear explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ with tangible expressions of kingdom life, we'll witness neighbors from all over our city respond by believing in Jesus too. And, that is something to celebrate!

PRAYER FOR TODAY:

Jesus, I believe that you are the Savior of the world. Thank you for loving me when I was still in sin and apart from you. I give back all that you've given me for use in announcing your kingdom to my neighbors. Use me to establish your kingdom in my neighborhood as it is in heaven. May my neighbors respond with life changing faith and celebration for new life in your kingdom. In Jesus name, Amen.