



**That You Might Believe**  
**Seven Signs from the Gospel of John**  
**John 2:1-11**  
**11<sup>th</sup> April 2021**  
**Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers**

We have just 20% of the lockdown race to complete! To help us run that race with perseverance Mike's going to complete his series of sermons from the book of Ruth and I'm going to stay in the Gospel of John and preach on the seven miraculous signs John, God-willing.

- Jesus turning water into wine
- Healing the son of an official
- Curing a crippled man
- Feeding 5000 people
- Walking on water
- Healing a blind man
- **And** raising Lazarus from the dead

**The Idea of Signs**

John calls these seven miracles, “miraculous *signs*.”

If we were driving along a Highway and saw a sign above us “New York City” none of us would confuse the sign with New York itself! No-one parks beside a motorway sign and gazes at its beauty!

No, the City is the real thing and it is far more glorious than the sign! People take helicopter trips around New York to gaze at its beauty!!

And in exactly the same way, we're not meant to stop at the signs, but we're meant to look *beyond* the seven signs, to what they point to. And John 2:11 tells us what that is:

***“This is the first of his miraculous signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory...”***

These seven signs point to ***the glory*** of Jesus Christ; which means they reveal his character, his compassion, his love, his power, his majesty.

So as we make our way through these seven miracles, we must go beyond the sign and ask ourselves: “What is this sign telling us about Jesus?” And since Jesus is God come in human flesh, “What is this sign telling us about God?”

And it doesn't stop there! Once we learn through the signs who Jesus is, we're meant to put our trust in him: *“These miraculous signs... are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20)*

The signs point to the glory of Jesus -> the glory of Jesus Christ helps us to believe in him -> and one final step:

*“believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31)*

The end-purpose of the seven miraculous signs is so that we can enjoy *the new life* God wants to give us, *new life in this world, and life beyond the grave!*

There's a piece on the BBC website which states that the average person has around 40-60,000 thoughts every day but some 80% of those are usually negative! It does *not need* to be that way! Jesus came into the world to give us a *new thought life* which, by the power of His Word and Spirit is continually renewed; and a thought life God promises to guard with his peace. Those who will trust in Jesus do not need to experience a mind filled with 80% negative thoughts!

### **Water into Wine—the story**

Let's start with the first miraculous sign, when Jesus turned water into wine.

This miraculous sign took place at the very start of Jesus' ministry. It was the first miracle he performed and it took place not far from his home town Nazareth at a place by the name of Cana.

In fact this miracle took place so early in his ministry that Jesus hadn't yet gathered all his 12 followers. So far he had called only 6: Peter, Andrew, John, John, Philip, and Nathaniel.

And three days after calling the last two, Philip and Nathaniel, Jesus was invited, along with the six, to this wedding just up the road from Nazareth at Cana.

We should pause to notice that by accepting this invitation, and performing his first miracle at a wedding, Jesus was honouring the institution of marriage. Both Scripture and Nature confirm that marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman. Jesus was saying "Marriage is a good thing!"

And so we should affirm and honour marriage. Blessed are the couple who invite Jesus to *their* wedding: who pray together, who worship together on the Lord's Day and who talk about the Lord in their homes.

Now, from what we can gather, it is likely that the couple getting married were close friends or relatives of Jesus, and it is likely, from the way Mary speaks to the servants, and the way she knows about the wine running out, that she is a helper at the wedding.

In those days wedding feasts could last a week, but at some point during during that week, the wine ran out.

In an eastern *shame culture*, failing to provide drink for your guests was an *embarrassing catastrophe*! And if the news got out, your wedding would be remembered for all the wrong reasons!

Well, Mary, who is in the know, comes to Jesus and tells him the news. "They have no more wine."

There is no doubt, that Mary was aware that Jesus was special. And now that he had *turned thirty*, the age that priests began their work - and now that he was *gathering together* some followers - she probably thought it was time to give him a nudge, in the full confidence that he could perform a miracle and resolve this embarrassing problem. "*They have no more wine.*"

Thank the Lord for mothers – and fathers - who sense their children have a gift or an ability and give them a gentle prod!

Thank the Lord for church folk who see a spiritual gifting in someone else and stir that person up to serve the Lord!

Most of us, you see, are naturally reluctant to step forward, and so we need someone else to say “I see this gift in you, come on!”

- Reluctant Moses needed a divine prod to start leading Israel
- Elisha needed a cloak from Elijah
- Paul needed the word of encouragement from Barnabas
- And Timothy needed Paul’s “Stir up the gift in you.”

And we should not think that Jesus was different from us in this! It is not a sin to be reluctant - especially when Jesus knew of the suffering that his ministry would eventually lead to.

Perhaps God calling a Mary this morning to be the person who urges on someone else? Perhaps through this sermon he is urging *you* on!

Jesus gently rebukes Mary *“Woman why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.”* Jesus means that he has not heard from his Father what he should do—but in the next few minutes or even seconds *he does hear* the command from his Father!

Jesus is gently telling his mother, *“up to now, living at home, I have been rightly tied to your instruction and counsel, but from now on, I must obey only my Father in heaven.”*

And that is another word for us. We love our parents and our families, but they must never stand in the way of the commands of Christ. Jesus must always come first.

I remember an American preacher telling the story of how a close relative had promised to buy him his first car, a sports car. But when she heard that he was planning to be a preacher and not what *she wanted him to do*, she withdrew the gift in an attempt to change his mind! The young man would not be manipulated by his relative, he obeyed Jesus and became a preacher.

Mary accepted the gentle rebuke but full of confidence in Jesus tells the servants *“Do whatever he tells you.”*

Now Jews always wash their hands before they eat, so six large jars were standing by, with a total capacity of around 600 litres. Jesus commands the servants to fill them to the brim with water.

Absolutely no-one must know about this embarrassing wedding problem, so Jesus now performs the miracle inside his mind, without a word or a touch, and *wills the water into wine*. And then he asks the servants to draw water out of the jars and take it to the Master of the Banquet.

It would have been easy for the servants to obey the first command, to fill up the pots, but this second command must have seemed strange! “Take **water** to the master of the banquet!” But to their credit they obeyed him!

We can’t always understand the commands of Jesus, but happy—and blessed – is the one who obeys!

The miracle wine was so good that the Master of the Banquet – who knew nothing about the miracle— called the bridegroom (who was responsible for food and drink) over to congratulate him on the quality:

*“Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”*

By the way, these words shows us that the drink Jesus miraculously produced was alcoholic wine, not grape juice. The Scriptures regard wine as a good gift from God, (Psalm 104), but everywhere the Scriptures command moderation and forbid excess and drunkenness.

What an amazing and wonderful miracle!! Water into wine! A wedding saved! A social embarrassment avoided!

But says, John, the miracle is not the city, it’s only the sign to the city. So as we close we must ask “what does this sign point to?”

***(i) See the mighty power of Jesus***

Well, see here the mighty power of Jesus! Jesus has total power over nature! Water is always turning into wine, but normally the water of a stream must pass through a vine, and then with the help of sunshine and a host of workers it turns into wine over a long period of time. But Jesus short-circuits all the normal process and in an instant produces high quality wine!

What divine power! This story should encourage every believer to bring *big petitions* to God in prayer, confident that *nothing* is impossible with God!

***(ii) See the compassion of Jesus***

Secondly, see here the compassion of Jesus! This is a very special miracle because no-one was dying, no-one was sick, no-one was going to drown! There was no physical threat or emergency! But Jesus, sensitive to the social embarrassment of the moment performed a *miracle of kindness!*

And no-one except Mary, the disciples and the servants knew what happened! Jesus did the miracle on the quiet, in the background, so that the embarrassing news would not get out! What compassion!

And in exactly the same way, Jesus is able to cover our mistakes or misfortunes and turn them around for our good and for his great glory! What compassion Jesus has for us!

***(iii) See the boundless Generosity of Jesus***

And finally, we see here the sheer generosity of Jesus. 600 litres—or 800 bottles—of the best wine was an amazingly generous provision for any wedding! Let me ask those of you getting married this year – are you planning to buy 800 bottles of “*Chateau Lafite*”? God is a generous God!

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus*

*Vast unmeasured, boundless, free*

*Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me*

*Underneath me, all around me, is the current of God’s love*

*Leading onward, leading homeward to his glorious rest above*

When God gives, he gives liberally, generously, bountifully, lavishly, freely, openhandedly, unsparingly!

Think about all the good gifts God has given to you and gives to you every day! Of course God is generous, because since he has given us His Best, he is bound to give us lesser gifts! *“he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)*

Let us banish miserly views of God, and let us expect great things from God! And let us, like him, be generous with all the gifts he has given to us!

What is God like? Powerless, uncaring, stingy? No says Jesus, this miraculous sign shows that God is all powerful, compassionate and generous.

After witnessing this miracle, the disciples, we read, *“put their faith in him.”* They already believed in him, so what John means is that their faith in his power, his compassion and his generosity *grew!*

Perhaps you are not yet a believer and you wonder what God is like! Well, now you know! God is *all powerful* and he uses that mighty power to help his people. God is *compassionate*, he understands and cares about the problems of our frail human life. And God is extremely *generous*.

And today he wants you to put your trust in Him and in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's sing and make our own, what must be the most well-known modern hymn:

*In Christ alone my hope is found  
He is my light, my strength, my song*