

Sermon Text: John 2:1-11 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.

Sermon Theme: As Jesus Manifests His Glory He Reveals Himself as our Best Friend

In the name of Jesus Christ, who is our best and kindest Friend, dear fellow redeemed;

In 1865, an Irishman named Joseph Scriven wrote a hymn for his mother to comfort her in times of sorrow. Through the words of this hymn Joseph reminded his mother of Jesus being the believer's Friend whom we can always look to and rely upon to supply needed comfort, strength, and help. With these words then he wrote of Jesus being our Friend:

What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and grief to bear!
What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a Friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness - Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our Refuge - Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.

(L.H. 457)

In the past, this hymn has been criticized by some as being "too much on the order of the sentimental gospel type." There is no question this Christian anthem appeals to human emotion. However, the emotions this hymn stirs up within us are not shallow, superficial or groundless. This hymn quite fittingly arouses the good and beneficial feelings of comfort, peace, hope, and joy, because it tells how Jesus is always there with us as our Friend. He is there to share our life's sorrows and provide us with the kind of help we need for our body and soul.

That Jesus is such a true and most helpful Friend is revealed in John's account of the wedding feast in Cana. From our childhood training in Sunday School we remember hearing of Jesus and His disciples attending a Jewish wedding as invited guests. What stands out about this joyous event is Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine so that there would be an adequate supply for the week long celebration. At the conclusion of this account, John points out that this was the beginning of Jesus' miraculous signs which manifested His glory as the promised Lord and Christ.

The glory of Jesus which shines forth in this event sheds light on a number of truths about this wonderful Friend who is our Lord and God. It shows Jesus' willingness to join us in our life's experiences, sharing with us our joys, as well as our sorrows. It reveals His love and compassion toward us in our earthly needs. It gives evidence of His great wisdom to know what and when our needs should be supplied. And it finally demonstrates His great power to help us in any and every situation of life.

When Jesus accepted the invitation to attend this marriage service and the wedding banquet that followed, His very presence tells us He took a personal interest in this important event for this couple. This was the special occasion of God uniting the couple together in the holy estate of matrimony. Jesus also shared their joys, rejoicing with them over the blessings God would give them through this sacred union.

This is just one of countless occasions Jesus has been present to share with us and all other brothers and sisters in the Lord our joys, joining us in rejoicing over the good times, the blessings and triumphs in life. Whatever the event, occasion or experience of life Jesus is ever at hand taking a personal and active interest in our lives.

Besides the joyous events, Jesus is also acquainted with our human experiences that are not so happy. An example of this is the time when Lazarus, Jesus' dear friend, was gravely ill with an affliction that led to his death. As Jesus came to Bethany and found Lazarus' sisters and others weeping, He also wept. He wept, because He shared with them the sorrow caused by being physically separated from loved ones through death.

Jesus is fully acquainted with all the various adverse feelings we experience in this sin-cursed world. He knows exactly what those feelings are like, because He has personally experienced them all. How can we make this claim? In the book of Isaiah where it speaks of Jesus' substitutionary work as our Savior, the prophet reveals that Jesus was a man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief, bearing in His person all our griefs and carrying all our sorrows. When the heavenly Father laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all to atone for our sins, Jesus experienced everyone's feelings of fear, guilt, sorrow, pain, and all that which comes as a consequence of sin in this world. So then, when we experience the ill affects of life, we can know with absolute certainty Jesus knows fully what we are going through.

During those times of life that bring either joy or sadness, would that we would always realize Jesus is ever there for us as our Friend. Would that we always be moved to cast all our burdens and cares upon Him through prayer and be ready to listen to His divine counsel and invite Him to be a guest in our daily lives as did the wedding couple in their time of joy and the sisters of Lazarus at a time of sickness, pain, and sorrow. We have often times needlessly missed out on experiencing a blessed life of communion with Jesus, because we have not always realized His presence or looked to Him as our best and kindest Friend. As Christians who have come to know Jesus as our greatest Friend, we want to invite Him to have a share in our personal life and our family life, whether at home or at work or at play.

This very special guest at the wedding in Cana was not an unfeeling, idle bystander who had no concern about the special needs that arose. As a true Friend of the married couple, when the wedding banquet ran out of wine, Jesus was sympathetic and took a personal interest in the predicament. Judging by the circumstances recorded in John's gospel it would appear that the family, which was putting on the wedding banquet, could ill afford more wine for the celebration that was to continue on for a number of days. While this shortage did not present a serious problem with grave consequences, nevertheless it would have put a damper on what was to be a joyous celebration. And Jesus' response to this minor need reveals Him as a Friend who is lovingly and compassionately concerned about every aspect of human need.

That wonderful characteristic of compassion, which is an essential element in a true friend, was ever to be found with Jesus when He was confronted by the many and various needs of the people. This friendly attitude is said of Jesus repeatedly when He beheld the human needs of those who were physically afflicted, hungry, poor, oppressed, and spiritually tormented, lost, or forlorn. Scripture reveals that it is because of the Lord's compassion that is new every morning that we are not consumed on account of our transgressions, but instead are shown mercy. It was on account of Jesus' spirit of compassion that He has shown Himself to be our best Friend by laying down His life for our salvation.

Jesus' mother Mary came to the realization that Jesus is our best Friend in time of need, for when the celebrants ran out of wine, she came to Jesus with the problem. She had the confidence that Jesus would be both willing and able to remedy the shortage of wine.

Jesus responded to Mary by saying, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." This rather curt sounding reply was not an utter rejection to help the wedding couple. What it does reveal is that Jesus found it necessary to gently rebuff Mary, for it appears she was giving Him instruction as His mother just like she had been accustomed to do during the years Jesus was growing up in their home in Nazareth. But when Jesus began His ministry, Mary's role as an authority figure in Jesus' life came to an end.

It is vain and even wrong for people to think Mary even now has a special in or influence on Jesus so that they feel compelled to bring petitions to her in order to intercede for them with Jesus. Mary's request of Jesus at the wedding feast was on the same level as any sinner coming to Jesus with a petition. And the Bible clearly teaches we have a direct channel open to us with our best Friend Jesus Christ when the need arises to bring our requests and supplications to Him. Jesus invites us to come and speak directly to Him when we are burdened and heavy laden. And He assures us that whatever we ask of Him in accordance to His will He will grant it to us.

Jesus' remark, "My hour has not yet come," gave an indication that He would determine according to His wisdom the appropriate time and manner in which to respond to the need that arose at the wedding feast. Mary in turn willingly accepted what Jesus had to say to her, knowing Jesus would help out in His time and in His way. And so she gave instruction to the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do. Mary's humble acceptance and confidence in Jesus' divine wisdom to know best when and how to remedy the problem of the people provides us with a good example of how we ought to wait on Jesus after we have brought our prayers and petitions to Him.

May God preserve us from the folly of thinking we always know what is best and of neglecting to take into account the Lord's all-knowing wisdom. This kind of thinking can only set us up to conclude that Jesus is not such a good Friend if He doesn't give us what we ask of Him or grant it to us when we think it ought to be. When we consider that our whole life and yes even the whole world is under the governance of the all-wise God who by His almighty power created

all things and in whose hands everything consists, how can there be any question or doubt in our minds about the Lord's wisdom in His dealings with our lives.

That Jesus possesses the power to master every situation or predicament that arises which is beyond our control was clearly demonstrated in His miraculous act of turning water into wine. While we are subject to the laws of nature, nature on the other is always subject to the divine will and almighty power of God. And in this particular instance Jesus suspended and superceded the laws of nature by miraculously changing about 90 gallons of water into the finest wine served at that wedding banquet.

The gospel accounts in the New Testament Scripture are filled with examples of people coming to Jesus with all kinds of problems which only Jesus had the power to remedy. There were individuals afflicted with blindness, deafness, physical paralysis, leprosy, demon possession, along with many other kinds of ailments. Jesus even restored life to loved ones who had died. In every instance there wasn't a single problem Jesus couldn't help with.

What a Friend we have in Jesus, for we can go to Him with any kind of problem of life and know that there is nothing too hard or too difficult for Him to help us with. Knowing this, we can cast all our cares and burdens upon Him as He has instructed us to do and confidently trust that He will help us according to His gracious will and eternal purpose.

The evangelist John reports that when the disciples witnessed this miraculous sign, it served to strengthen their faith in Jesus. May the message we receive from this account serve to strengthen our faith in the blessed truth that Jesus is our best and kindest Friend who will ever help us and love us to the end. Amen.