The Good Wine!
John 2:1-11

This is the story of Jesus changing water into wine!

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.

He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So, they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John has this as Jesus’ first miracle, or what he calls, “signs.” So, Jesus chooses to kick off his ministry by changing water into wine? Seems an odd miracle. Why not heal a sick child, or provide food for the hungry? Is running out of wine that big a deal? (Depends on who you ask!). But even so, as the first miracle? Why would Jesus do that? Even he questioned it a little bit! “What concern is that to you and me?” he asked his mother.

Did he do this to impress us that he has superhuman powers? So, we should follow him because he can change water into wine? He can walk on water. He can heal the
sick. But wouldn’t that make Christ somewhat of a *Genie-in-a-bottle*? You follow him because of what he can do for you.

And do we really need a display of miracles from God when there are 2 trillion galaxies in the universe? We live in one of those galaxies, the Milky Way, that is 100,000 light years long and 1,000 light years wide! Changing a little water into wine seems frivolous in comparison to all that.

*So maybe there is a deeper meaning to this.* Maybe it’s symbolic. The wine has run out. That happens in life. The Messiah has come to a world that often runs out of wine, out of joy, out of celebration, and we cannot replenish ourselves. Could it be that this miracle, or sign, is a statement about who we are and who he is?

“They have no wine” said Mary. That was both literally and figuratively true. The human condition is empty without God. The wine has run out. That’s not to say there is no joy in this world, or cause for celebration, but Christ himself said, “*For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.*” (Lk 19:10). People do run out of wine, out of joy and celebration. Humanity needs divine intervention. We can’t replenish ourselves. We’ve tried.

*Yet another mass shooting. This time in Virginia Beach. Twelve dead. Others injured. Countless others traumatized, and even more in grief. These aren’t foreign terrorists. They aren’t immigrants. If they are mentally ill, why have the mentally ill started killing innocent people? Why are we so unsafe in schools and businesses, government buildings and airplanes, and even in places of worship? How did we get here? Where are we going? When did the wine run out? Little did Mary know how desperately the world would come to need this miracle of Christ.*

*It’s the way Jesus did this that makes it more than just a miracle.* After Mary sets it up, Jesus tells the servants to fill six stone jars with water. These weren’t your everyday water jars. They were used for *Jewish rites for purification*. This is ritualistic water! To be clean was a requirement to be in relationship with God.

There’s a passage in Mark where the Pharisees confront Jesus because his disciples don’t follow these rules.

… ‘*they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them.*’ *(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; ‘and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.*). Mark 7:2-4
What Jesus does here is intentional. There was at least 150 gallons of water in those six stone pots, and the servants filled them to the brim. So, nothing could have been added. No tricks. And Jesus worked through the ritual of cleansing to make a statement. “I will make you clean!”

He filled the pots with wine. There was no water left in the pots for purification. You don’t need it anymore. Not that we all shouldn’t be clean, but that Christ came to cleanse us of our sin, to renew us to God, to replenish what is empty. Mere rituals can’t do that. Rules and regulations can’t do that. He does that!

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Shakespeare’s Lady MacBeth murders King Duncan and her hands are covered in his blood. She casually remarks, “A little water clears us of this deed.” But nothing could be further from the truth. She becomes obsessed with washing her hands, even in her sleep, but to no avail. The guilt remains. She can’t wash it out. Nor can we.

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Jesus replaced our failed attempts to cleanse ourselves. This is a statement of extravagance, excess, abundance, grace, celebration and joy! It’s not really about the wine…or even the wedding. It’s about who he is. It’s about why he came.

Later in John’s Gospel, Jesus says, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (10:10b). This miracle, or sign, is bigger than that wedding. It sends a powerful message to the world, for all generations, as to who Christ is, and who we can become. There are no pots of purification. Mere human endeavors to cleanse us of our sin are inadequate. Christ alone is adequate. The wine is in him. The hope of life is in him. The abundance is in him. Mary knew that! Maybe that’s why she said, “It all begins here, at a wedding, in Cana of Galilee!” You should always listen to your mother!

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So, we come to the Table of Christ. Bread and wine! As a Methodist, I grew up saying a prayer at communion known as The Prayer of Humble Access. It’s found in Anglican and other Christian liturgies.

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy. So, feed us with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, your Son, that we may forever live in him and he in us.

Was Jesus trying to impress us with his power, or just replenishing wine at someone’s wedding? Maybe he was doing something else, giving the world The Good Wine,

...so that we may forever live in him and he in us!
Grant us to drink of this wine, O Lord.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Congregation: Amen