

What Do You Do When There's Nothing Left?

John 2:1-11 • October 9, 2011

Have you ever run out of gas? (Tell us about it.)

Money? (Don't tell us about it! All too often! Too much month left at the end of the money.)

Food? Romanian fisherman and frozen fish.

Strength? Can't go on another day.

Patience? Can't put up with it any longer.

Forgiveness? Done it to me too many times.

So what do you do when the food, money, patience, strength runs out?

Do you give up, collapse and fold? Do you stress and worry? Do you get angry and blame others? (After all, it's never OUR fault!)

Well, in today's text, not only do we learn what to do, we also learn that it's what we MUST do. When there's nothing left – whatever the situation/ problem/ crisis – there's only ONE option that will work, only ONE decision that will rescue us.

It's a choice we have to make. And when we do, it will make all the difference in the world to us. It will not only turn our life around; it will transform it.

As we continue our study of John's Gospel we come to his account of a wedding in Israel—a wedding in which they ran out of something really important back then — they ran out of wine.

Remember we're looking at how people lived in first century Israel. And in that culture, wine was a necessity of life. In fact, here was an old saying back then that went like this, "Without wine there is no joy."

And this was especially true when it came to first century Jewish weddings. Wine was part of the joy of that kind of celebration. Well, John tells us about a wedding where they ran out of wine and the people didn't know what to do. Let's read what he says in John 2:1-11.

John 2:1 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." And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.

9 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.

10 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!"

11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

Now, before we go any further let's do what we should always do when we study the Bible—let's take a look at the setting—the CONTEXT of this story.

John 2:1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

[Map] Verse 1 says that this wedding and the events surrounding it happened in Cana of Galilee—a village that was located next to Nazareth, which means the people of Nazareth, Jesus' home town, and the people of Cana were neighbors. They knew each other.

Well, Jesus' mother had a very important role in it the wedding celebration. It appears that she was in charge of making sure everything went as planned during the wedding celebration—kind of like a hostess or director.

We know this because John tells us she was personally concerned when the wine ran out and she also had the authority to order the servants to do whatever

Jesus told them to do. We're not certain, but this was probably the wedding of someone in Jesus' family, perhaps a cousin.

I also want you to notice that Mary is mentioned in the story, but Joseph isn't. This is probably because he had already died by this time. Most scholars believe that Joseph died very early in Jesus' life.

We see Joseph when Jesus was 12, but after that, he's no longer mentioned, so Joseph probably died shortly after Jesus' 12th birthday. This would also explain why Jesus spent all those years in Nazareth.

As the firstborn son, He was responsible for taking care of the family. So, He used his carpentry skills to support His mother and His younger half-brothers and half-sisters until they were old enough to take care of themselves and Mary.

Now, you think weddings are a big deal today. In Jesus' day a wedding was a VERY big deal. The whole town was involved. In fact, in Palestine, the wedding celebration lasted more than one evening, or even one day. It went on for an entire week!

The ceremony itself took place late in the evening, after a feast. Then the young couple were taken to their new home. By that time it was dark and so they were taken through the village streets surrounded by people carrying torches.

They were taken to their home by going the longest route possible so that as many people as possible could congratulate them.

And there was no going away for a honeymoon back then. Instead the newlyweds stayed at home that next week and hosted sort of a seven day party/ open house.

And during that week both bride and groom were treated like a king and queen. They wore crowns and dressed in their bridal robes. They were even addressed as royalty and their word was considered law.

I think the reason we see this kind of "extreme" celebration is the fact that in those days there was so much poverty and hard work and so little time for leisure and fun.

Plus, they lived under the constant oppression of the Roman soldiers who occupied their land. So this week of celebration and joy was one of the high points in life. Everyone looked forward to it, so it really WAS a big deal.

I hope this gives you a better picture of what was going on in our text. Jesus was attending one of these week-long wedding celebrations. But then something went wrong. They ran out of wine.

Remember, wine was essential for a Jewish feast. That doesn't mean that everyone like to over-indulge and get drunk, because in their culture drunkenness was both a disgrace and a sin. (It still is.)

Plus, historians tell us that back then people actually diluted their wine, about two parts wine to three parts water. So a you'd have to drink a barrel full if you were going to over-indulge.

In any case, wine was an essential and for the hosts to run out was VERY embarrassing. If you read your Old Testament carefully (and New Testament), you will see that hospitality was extremely important in the cultures of the Bible lands. So, for things to literally run dry would've brought terrible shame to the bride and her groom.

So, this was a BIG deal. But! Mary knew what to do when the wine ran out. She went to Jesus and told Him what had happened.

3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

I think Mary did this because she knew who Jesus was: the Son of God, the Messiah. But, He still hadn't announced it publicly to the world.

Yes, He'd been baptized by John and God's voice had spoken from Heaven. Yes, He now had at least five disciples. So maybe she was thinking, "Now's the time. Now He'll declare Himself publicly."

I'm not sure, but maybe that's why she went to Him and said, "They have no wine." Look at Jesus' response.

4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

Now, what Jesus says may SEEM to be kind of rude. "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?"

// Just curious. How many of you mothers would be insulted if your son called you “woman?” “Woman, when will supper be ready?” “Woman, did you wash my clothes?”

Well, in Jesus’ day, the word “woman” didn’t carry that kind of disrespectful meaning. Back then it was actually a title of affection and respect. (Therefore “Dear woman” in some translations.)

To show you what I mean, it’s the same word Jesus used as He hung dying on the cross. He looked down and said to Mary, “Woman, behold your son,” and then He told John to take care of her.

But that’s not the only phrase we have to look at because the words, “What does your concern have to do with Me?” —well, they sound kind of disrespectful, too, don’t they?

But again, back then they weren’t. This was a common phrase when someone didn’t understand what was going on.

It was kind of like Jesus was saying, “Don’t worry, mom. You don’t quite understand what’s going on; leave things to Me, and I’ll take care of it.” Jesus was simply telling Mary that He knew what to do, and that He’d deal with the situation.

And if you doubt what I’m saying, just look at Mary’s response, because it shows that she didn’t feel disrespected at all.

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."

She answered Jesus in a way that showed she had confidence in Him because she left it up to Him to take care of it and she went back to her duties as hostess.

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." And they filled them up to the brim.

So, after Mary left, Jesus instructed the servants to take six stone water jars and fill them with water. Each jar held 20-30 gallons, so this was no small job.

Verse 6 says these jars of water were used for purification of the Jews. That just means that the water was used to wash the feet of people as soon as they entered the house. Remember? The roads weren't paved and—depending on the weather—they were either mud or dust.

A second purpose for the water was to wash hands. Strict Jews washed their hands before a meal and even between each course. So, people always needed to have a lot of water in their house, especially when they were having wedding guests for a whole week.

Notice that Jesus commanded the jars to be filled to the BRIM. John includes this detail to make it clear that nothing else but water was put in them. No wine was added to the water.

Then, in verse 8, Jesus tells them:

8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.

The master of the feast was like the "head waiter"—the guy who was responsible for seating the guests and making sure all the food was served at the right time and everyone's wine glass stayed full.

When he tasted it he said:

9 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.

10 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!"

Jesus turned those 180 gallons of water into wine—the BEST wine. What a wedding gift!

OK, that's the context. Now back to our question: What do you do when there's nothing left? Where do WE go when the "wine" runs out?

Whether it's food or money or strength or patience, where do we go when we have a need we can't meet on our own? / a problem we can't face by

ourselves? / a challenge we have no solution for? Where do we go when there's nothing left?

You see, I believe this story teaches the important truth that when those times come – and they WILL come – we MUST go to Jesus. He's not only the best choice – He's the ONLY choice that will rescue us. And let me tell you why.

1. First, we go to Jesus because we know He can do BIG things.

When you and I are worn out, exhausted, bankrupt and broke. When you and I face the impossible challenges of life, we go to Jesus because we know He's able to help. We know Jesus can do the impossible. As His disciples learned that day, Jesus is able to work miracles.

By the way, this is a good time to remind you that according to John, the main reason Jesus did miracles like this was to get people's attention and cause them to focus, not on the miracle but on HIM.

Miracles were done as SIGNS that Jesus was the Messiah—signs that would lead people to put their faith in Him. Remember the reason John gives for writing his gospel? In John 20:30-31 he said:

John 20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Here, John tells us that this first miracle accomplished this purpose. Look at verse 11 where it says,

11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

Notice the first four words: "This beginning of signs." This miracle was Jesus' FIRST miracle. So forget about all those crazy stories about Jesus performing miracles during his childhood. Those are just superstitions that are lies, because here the Bible tells us that THIS is His FIRST miracle.

And He did it to reveal His glory – to reveal that He really WAS the eternal God clothed in Human skin. Mary already knew Who Jesus was. She knew He was

the Son of Almighty God and this is why she trusted Him to handle the problem at the wedding.

She knew that, as God in the flesh, He had the power to take care of literally ANYTHING, so she went to Him when the crisis came along. She went to Jesus when the wine ran out. And that's the kind of faith WE need — faith that leads us to take OUR troubles, OUR problems, to Jesus.

As God declares in Jeremiah 32:27:

Jeremiah 32:27 Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?

Answer His question. Go ahead. Answer God's question in your mind, heart, life right now. Of course the answer is no! God can do anything! Even BIG things! Because He's a BIG God! And He's OUR big God!

Listen, as Christians, if we're ever going to survive the troubles and trials of life, we MUST believe in God's infinite power.

If we're ever going to overcome the problems and stresses of life, we MUST believe in God's infinite power.

If we're ever going to do anything great for God, we MUST believe in His infinite power — a power with NO LIMITS – a power that can handle the BIG things of life.

The more we believe He can do, the more we'll attempt to do FOR Him and the more God will do IN us and THROUGH us.

Do you believe your God is truly omnipotent? Do you believe your God has infinite power?

Is He powerful enough to heal your marriage?

Is your God big enough to protect your kids from all that this sinful, ungodly world throws at them?

Is He strong enough to take care of your physical needs?

Is your God able to make you an effective parent?

Can He help you do your job—can He help you with the challenges of your career? Can He help you FIND a job?

Is He big enough to guide you through uncertain times?

Does He have the power to protect you and provide for you?

Yes! Yes! Yes! Like the chorus I sang as a kid says, “God can do anything, anything, anything. God can do anything—BUT FAIL!”

God can even miraculously transform your LIFE, just like He transformed that water. Some of you – US! – have struggled with habits and addictions and attitudes and anger and all sorts of character flaws.

We make a little progress but then we fall right back to where we were. And it seems like all we do is try and try and try to change, but we never make any progress that lasts.

Well, it’s time to stop trying in your own strength and humble yourself and lie on your face at Jesus’ feet with a broken heart. He CAN and He WILL transform you.

Listen, if we focus only on those stone water pots we miss the whole point, because Jesus is all about TOTAL transformation.

As someone once said, “Jesus turned water into wine and He turns frowns into smiles; He turns whimpers of fear into songs of hope; He turns deserts into gardens; sorrow into joy; sin into grace; death into life.”

Whenever Jesus comes into life, He brings a new, refreshing quality that’s like turning water into wine.

Without Jesus, life is dull, hard and desperate – “what will we do?!” But when Jesus comes into life it becomes exciting and joyful and secure – “Don’t worry. Jesus is here.”

Remember, John wrote gospel 60 years AFTER Jesus’ crucifixion. He’d thought about his years with Jesus all those decades and now he’s saying, “Wherever Jesus went, whenever Jesus came into someone’s life, it was like turning water into wine.”

John knew that. And any FOLLOWER of Jesus (not Christian, but follower) also knows that. Maturing believers KNOW Jesus has unlimited power—enough power to handle any problem, any struggle they face no matter how big, so they go to Him when the “wine” runs out.

They go to Jesus when they face an impossible situation. But followers of Christ don’t just go to Him with our BIG needs. We go to Him no matter what “size” problem we face. We cast ALL our cares on Him and we do this because we know...

2. Jesus cares about the LITTLE things in our lives.

Remember, Jesus did this – His first miracle – in a tiny little village in Galilee, not downtown Jerusalem.

He wasn't surrounded by huge crowds. No, Jesus' first miracle happened in a home. He first displayed His glory in a house filled with humble people.

His first miracle wasn't raising the dead or feeding a multitude. It was saving a hard-working family from shame and humiliation. That shows us that God cares about EVERY problem we face—big AND small.

We go to Jesus with our BIG things because we know He has the power to deal with them. But we also go to Him with our small things because we know He loves us. We know He cares. There's nothing too BIG, nothing too SMALL for God to handle.

// In this very first miracle, Jesus — the Creator and Sustainer of the universe — shows us that the JOY of those hard-working, humble peasants from Cana and Nazareth was important to Him. When you love someone, even the little things in their life are important to you.

Jesus is ALWAYS there to help you – with the BIG things in life – and with the LITTLE things.

The challenge YOU face is this: Learn to turn to Him and trust Him instead of worrying and stressing. Trust Him in both the BIG and the SMALL and Jesus will transform your life.

Just like He turned water into wine, He will transform YOU. What are you struggling with today? You MUST turn to Jesus. Let's pray.