

Miracle at Cana – Part II
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 2:1-12
March 6, 2011

Looking again at the first section of the second chapter, John 2:1-12, the miracle at Cana of Galilee. We see in this passage how important it is that we interpret the Scriptures carefully, that we let the text set the agenda. So often we go to the text with our own agenda, our own questions, and we ask the wrong questions and we cannot get the right answers. If we look for what the text is telling us, then we find why the Spirit inspired the words. That is the point of Bible study and the point of teaching, and preaching, is to let the text speak, let it make its claims on our lives. We began looking at this last time, and we started with the five W's and an H. The *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?* Last time we got through *When? Where? What?* and *How?* This morning we want to look at *Who?* and *Why?* so that we can finish observing this passage, and see what it has, all that it has for us.

When noted last time that *When?* it told us right at the beginning that it is on the third day after Jesus' encounter with Nathanael, and His words to Nathanael that the Son of Man will be Jacob's ladder. The angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man as a reference to Genesis 28, to Jacob's ladder, the place where Heaven's fullness meets earth's need. Jesus is saying, "The Son of Man, My ministry, is about that. It is about bringing the fullness and the infinite resources of Heaven to your poverty." The junction point is the Son of Man Himself, it is Jesus Christ.

The *Where?* we noted that it was at a wedding, and we noted that that immediately tells us how different John the Baptist's ministry was from Jesus'. Jesus, at a wedding, celebrating, the Son of Man with the people, entering into our experience. We know that it was profoundly important that His first miracle happens there.

What? They were short on wine, they were out of wine. That was the problem that had presented itself, and we'll read it again in a moment. So that Jesus provides wine at the wedding. That is the *What?*

We looked at *How?* How He responded to His mother's request and initiative. "I say My hour has not yet come," and then He supplied an extravagant and lavish amount of wine for the people at the wedding. We saw that this was about not the wine, that isn't the issue, it was about Jesus being the bridegroom, Jesus being the

one who supplies the joy of which wine represents that in the Bible, 252 times where wine is translated in the New American Standard Bible. Psalm 104:15 points out that the Lord gives wine to gladden our hearts. That is what the Old Testament, the basic message, though certainly there are the warnings in Scripture about the overuse of it. The first instance of it being in Noah's life. We need to be careful with it, but God has given it for joy. That is the picture of the Old Testament, that in this fallen world we, encountering the effects of sin, and death, and destruction, God gave this as an alleviation of that in some sense, to give joy to fallen men. But Jesus says, "I have come to give you true joy." When you really understand who Jesus is and what He brings, wine is secondary and unnecessary because Jesus is the fulfillment. He is the bridegroom. So it is all about joy. It is about the character of His ministry. When we understand that it means that Christians are to be characterized by joy, that we are to be known by our happiness in God. To encounter Jesus is not merely to believe facts about Him, but to encounter Jesus is to enter into the experience of Him. It is not to ascent intellectually to propositions. It is that, remember, we've made clear that there must be propositional truths about Jesus. You don't believe into some mystical abstraction, you believe into a real, historical person and facts about Him. Yes, but it is not merely facts. We enter into an experience of His person, and His work. We connect to Him. It is a living, organic relationship and it should have impact on us. We begin to abide in a vine, John 15.

So to come to Christ is to be, in the words of C.S. Lewis, in his biographical sketch of his life which he describes how he came to Christ. Lewis was a brilliant Oxford scholar, an atheist, who in examining the truths of Scripture came to accept that Jesus, though he had been an atheist, Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. He titled his intellectual quest that had begun, his search for God. Is it logical? Is it right? He was thinking like that and he investigated the evidence, looked at the Scriptures, and he was converted. Listen to how he titled his biography: Surprised by Joy. What he found was not just accepting intellectual propositions, it was to encounter joy itself. That's a good title for really this passage of Scripture in this two part series of messages—'Surprised by Joy'.

Last time, as we looked at those first four questions *When? Where? What? and How?* we really kind of looked at the arrival of joy. When we look at *Who?* and *Why?* I think we're looking today more at the experience of joy, how we come to experience joy. Surprised by joy, the experience of joy. Let's read again this passage, John 2:1:

*John 2:1-12 ~ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus *said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus *said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother *said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." 6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus *said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He *said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him. 9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter *called the bridegroom, 10 and *said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. 12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.*

Let's pray.

Father, as we come to You, before this passage, we are mindful of our complete dependence upon Your grace. If we are to understand, Lord, You must reveal. If we are to be changed, Lord, You must act. So we ask that You would. We are thankful that, as we read earlier from Your word, that Your invitation has always come, and so Lord we come. We are thirsty and we ask that You might satisfy our hearts with a vision of the glory of Your Son. We pray in His name, amen.

The words are a familiar refrain to a song that we sing at Christmastime, we hear during the holidays. This refrain of that song, 'Mary Did You Know?'. *Mary did you know that your baby boy would someday walk on water? Mary did you know that He would heal our sons and daughters? Did you know?* That is really part of what is going on in this passage is how much did Mary know? And what did she know? And what we see in the passage is that she did understand some things, but she was clearly mistaken about something and was reproved by the Lord. She had much to learn. I can kind of understand that would be the way it would be. I mean, she understood a lot. She had treasured up the things in her heart that she had seen from Jesus' birth. The wonder of the angel appearing to her. Joseph's encounter

with the angel Gabriel as well. The birth and the shepherds showing up telling Joseph and Mary the glory that they had seen in that field out from Bethlehem. The wise men showing up months later, Magi, and bowing down to worship the One who was born King of the Jews. Of course before that, they took Jesus to the temple for purification. There Anna and Simeon, these aged, a prophetess and a prophet, separately come up, recognize the child, and prophesy over the child. “This was the One. This is the One I’ve been waiting for,” Simeon said. “Lord, now I can die in peace, for I have beheld Your salvation.” She treasured all of those things up in her heart. So in this moment, we understand that she definitely has a significant understanding of the importance of Jesus and who He is, and yet we see in this passage that she had much to learn. She didn’t yet know what she must come to know.

Rightly understood, this passage does the opposite of what the Catholic Church has let it do. This passage has been used by the Roman Catholic Church to teach the dogma that Mary is co-redemptrix. I mentioned this last time, but we’re going to deal more directly with the reputation of that today. They look at this passage and they say, “Don’t you see Mary starts Jesus’ ministry? Don’t you see she recognized the need, and she goes to Him and Jesus needed to be nudged out into His ministry? There He was distracted, insensitive, but it was Mary. Mary is the one who saw the need and came to the rescue.” So now, you are encouraged to pray to Mary because she can get His ear. “You see, Jesus is too distracted, too busy running the world, but Mary, Mary can relate. She is a wonderful mediatrix.” That is the doctrine. What a heinous, blasphemous doctrine that is. Completely misses the point. Completely misunderstands what this passage is even saying. It is 180 degrees out of phase. This passage is not elevating Mary, this passage is humbling Mary. It shows that when you come to the text with an agenda, you can read whatever you want to. I mean, Satan is a master user of Bible text. How did he tempt Jesus? With Scripture! Inappropriately interpreted. So we must be careful to interpret the Bible the way it ought to be interpreted. Let the text set the agenda. When you let the text set the agenda, you don’t come away from this passage thinking Mary is anything like a mediator. You come away understanding that Mary needs to be saved every bit as much as you and I need to be saved. That is the point of the passage. What she didn’t know was that she had developed a wrong understanding of Jesus. In fact, let’s get back to the questions. We looked already at *When? Where? What? and How?*

Who? The question is: *Who?* It is right to notice the prominence of the mother of Jesus in the passage. Clearly, she is important in the passage. Three different times she is referred to as Jesus' mother. It is interesting, never as Mary actually in the passage. Verse 1:

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

Verse 3.

John 2:3 ~ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus *said to Him, "They have no wine."

Verse 5.

John 2:5 ~ His mother *said to the servants,...

Never 'Mary', always 'His mother'. Why is that? It seems to be emphasizing the relationship, doesn't it? It is not so important that we see Mary, and her as a person, as much as we see the relationship. That's interesting. The mother of Jesus. When we see that, the threefold reference to her as mother, what immediately jumps out at us is Jesus' reply in Verse 4. Because the mother of Jesus, in Verse 3 says to Him, "They have no wine." But how does Jesus reply to her? He doesn't say 'Mom'. He says, "**Woman, what does that have to do with us?**" Now this is a twofold, two-part distancing of Jesus from Mary. He is creating distance between Himself and her. He is not treating her with disrespect or dishonor because that would be sin, and it is unthinkable for Jesus to sin, and this clearly isn't. For Him to say 'Woman', it is a little hard for us to translate this. If I were to say 'Woman', or you were to say 'Woman', it is just not the way we speak in our context. 'Woman', right? The NIV, I think, gets closer with 'Dear Woman'. Now that is more of kind of the idea, because the term Jesus used was a respectful term that you would use to someone that you might not know.

You know, maybe in the south it is like 'Ma'am'. You know, you are taught as a southern boy, I grew up in this area. You are taught that you are to call everyone 'Ma'am' that might possibly be older than you, right? It even happens when they are younger than you. I find myself saying 'Ma'am' to people. The lady at the checkout, "Ma'am, can I borrow a pen." I don't say, "Hey, you!" Right? 'Ma'am', that is kind of what is going on here. It is something close to that, "Ma'am, what does this have to do with us?" That's extraordinary and it is significant. It is the same term Jesus uses in John 19 when hanging on the cross, He looks at His

mother, and He looks at John, and He says, “Woman, behold your Son. Son, behold your mother.” But Jesus speaks to Mary as *‘Woman’*, not as *‘Mother’*. What we see is that He is careful to maintain distance, and what’s happening here is I think Mary comes, I don’t think she is definitely expecting a miracle either. This is Jesus’ first miracle. But can you imagine being the mother of Jesus? What better Son to have. Even when He is not doing His miracles, He is always able to know what is best to do. He’s always able to be resourceful. Apparently, her husband Joseph has died. There is no reference to him in the story, and most theologians and interpreters think Joseph has gone on to be with God. So her oldest Son is the one that she looks to and leans on, as any woman does, and for 30 years that has been the nature of their relationship.

In fact, if you look at the history of how things unfold, when you read Luke 2, I mentioned earlier, remember how Mary had all these things treasured up in her heart? One of the things that Luke says she treasured up in her heart was what happened when Jesus was 12 years old. Remember when they had been on a trip to Jerusalem, and they were on the way back, and there was a caravan of people making their way back to Nazareth from Jerusalem? They decide, they suddenly realize that Jesus isn’t in the caravan. Something has happened. They realize He is not here and they run back to Jerusalem looking for Him, and they find Him where? In the temple, disputing with the Pharisees. Basically teaching the Pharisees. This 12-year-old boy, who were marveling at His understanding. There is a reproof from the parents. “Were You not thinking about us? I mean, didn’t You understand we would be worried about You?” And Jesus said, “Did you not understand? I had to be about My Father’s business.” Some translations say, “I had to be in My Father’s house,” but literally, “I had to be in the things of My Father.” Now that should have already been telling her who is setting His agenda—the Father.

When you read John 5, if you think that you need to get to Mary to get to Jesus, just read John 5. He says, “The things that the Father tells Me to do, that is what I do.” There is no reference to His mother directing Him, or giving Him any insight, or help. Jesus is in communion with the Father! That doctrine would never have come up from reading the Bible, and it didn’t. It came up outside of the Bible from some satanic strategy to pervert the Bible and it was read into the text, not lifted out of the passage. But it says after He said that, “Didn’t you know I’d be about My Father’s business?” “She treasured these things up in her heart.” It also says that Jesus went home, in Luke 2, I think it is Verse 50, “and He lived in subjection to them.” Then it goes on to say, “And He grew in stature and in favor with God and man.” But He lived in subjection to them. He lived as a Son obeying His

parents. Now think, you are His mom. “Jesus, carry out the trash.” He carries out the trash, no complaining. “Jesus, Honey, I need You to do this.” “Sure, Mom,” and He does it. Joseph dies and now Jesus is no longer the Son of the carpenter, He is the carpenter providing for the family. He is the One taking care of the family’s needs and taking care of her as a good Son ought to do who is living as He should before His parents.

Then His ministry is inaugurated with His baptism. He begins to call His disciples to Himself. He has five disciples at this point. Three days after His last disciple is called, Nathanael. I mean two days, the third day after. They are at this wedding in Cana of Galilee and she comes to Him with a need for wine. An embarrassing situation, the bridegroom is out of wine. This is not good, this is a social faux pas of the highest order. In a time of great celebration and great joy is about to be drug down and so she naturally goes to the One that she normally would go to. There is nothing essentially wrong in her motivation at first. She goes to the One who has the resources, who has the ability to know what to do. “How can we salvage this situation?” But she must understand that something radical has happened. He is now no longer her Son. If she is to relate to Him from this point forward, she must come on her knees. He is her Lord. That is what is happening. “Woman, what is this to you and Me.” *‘Woman’* itself, distances.

To just show how this is true, and how this is so clear in the New Testament, if you looked at Luke 8:19-21, you might make a reference to that, the parallel is in Mark 3:31-35, and Matthew 12:46-50. But Luke 8:19-21, the author Luke tells us that Jesus’ mother and brothers come to see Him. The disciples go to Jesus and say, “Master, Your mother and Your brothers are here.” What does He say? “Who is My mother and who are My brothers, but the One who does the will of God?” Do you see that? He is saying, “It is no longer about my earthly relationships, that they cannot depend on their earthly relationships to Me. They must come to Me in the context of Me as Son of Man, as the One that I’ve come to be—Messiah! They must think they come to Me on some kind of inside track. Everyone must come the same way, on their knees repenting and believing.” He is lovingly shepherding her soul in this reproof. He can’t even use the word *‘Mother’*, He has to say this *‘Woman’* so that she will hear.

There is a sense in which I think He’s even preparing her for the cross. I mean, how it must have broken her heart to see her Son hanging there. But even from the cross He doesn’t say, “Mother,” He says, “Woman.” It is the Son of God loving her soul, and not letting anything get in the way of her salvation. *Her* salvation. She needs to be saved every bit as much as you and I, every bit as sinful as you and

me. Nothing in the Bible would give any other impression than that, and certainly Jesus' response, if the Catholic doctrine were right, would be inappropriate. If she was some kind of mediatrix that needed to nudge Him along, He would not have spoken to her this way. But He says, "Woman," for a reason.

And then the second part, "Woman, what is this to you and Me?" Literally, "What to Me and to you?" This is a phrase that is used throughout the Old Testament, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, when you look at, it's called the *Septuagint*. Remember the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but it was translated because so many people were speaking Greek, so many of the Jews were speaking Greek, in the 2nd Century B.C., they translated it into Greek, the Old Testament. When you look at, there are five different places where this exact phrase is used. "What to you and to Me?" Judges 11:12, Jephthah says to the King of the Ammonites, Jephthah a judge, appointed by God to deliver Israel from the Ammonites says, "What to you and to me?" "Why are you messing with me?" That is what he is saying to the Ammonites. It is always a term of rebuke.

David to his mighty men in 2 Samuel 16:10 when Shimei, the descendent of Saul, comes up and curses David. Remember? He comes up and curses one of his mighty men. He does what he thinks would be the right thing. He says, "Why is this dog allowed to speak to you? Let me cut him down." And David says, "What is it to you and me?" The same exact phrase. "Why are you speaking to me like that?" He says, "Why are you speaking to me like that?" because God has appointed him to do this. "Don't cut him down." It is a rebuke again.

1 Kings 17:18, the widow of Zarephath comes to Elijah after her son has died and basically says, "What is this to you and me? Why has my son died? You came into my house. I'm providing for you and now my son is dead. Did you come here to just curse me?" Obviously, she's not understanding correctly, but her intention was to reprove him. "What are you doing to me?"

2 Kings 3:13, Jehoram, the wicked King of Israel, the son of Ahab. Prompted by Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, calls Elisha. Jehoshaphat says, "Well, we need to call a prophet of God. You've got all these prophets of Baal, I don't want to hear from them. I want to hear from a prophet of God. Can you find one?" Jehoram, who never had called on Elisha. Somebody says, "We can call Elisha. Call him in." Elisha, to that wicked king, the son of Ahab, says, "What to you and to me? What do you have to do with me?"

You find the same thing in 2 Chronicles 35:21, this time on the lips of Pharaoh Neco, to Josiah. Josiah, the godly king, makes the mistake of attacking the Egyptians. In his joy and pride over what God is doing, and the revival that is happening to Israel, he doesn't realize the Lord is at work in Neco's battle with the Babylonians, and he goes out and tries to intercept Neco on his way to fight the Babylonians. Pharaoh Neco says to him, "What is it to you and me? What are you doing? Why are you fighting me? Go home!" Josiah continues and disguises himself so he won't know where he is, and then he is shot by a lone arrow and dies.

All five times there is rebuke. What is happening here is Jesus sees her heart. He sees her heart, He sees that she is looking to impose upon Him as a mother, a Son, and if it were a normal relationship it would be okay, but here it cannot be abided. I mean, Jesus knows what is in her heart perfectly. In fact, John 2:25, look at this. The next section we are going to look at. Verse 24:

John 2:24-25 ~ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

He knows the heart. He knew what was in Nathanael's heart. He knows what is in Mary's heart and He knows what she needs. So He is telling her, "You must no longer see Me as your Son. You must no longer think of Me as your Son. You must think of Me, if you are to be with Me, as your Lord." So He is calling for submission to His Lordship. Every claim that she might make must be laid down, and she must come empty-handed to Christ as Savior and Lord. So in this way, Mary is actually, understood rightly, is a wonderful model of how we enter into joy, how we enter into salvation, how we enter into the joy of Messiah. We must renounce every claim, we must renounce ourselves, we must renounce everything that we are, and we must come on our knees to Christ. Submission. If you are to be saved, you must submit. There is no salvation without submission. To come to Jesus you must come to Him as Lord and that is what we see, wonderfully modeled out by this woman, who truly, rightly understood, is a great example of faith, a great example of godliness. Thankfully there is no sorrow in Heaven, but if Mary were alive today, she would be most grieved over all that has happened in her name because it detracts from her Lord.

Submission, but you also see in her response, not just submission, but faith. Faith that lays hold of the promises. That rebuke comes out, "Woman, what does this have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." She takes the rebuke, receives

that, and then in humility says to the servants, no longer telling Jesus anything, “Whatever He says to you do it.” In other words, “If He tells you to do nothing, okay. If He tells you to do something, do what He says. All I can do is surrender to Him and trust Him.” And what you have here is the flip side of salvation and submission. Now you have trust, absolute trust. She’s trusting in His goodness. “He’s seen the need, He knows what the situation is, and I trust Him completely.”

This is faith. This is saving faith. Isn’t it interesting Jesus often in His ministry, when you read the gospels carefully, you find Him again and again testing people’s faith. Remember the woman who comes to Him, the Syrophenician woman who comes to Him and asks for a blessing, and He says to her, “Woman, why should I take what is holy and give it to the dogs?” What an amazing thing to say. I mean, here she is wanting to be saved, but He puts that obstacle in front of her so that He can prove her faith and help her to truly believe, and then to be an example of what true faith is.

What does she say after that? She says, “Yes, Lord, I understand that I’m just a dog. I understand that, but even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table. I just want a crumb,” and He marveled. The scripture says He marveled at her faith. “That’s the kind of faith I’m looking for. That’s it.” And Mary models this out right here. “Whatever He says to you do it.” She has submitted and she has surrendered, and she is trusting. And to be saved, what has to happen is we have to submit and surrender and trust, and when that happens we enter into joy. That’s why the *Who?* is prominent here to show us the path of salvation. Submission and trust, if you want to be saved, you must submit to Christ. You must surrender and you must trust Him. Know that He’s good, know that He’s loving, know that He’s merciful, and surrender yourself to Him. That is *Who?*

The next question we need to ask of the text is: *Why?* Why did God choose for this to be Jesus’ first sign, His first miracle? I mean, think about that again. Why is this the first miracle? We talked about this briefly last time and we need to deal with this more fully right now. Why is this, the changing of water into wine, about joy, why is this the first miracle? Now, remember the way Jesus had redirected Nathanael’s praise. When Nathanael praises Him in the last chapter, immediately preceding these verses and says, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel,” how did Jesus respond? “You will see greater things than these, Nathanael. You will see the heavens opened and the angels ascending and descending on...” not the Son of God, not the King of Israel, but who? The Son of Man.

The Lord chooses this title because it emphasizes His full humanity. He is the Son of Man. It does have that overtone of deity from Daniel 7, but it's a term which can be developed out and shown to be filled up with meaning as Jesus walks through His ministry. But Son of Man means He is fully human. He's fully entering into our experience, and He knows that His life will be filled with suffering. His earthly ministry will be characterized by sorrow which will increase in intensity until it climaxes on the cross. That's the way the Son of Man is going to walk.

This is why Isaiah, in prophesying of Jesus 700 years before His birth, says, "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Surely He has born our griefs. He has carried our sorrows. We esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God." Isaiah says, "He turned away from Him." So the Son of Man has come to be a man of great sorrow. He has come to be a man who will experience incredible suffering, increasing rejection, increasing opposition, increasing hatred, increasing rage against His person and work, climaxing in the murderous outcries, "Crucify Him!" That is going to be hard for them to understand in itself, and it's going to be overwhelming, and it's because the Lord understands our weakness and frailty that He starts off with the end at the beginning. He says, "I want you to understand when you walk with Me, disciples, through these paths, when you walk with Me, Christians, through the paths, the valleys of sorrow, and difficulty, and affliction, realize that I am the One who has come to give unspeakable joy. You need to know that right at the beginning. You need to understand that I am the One that brings in Messianic joy, overflowing joy."

The ultimate character and purpose of Jesus' ministry as Messiah is He is the Bridegroom, and the Bridegroom brings in unbridled joy. To a joyless Judaism of the first century, He comes and He lavishes joy on her at this miracle at Cana, because that's the character of His ministry. Here's the Bridegroom whose ministry is radically different from all who have gone before Him, and most notably different from that of His immediate predecessor John the Baptist. John would not have been at a wedding, would not have drunk wine. I mean, John the Baptist had taken the vow of a Nazarite, a lifetime vow of the Nazarite, never to let wine touch his lips, to live a life of separation and fasting and denial of self. That's why Jesus in Matthew 11:18-19 is continually calling out the differences between John's ministry and His own. He says in Matthew 11:18, "John came not eating and not drinking, and you said he has a demon. The Son of Man comes eating and drinking and you say He is a glutton and a drunkard." The Son of Man did not have the vow of the Nazarite. He comes living in the fullness of the experience of the Jews.

This is why another time, remember, earlier in the same gospel, Matthew 9:14, the disciples of John come to Jesus and say, “Hey, why are we fasting and Your disciples aren’t fasting? I mean, we’re really serious about God, the disciples of John over here, and we just want to know why Your guys are such lightweights.” On the surface of it, I think any of us would think, “Now, that’s pretty impressive. Why are Your guys not fasting? Jesus, I think you need to pick them up and nudge them along.” He says, “When you have the Bridegroom with you, it is not a time for fasting.” They were not to fast when the Bridegroom is with them. He’s saying, “The character of My ministry is I am the Bridegroom gathering my bride. This is a time of unparalleled joy,” but then He’s walking the way of sorrow. What an astonishing reality.

That’s why this first miracle is so important, because we’re going to see sorrow, after sorrow, after sorrow. We’re going to read John 6, and we’re going to see after He performs the great miracle of feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, then He’s going to say, “I am the Bread of life,” in the shadow of that miracle. When He heals the blind man in John 9, right after He said, “I am the Light of the world,” do you see His miracles that John chooses to tell us about are almost all metaphors? They really happened but in the providence of God, they happened to tell us something about who Jesus is and what He does.

In John 6, though, when He says, “I am the Bread of life,” He’s immediately rejected by the people, because they come out and they’re basically wanting another miracle, and they say, “Hey, we’re hungry again. Come on. See what You can do with one loaf and one fish.” That’s not what they say exactly, but they want to see another miracle, and Jesus said, “You came out to seek to get bread?” He was grieved in His heart. They’re totally misunderstanding, and He says, “Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood you have no part in Me.” John records that those who had been following Him said, “This is a hard saying,” and many departed, and the crowds left Him. And Jesus, feeling the anguish and sorrow of seeing so many reject Him, looks at His own disciples and says, “Will you too desert Me?”

That’s the path He walked. The initial popularity was only a surface popularity. There were very few who received Him. John had told us this in the first chapter, didn’t he? When we read Chapter 1, the prologue, “He came to His own and His own did not receive Him.” He was rejected, despised, and because we would be prone just to see all of the bad stuff, because there’s something about fallen men is we zoom in on the bad stuff, He starts off and says that the first thing you need to know is He has come as the dispenser, the originator, the source of joy

unspeakable, and He's full of glory. Know that right up front. 120 to 180 gallons of wine He makes. 600 to 900 bottles of wine in the setting according to the head waiter of the people who had already drank enough. It's not about them having more wine. The point is, "Look what I have come to bring, an abundance, a super-abundance over and above and beyond abundance of joy, and know this at the beginning, because as you walk with Me, you will see Me experience unimaginable sorrow."

What we see in this is that Jesus Himself, remember He's the intersection of heaven's abundance and earth's need? He's also the intersection in an unbelievably profound way of indescribable joy and unimaginable sorrow. Jesus is the intersection point. Why? Because He had to be. If He was going to be our effectual High Priest, the one who brings us back to God, He has to enter fully into our sorrow so that He can lift us up into His joy. He descends down in the depths of human misery so that He can transport us up to the heights of divine bliss. The very heart of joy and the overflowing ecstatic union of the Trinity, that's what we're destined for, a joy that is bubbling up out of God every moment and has been for all eternity—communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this joyful, wondrous experience of happiness that goes on flowing like a fountain, that's what He's taking us to, but to do that, He had to come down into the dregs and depth of our misery. He'd experience the intensity of our sorrow.

We read earlier from Hebrews 2. The author of Hebrews does such a great exposition of Jesus as our High Priest. In that Verse we read earlier in Hebrews 2:10, look at the parallel here in bringing the contrast:

Hebrews 2:10 ~ ...in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

To take us to glory He had to suffer. ***...to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.*** To take us to glory He had to suffer.

Hebrews 2:17 ~ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

He's experienced every sorrow that you and I have ever experienced. In fact, let me tell you this. It is without doubt and clear from the scriptures that any sorrow that you will ever find yourself in, Jesus has experienced at a greater magnitude than you could ever imagine. Whatever it is, He has experienced it. The only thing He hasn't experienced is His own personal sin, but there on the cross, even that, He bore our guilt. It wasn't His guilt but He bore the anguish of your guilt. There is nothing that you can experience that He has not experienced to a greater measure. So you find yourself walking in the valley, and what do we find in this world? We find sorrow. Isn't it true? It's almost like it's a world of sorrow with occasional experiences of momentary lapses where there's a little bit of joy. The longer you live you see that.

The kids are little and you're trying to keep them from hurting themselves, you know, and they fall and they really hurt themselves badly, and you're like it's something that hurts to see it. And one of the things that I remember feeling was they were so happy and things were so wonderful. This was so good, whatever it was, chasing a butterfly or whatever, and then bam, boom, their face is bleeding, and they're in incredible pain. What they're finding out is this is what this world is. I wish it weren't like that, but life is pain. In a fallen world life is pain. Life is sorrow, but in Christ we have One who understands, and we have One that when you go to Him, you go to the intersection. You go to the junction of indescribable joy and indescribable sorrow. He can meet you at your point and transport you to the bliss of Heaven. In Him you find both. Turn over to Hebrews 5:7. Look at the Man Christ Jesus:

Hebrews 5:7 ~ In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,...

He had to be perfected through sufferings. He had to experience every depth of human sorrow. He had to experience all of that and be the propitiation for sin so that He then could lift us up, but He went through the loud crying and the tears. This, I think, speaks uniquely or most specifically about Gethsemane, but I think it speaks about His whole life. I mean, think about the sorrow He experienced. This is where we fail to understand because we can't relate to what it must be like to be sinless. But think about Jesus.

I mean, He enters into this world. He is the eternal God. How profound must His experience be when He encounters the brokenness of sin? When He sees it up close, not experiencing it, but He sees the misery of human beings, and He who is joy itself encounters that. He who is love in its perfection experiences hatred. How profound must His experience of that be compared to us? When we are hated, we're hating ourselves. When somebody murders us with hurtful words, it's just one murderer murdering another filthy murderer, because you and I are murderers. But when He was murdered by people in their hatred, desiring to put Him to death, hating Him, He was love itself being murdered. He was joy itself experiencing sorrow. When He did not yield to temptation, He was righteousness itself fighting against sin. He was the pure of the pure of the pure fighting against filth. So He has felt everything you and I have felt with greater intensity in Himself. He comes to enter into our sorrow so He can lift us up to His joy.

Turn back over to John, and look how this remains a refrain of Jesus' ministry. Look at John 15. He's a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. Look at Verse 11 of John 15:

John 15:11 ~ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

"I'm a man of sorrows filled with joy, and I want your joy to be full. I want My joy to be in you."

John 16:24 ~ Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

"I want your joy to be full. You see, I am the One who's come to bring unbridled joy." Look at John 17:13 as He's praying to the Father. In the shadow of the cross, in the shadow of His deepest sorrow, what does He pray in Verse 13?

John 17:13 ~ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

He wants us to have unspeakable joy. That's why He came. He knows the reality of what we experience. He's not a Pollyanna God. He knows firsthand exactly what you're experiencing, and He said, "I want you in the midst of your overwhelming sorrow even to have unspeakable joy." And the reality is for those of you who know the Lord, isn't it true that where the greatest points of sorrow are, that is where the greatest wells of joy can spring up? It's there even in conversion.

When Jesus explains the way of salvation in Matthew 5 in His first sermon, “Oh how happy and blessed are...” who? “Those who mourn. Blessed are those who are overwhelmed with their spiritual poverty. Blessed are the poor in spirit.” What do the poor in spirit do? They mourn. They grieve. They’re filled with sorrow. “Blessed are those who are filled with sorrow.” Why? “Because they’ll be comforted.” When you mourn over your sins, you find Jesus, and you find His joy, and you find Him saying, “I have made you new. I have given you righteousness, the Gospel. I died in Your place. Your sins are covered. Come to Me and you will receive perfect righteousness.”

What is more wonderful than knowing the forgiveness of sins? And it continues to be that way throughout our Christian lives. You have to follow Mary’s example in the passage. Submit and trust. Again, and again, and again, submit and trust, and you will find joy. You will be surprised by joy in the most astonishing places. Others sin against us. Others do hurtful things to us. Others damage our reputation or say incredibly unkind things to us, and in that we’re tempted to bitterness. We’re tempted to harbor that offense and to nourish it in bitterness, but what does God say? He says, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God also in Christ has forgiven you.” He says, “Forgive each other and look at Jesus.” That’s what He says. That’s always the message. To overcome sin, look at Christ.

If you’re having trouble forgiving someone, look at Jesus and see how He forgave you, and this amazing wound that someone has done, stabbed you in the back, this betrayal, lifted their heel against you, is there anyone who understands that? There is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother. Judas lifted his heel against Jesus Christ. The one He had given bread to lifted his heel against Him. He knows about betrayal, and He who was the most worthy of loyalty. You and I aren’t worthy of loyalty. He was and He was betrayed. Forgive the one who’s betrayed you just as He forgave you, because you and I lifted our heels against Him as well.

When you see what your sin has done to One so lovely and so pure, then you’re to hate your sin and at the same time receive in joy of His forgiveness. He’s forgiven me so much. Suddenly that wound became an avenue to see His forgiveness again, and sorrow swallowed up my joy. No matter what circumstance you find yourself in—you’ve lost a loved one, you have experienced pain—He knows what it’s like. He was separated from His Father on the cross for you. He who was life saw death around Him. What a glorious Savior.

I mean, it's amazing how wonderful it is to see that every sorrow is an opportunity to enter into His joy, to know that one day it won't be like this, but to know even now it's not like this because I'm looking at Christ, I'm filled with His goodness, and if we are hated for His Name's sake, then we share in the fellowship of His sufferings, and that's where joy is. That's why Paul said, "That's what I want to do, that I may know Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. That's what I want," because it's in the valley where you find Jesus, and you see how wondrous a Savior He is.

So, Lord, if that's the case, Lord, take me into the valley, because I want to see how precious my Savior is. He is the intersection of joy and sorrow. And that's the way it should be in our Christian lives. We should be people who are able to feel profound sorrow, to mourn with those that mourn, yet to rejoice with those who rejoice. I love what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:10 when he's talking about the different circumstances of his life, all of the pain of his life, yet the triumph that Christ has given him. He describes himself and those with him as sorrowful yet always rejoicing. That's our life. Sorrow swallowing up joy. A poet has written this about how sorrow finds joy and intersects in Jesus. He personifies sorrow and joy. Listen to this carefully:

Sorrow was beautiful, but her beauty was the beauty of the moonlight shining through the leafy branches of the tree in the wood, and making little pools of silver here and there on the soft green moss below. When Sorrow sang, her notes were like the low sweet call of the nightingale, and in her eyes was the unexpectant gaze of one who has ceased to look for coming gladness. She could weep in tender sympathy with those who weep, but to rejoice with those who rejoice was completely unknown to her.

Joy was beautiful, too, but his was the radiant beauty of the summer morning. His eyes still held the glad laughter of childhood, and his hair had the glint of the sunshine's kiss. When Joy sang his voice soared upward as the lark's, and his step was the step of a conqueror who has never known defeat. He could rejoice with those who rejoice, but to weep with those who weep was unknown to him.

"But we can never be united," said Sorrow wistfully. "No, never," and Joy's eyes shadowed as he spoke. "My path lies through the sunlit meadows, the sweetest roses bloom for my gathering, and the blackbirds and thrushes await my coming to pour forth their most joyous songs."

"My path," said Sorrow, turning slowly away, "leads through the darkening woods. With moon-flowers only shall my hands be filled, yet the sweetest of all earth-songs—the love song of the night—shall be mine. Farewell, Joy, farewell."

Even as she spoke they became conscious of a form standing beside them, dimly seen, but of a Kingly Presence, and a great and holy awe stole over them as they sank on their knees before Him.

"I see Him as the King of Joy," whispered Sorrow, "for on His Head are many crowns, and the nail prints in His hands and feet are the scars of a great victory. Before Him all my sorrow is melting away into deathless love and gladness, and I give myself to Him forever."

"Nay, Sorrow," said Joy softly, "but I see Him as the King of Sorrow, and the crown on His head is a crown of thorns, and the nail prints in His hands and feet are the scars of a great agony. I, too, give myself to Him forever, for sorrow with Him must be sweeter than any joy that I have ever known."

"Then we are one in Him," they cried in gladness, "for none but He could unite Joy and Sorrow."

Jesus Christ—King of sorrow, King of joy, King of kings, and Lord of lords—what a wonderful Savior. Let's go to Him in prayer...

Our Father, we come before You in awe of Your great love with which You have loved us, that You would send Your Son into this world to save sinners like us who were in misery and... [audio cuts out here].

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.