

## “Who Does He Think He Is?”

Do you have a favorite Bible verse? I asked that question to a people last Wednesday night at church and got some pretty good answers. Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” John 14:6, “I am the way and the truth, and the life.” Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” And of course, John 3:16. It’s good to have favorite verses of Scripture memorized, especially in times of prayer. As a pastor, I certainly have my favorites. But one of my all time favorite verses, I don’t actually use in prayer. In fact, I don’t use it anywhere except when my wife or one of my girls asks me to do something that I don’t want to do. It’s John 2:4: “Woman, what does this have to do with me?”

Ok, I’m just kidding. I might want to say it, but I know better than that. But I’m not kidding about it being one of my favorite verses. I like it because It’s just not what you would expect to hear from our Lord, especially when he’s talking to his own mother. “Um, Jesus my dear, they have no wine.” “Woman, what does this have to do with me?” It’s an answer that seems kind of surly, kind of dismissive, but to me also kind of curiously funny. Every time I hear it I can’t help but think, who does he think he is? But this is Jesus, God in the flesh. He knew who he was. He knew what he came to do. But most everyone else didn’t know. In fact, most everyone else had no idea. “Who does he think he is” probably was asked a lot. And since many people today still don’t really know who Jesus is, it’s a question that is probably still asked.

So, during the month of October we are going to be looking at a few accounts in the book of John that might raise this question, “Who does he think he is?” And we’re doing it all in an effort to point to Christ’s true identity and his true mission for coming into this world. And today we begin with the wedding feast in Cana.

I’ve always liked this account in John, chapter 2, first and foremost because it’s joyful and pleasant. No one is mad at Jesus. No one is out to get him. It’s Jesus, his mother, and his disciples at a wedding and it seems like a good time. That is until they run out of wine. I don’t know about you, but being the host of a party or a wedding reception where the wine runs out is not the person you want to be. I’m sure the groom was freaking out wondering what in the world he was going to do. Mary tells Jesus. He, of course, says, “what does this have to do with me,” but obviously it did have something to do with him because he ends up helping. And he doesn’t just help out a little— he fills 6 water jars, each holding 20-30 gallons, with not just average wine, but better wine than what

they had. So now there's a lot of really good wine. And it's so good that master of the feast goes to the bridegroom and says, "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." The celebration is back on and we are told that this is the first of our Lord's signs, which showed his glory.

Signs. This is a really important word in the Gospel of John. In fact, near the end in chapter 20, John writes that, "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these, *meaning the signs revealed up to this point*, are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may life in his name." So John is set up with specific signs of Jesus, the first of which is turning the water into wine. And these signs throughout the book all point to the ultimate sign, which is his resurrection from the dead.

But when it comes to this celebration in Cana, we all kind of acknowledge that the sign happened, but we can also kind of get wrapped up in something else that can detract us from what Jesus did. And this is the emphasis we put on marriage in this passage. Jesus blessed and honored marriage with his presence at the wedding and we should remember that he honors and blesses our marriages with his presence. We hear this at weddings a lot. And it's not wrong. In fact there are many things we can take from this account that help us see Jesus in the everyday. But when we kind of take this account for the things that it is beyond the first of Jesus' signs, which manifest his glory, we kind of miss addressing a really important question about the sign in the first place.

And the question is, "Is it true?" Did this relatively unknown man from Nazareth really show up at this wedding at Cana and turn water that was in these giant jugs into wine? The answer, of course, is yes, he did. I can't help but think of the disciples here. The text says they believed in him after this sign, but they were probably thinking who in the world does this guy think he is and what exactly is happening here? And they would be right, because who Jesus was and what he did was not normal. This is why this sign is pointing to something much deeper than what we may have allowed it to become. I'm not trying to be funny, but we have this tendency to kind of "water down" the amazing and bountiful wine in this whole scene in John, chapter 2.

Actually we have this tendency to kind of water down a lot more than this. It's not always intentional. I know that. But when we make Christ into someone who mainly came to give us a better life, or some kind of mystical genie who might show up when we least expect it to solve our problems, we're watering down the wine. Good things in

our lives we can attribute to Jesus, for sure. But Christ did not come into this world to keep our parties going, help us get the job we want, or our kids good grades. He came to bring life to dead people. Those who have departed and dead people like you and me who are crushed under the weight of sin.

Remember what John says, that by believing in him, you will have life in his name. And when you take another message of John's that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for you", and then understand that message is actually shown in the signs, in the work of Christ, this can't help but change your life forever. You see your life as a gift. You see your family, your friends, your neighbors, even your enemies as those through faith who are grounded in the life that God showed us by bringing his son back from the dead.

This is why the better you, the slimmer you, the richer you—all those things that we might wish we could get out of Christianity have watered down the wine. Because they are the farthest thing from what Jesus came to do. What he came to do was to take your guilt and my shame, our insecurities, our doubt that cause us not to know what to stand for. He came to take it all and give us his life. And it began with this sign at Cana.

You know, as a pastor, I've had quite a few conversations with folks who say they really want to believe in God. They see the importance of bring their kids up in the faith, in the church. But they just can't seem to get there because they have so many questions. Maybe something really bad happened in their life. If only God would provide a sign, it would make it easier, they often say. We've probably all heard people say things like this. And while we can't talk anyone into believing in God, we can point them to what God says in his word. We can encourage them to come to worship and hear God's word proclaimed and given through his sacraments. We can be honest and say we too have wanted signs from God at some point in our lives. But as many of us have matured in our faith, we have come to understand that we have every sign from him we could possibly need. That's why we're here. To hear the word; to taste the word in Holy Communion; to feel the word in the waters of baptism. We should all pray that Spirit moves people on the edge get that same opportunity.

My friends, the signs are all there beginning with the water into wine and ending with the greatest sign of all, Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And he has given them so we may believe that he is Christ, so that we may have life in his name. Amen.