

# Good Wine & the Grace of God

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] You're listening to a sermon recorded at Providence Community Church, Truth and Beauty in Community. If you are in the Kansas City area, please consider joining us in person next Sunday.

We meet in Lenexa, Kansas at 10 a.m. every Lord's Day. Until then, we pray that as you open your Bibles, the Lord will open your heart to receive His Word.

My name is Dov Cohen. I'm a pastor here at Providence, and I have the privilege of opening up God's Word for us. This morning, it's great to be with you all. It's great to see you all. And it's been a little bit since I had the opportunity to preach.

There's been just a few things happening in my life, not the least of which being the birth of my Christine's fifth child, Annalise. I'm grateful that she can be here this morning and that Christine's mother-in-law could be here, or mother, my mother-in-law could be here to hold Annalise during the sermon.

And so I also appreciate Chris giving me a little bit of a breather in my preaching schedule so that I could care for Christine and for my family well through this time of transition as we transition to a family of seven, which is just a blessing and just wonderful.

[ 1 : 0 8 ] So that being said, I'm super excited for today's message. We're going to be exploring Jesus' miracle at the wedding at Cana where He transforms water into wine, His first sign. His first sign in the book of John.

So to start, let me tell you a little story. It was the summer of 2003, and I had the privilege of traveling cross-country. My cousin, who was going to school in L.A. at the time, he was going to school there, so I flew from Philadelphia to the west coast, and we drove.

We drove from L.A. up the Oregon coast, or up the California coast to Oregon, and then we went back east to Philadelphia, and we drove.

And along the way, my cousin and I, we saw many incredible sights from the California coast to Glacier Lake to Yellowstone to a small drugstore in Wall, South Dakota.

Small drugstore in Wall, South Dakota, right outside the Badlands out there in South Dakota. Now, this drugstore itself, it seems that some of you guys have been there, have seen it.

[ 2 : 1 5 ] It's not so incredible in and of itself, but what I remember from visiting this drugstore was that for about, for miles, hundreds of miles, there were signs advertising this drugstore, pointing to this drugstore, grabbing our attention, and making us curious about this drugstore.

So what do we do? Well, after seeing countless signs for the store, we stopped at Wall Drug in Wall, South Dakota, and we checked it out.

Now, signs, signs can be interesting, signs can be meaningful, signs can be provocative, but as varied as signs can be, they all have a common purpose, to grab our attention and incline us to believe in a reality beyond them that they are testifying to.

So this morning, like I said before, we're going to explore a sign testifying to a greater reality, far greater than a drugstore in Wall, South Dakota, far greater than really any sign we've ever seen.

for Jesus himself employed signs in his ministry, and no, not signs that say Christ is Lord, but instead actions that testify to the authenticity of his message.

[ 3 : 47 ] These signs are intently placed throughout the first half of the Gospel of John, and today, we're going to investigate and unpack his first sign performed at a wedding in Cana.

And we're going to see Jesus' use of signs to authenticate his witness, we're going to see his control over nature, his total transformation of the Jewish rites of purification, and the superior nature of his new covenant, the superior nature of his new covenant, which we just sung about, and just what beautiful songs that we got to sing this morning because of Jesus.

And ultimately, we're going to see all this so we would believe in him freshly, deeply, like never before. So, let's dig in, let's read the passage.

We're going to be looking at John 2, 1 through 12, this morning. John 2, 1 through 12, this morning. John 2, on the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine. And Jesus said to her, woman, what does this have to do with me?

[ 5 : 10 ] My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, do whatever he tells you. Now, there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding 20 or 30 gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, fill the jars with water, and they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.

So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not know where it came from, but the servants who drew on the water knew. The master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, everyone serves the good wine first.

When people have drunk freely, then the poor wine, but you have kept the good wine until now. This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana and Galilee and manifested his glory.

And his disciples believed in him. After this, he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days. God, would you bless, as we prayed before, would you bless the preaching of your word.

[ 6 : 32 ] And throughout the Bible, God uses signs to authenticate the voice of his messengers. To start our discussion of signs, I'd like to take you on a tour of the theology of signs in the Old Testament.

If we're going to understand Jesus' use of signs in the book of John, we must understand how God used signs throughout the Scripture, throughout Scripture up to this point. So, when thinking about signs, one may think of the phrase signs and wonders and assume that signs in the Bible are all about displaying miraculous power.

And yes, while many signs in the Bible are demonstrations of God's miraculous power, the fullest, truest meaning of signs in Scripture is actually to authenticate God's messengers.

To authenticate God's messengers, primarily through some sort of visual aid or symbolism. So, consider the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 20, where as a sign against the nations of Egypt and Cush, God had Isaiah walk around naked and barefoot for three years.

prophesying how Assyria would one day lead Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles away from the land naked and barefoot. Now, in this sign, there was no great miracle, no change in laws of nature.

[ 7 : 52 ] Isaiah simply served as a sign of visual aid or symbolic representation to foretell something that God was going to do. And God did it, authenticating Isaiah's message and ministry.

Now, second, more immediately familiar to us. Think about all the signs that Moses performed in the Exodus in the land of Egypt. God gave Moses numerous signs, from his staff turning into a snake to the ten plagues to the parting of the Red Sea.

Now, why did God perform all these signs? Yes, to show his miraculous power and might. But mainly, it was to attest to the validity of Moses' message and God's dedication to speaking through Moses.

Now, shifting gears now, in the New Testament, and specifically in John's Gospel, God's signs through Jesus will be no different. They will be aimed at authenticating Jesus' message to inspire belief among his followers through symbolic or visual aids.

Now, there are six generally agreed-upon signs used by Jesus to accomplish these aims throughout the Gospel of John. These signs will be public, performed for all to see.

[ 9 : 12 ] They'll be explicitly identified in the Gospel of John as signs that will literally say that Jesus did a sign in this place. And they will again reveal Jesus' authentic representation of God.

Now, these six signs will be his transforming water into wine at the wedding of Cana, the healing of a nobleman's son, the healing of a lame man, the feeding of a multitude, the healing of a blind man, and raising Lazarus from the dead.

And notice, there are six of these signs. In Hebrew numerology, six generally refers to incompleteness. Incompleteness.

Remember, God created the world in Genesis 1 in seven days. So many commentators believe that the seventh and ultimate sign of Jesus in the Gospel of John is his resurrection, making his work complete.

This use of the number six will show up again this morning, so keep this point in mind. All right, so that's the backdrop of Jesus' sign of the wedding of Cana.

[ 10 : 22 ] Let's now dig into more so the significance of this sign that Jesus performs. So, the first observation that I'd like us to make about the, about Jesus' transformation of water into wine is simply the fact that Jesus, Jesus is sovereign over nature.

Just think about it. He literally transforms water into wine. That's just incredible. And I want to simply pause and be amazed that our Savior, that Jesus has the power and authority to transform simple, everyday water into wine, a wholly different substance.

At the same time, notice that the passage does not describe the transformation process. It seems that John, in his recounting of this story, he's not so interested in drawing our attention to the miraculous transformation process of water into wine, as many of our engineers here may be interested in learning about.

But instead, he wants us to see the significance of the sign. What's the sign really pointing to? So, let's consider that.

Let's dive into what Jesus is pointing to by transforming water into wine. So, to do this, let's first consider Jesus' relationship with water throughout the Old Testament. Throughout the Bible, God has created the oceans, flooded the world, parted the Red Sea, quenched thirst, turned bitter water into sweet, flowed water from a rock.

[ 11 : 58 ] All of these miraculous events that God did using water. And the New Testament in particular, Jesus transforms water into wine. He was a layman in a pool of water.

He offers springs of living water like we sung about. He washes his disciples' feet with water. And he walks on the sea. And more.

It seems that Jesus loves to use water to make symbolic and visual points ultimately to authenticate his message and reveal his glory. That being said, why this miracle at this place at this time?

Well, first, notice what type of water Jesus transformed into wine. The jars that were ultimately filled with wine were first water jars used for the Jewish purification rites.

This reference in John 2.6 points to practices the Jews were known for regarding using water for purification purposes. For example, Leviticus 15.13, in the discussion about bodily discharges, men were required to wash themselves in fresh water to be cleansed and acceptable again to their community.

[ 13 : 17 ] And in Numbers 8.7, the Levites themselves were to be separated from the people and cleansed by water before serving in their position. So, throughout Jewish law, there were a number of references to purification rites using water to make people physically clean and to a degree symbolically clean.

At the same time, these purification rites, while possibly helping to clean the body, were barren and ineffectual for truly cleaning the conscience and the soul.

they were pointers to new and better cleansing. One that we've sung about and one that we'll talk about shortly. Before we get there, though, notice again in this passage the use of the number six.

How many jars of water were there? There were six. This numerology, again, points to the fact that these jars, this practice, was incomplete. For the Jews, water purification was about as close to clean as they would get.

But, it was a practice that had to be done over and over again. In a sense, it was meaningful, but in a sense, meaningless. Again, it depended upon their own effort, their own performance of the ritual, over and over again.

[ 14 : 42 ] Now, consider the wine of Jesus' salvation. Jesus took this water purification rite and he was making something new out of it.

He was transforming it. Think about wine for a moment. Wine in the Old Testament much of the time symbolizes joy, celebration, and blessing. Psalm 4, 7.

You put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. in turning water, especially the waters of purification rites, into wine.

Jesus was taking a practice that was barren and repetitive and never fulfilled, one that required human effort, human washing, and he was transforming it.

His salvation, rather than being based on human effort and requiring constant repetition, is that his salvation will be one of completion by God himself, once for all.

[ 15 : 43 ] Hear his cry from the cross in John 19, it is finished. Hear Hebrews 9, 26. But as it is, he appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The salvation that Jesus offers is just so much better than the cleansing rites that the Jews used and that ultimately pointed them to a better, fuller, richer, perfect, effectual salvation.

One that Jesus would bring through his life, death, and resurrection. As Jesus would transform water into wine here in John 2, through his perfect life, death, and resurrection, Jesus would transform the way of salvation.

It would not be ceremonial washing or really any effort at self-purification. It would be about the fact that he has made purification, that he has finished the work.

Instead of striving after being clean from sin, if we have repented of our sin and trusted in Christ for salvation, we cannot rejoice in the fact that Jesus has made us clean.

[ 16 : 58 ] We can rejoice in him and celebrate his salvation. We can drink deeply of the wine of his gospel and receive his saving work on our behalf, a saving work that is finished, complete, and effectual.

All right, so how does that apply to us even deeper? How can we apply this to our hearts and lives? Well, I want us to pause for some time and consider, are we living in the good of this finished, complete, effectual salvation?

So let's consider a couple questions. Are you currently living in the grace of God? Do you relate to him by grace, grace being his unmerited love based solely on the work of Christ?

And before we say yes, let's just test our hearts for a second, let's make sure we're living by grace. Is there anything you are doing currently in your life that desire to make yourself clean, to justify yourself before the Lord or even before your own eyes?

Think about it. As important as it is to be kind to your spouse, to care for your children to serve at church, consider for a moment why you are doing these things. Is your heart settled in the love of Christ?

[ 18 : 20 ] Secure in God's acceptance, secure in his grace? And so are your efforts flowing out of a worship to the Lord and a love for others? Or, do they ever flow from a desire to be right in God's eyes or to feel good about yourself?

To be clear, license is evil. The grace of God gives us no leeway to sin and to break God's law. At the same time, though, legalism is another danger in the Christian life.

Anytime we do any work out of a desire to make ourselves clean in God's eyes or even our own, we may be obeying, but a bang out of a wrong heart motive. How so?

When we seek to live a good moral life apart from a love of God and others, we are sowing seeds of pride and self-righteousness. We're not living our lives in a settled assurance of God's love.

We're living our lives as if Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were not enough to secure our holy acceptance before God. rather, we are living as if we need to make ourselves righteous, to be good in and of ourselves, and due to that, we're not living out of a motivation of love for God and others.

[ 19 : 41 ] Listen to Galatians 2.16. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, because by works of the law, no one will be justified.

Hear that. By works of the law, no one will be justified. Beloved Providence, realize this. If you are living the Christian life to be good in and of yourself, to justify yourself in any way for the eyes of God, to be righteous in and of yourself, if that is the case, well, then you miss the grace of God.

And I know in this church, we celebrate God's grace and we sing of God's grace. And so I'm confident that many of us, most of us, live by grace.

But, if you are living to make yourself righteous, to justify yourself before God's eyes, then you have missed the grace of God.

And frankly, you may stand here condemned this morning. However, if you've admitted that you need mercy from God and mercy alone, if you've repented of your sins and placed your faith in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins and his righteousness as the basis for your standing before God, well, then, you are justified before the Lord.

[ 21 : 12 ] Again, to be justified before God, we must admit our total and complete depravity. we must daily live in the truth that we bring nothing to our relationship with the Lord except for the sins that drove him to that cross.

We must renounce all self-righteousness. Then, and only then, we must drink deeply from the wine of Jesus' salvation.

We must take it and drink deep of the free, full grace of God's total acceptance and love in Christ. Then, and only then, can we obey God out of a worship of him and love for others.

This morning, as we can consider the complete sufficiency of Christ's gospel, the transformation of waters of purification, barren, ineffectual, dependent on self-effort, into the wine of full, complete, free, gracious salvation, let us be free.

free from seeking to earn God's favor, free from seeking to justify ourselves in our own eyes, and now, free to live in the total, complete, rock-solid truth of God's loving, fatherly acceptance in Christ.

[ 22 : 30 ] Free to worship the Lord in everything we do, seeking to gain nothing by it before him, and free to love others so they can experience the love of God themselves and flourish.

The distinction is subtle. It's subtle between legalistic self-justification and living in the good of the gospel.

But it is so important that we test our hearts in this and make sure that we are sowing seeds of love based on the freedom we have in Christ rather than the seeds of self-righteousness and self-justification.

We know that in Christ we already measure up to God's approval, and we are not obeying out a desire to measure up, but ultimately to love God and others in the acceptance and freedom that he purchased for us through his perfect life, death, and resurrection.

Water into wine, repetitive, ineffectual, barren purification rites into it is finished. Let us trust in him and him alone and rejoice.

[ 23 : 38 ] All right, now second, let's dig into the significance of the master of the feast comment about old wine and new wine, and second and third points would be a little bit shorter than the first one.

Jesus said to the servants, fill the jars with water, and they filled them up to the brim, and he said to them, now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. So they took it. The master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

The master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine, but you've kept the good wine until now.

All right, now notice the comparison between the two types of wine that have been served at this wedding. The first wine was poor. It was weak, certainly not the best. The second wine was good, rich, strong, hearty wine.

And consider, this is a symbolic comparison between the old and new covenants. The old covenant blessings established a relationship with God, one that was dependent upon ceremony, sacrifice, and works.

[ 24 : 50 ] Yes, the Hebrew nation was promised great prosperity and land and physical peace if they lived within the old covenant structure. The new covenant blessings, though, just blow away the old covenant.

just consider Ephesians 1 through through 8, which was read this morning in worship. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ. In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.

The new covenant Jesus purchased for us, he's obtained full, rich, lavish, eternal blessings, forgiveness of sin, adoption into God's family, every spiritual blessing, fellowship with God, life forevermore is the presence of God as our Father.

This new wine of salvation is just overpoweringly good when compared to the old wine of the Mosaic covenant. So let us rejoice. Let us also be grateful.

[ 26 : 19 ] Around Passover time, the Jewish people sing a song called Dayenu, which means enough. Day, day, day, day, day, day, dayenu, dayenu, dayenu.

We sing that it would have been enough if God had just rescued us from slavery in Egypt. It would have been enough if God had just split the Red Sea for us. It would have been enough if God had just given us the Torah.

Well, this morning, can't we sing Dayenu? God has given us far and above and beyond what he gave to the saints of the Old Testament. If they can sing enough, how much more fuller can we?

If there would be one thing to mark us as a church, shouldn't it be gratitude? Yes, life can be hard at times, but even in the hard, the bedrock truth of God's lavish kindness to us in Christ by providing such generous spiritual blessings to sinners like us, that's the anchor for our soul.

That's why it's essential that we preach the gospel to ourselves every day. That we remind ourselves every day of the truth, that every day we can sing a new Dayenu, that it would have been enough had Jesus died for our sins.

[ 27 : 39 ] It would have been enough if he had forgiven us. It would have been enough if he had welcomed us into his family. It would have been enough if he had given us the Holy Spirit. I go on and on because God is just that generous.

As we consider how God has left the good wine, the wine of the gospel, until now for us to enjoy, let us celebrate and be grateful.

Not just here at church, but on Tuesday afternoon and on Thursday morning, and truly at all times, we remind ourselves how God is holy. We are sinners.

And Christ has bridged that gap between God for us. Dayenu. Let us gratefully rejoice. All right, one final point this morning.

Let's take a couple minutes and consider the servants at this wedding in Cana. Listen to how they are described. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine.

[ 28 : 40 ] And Jesus said to her, woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, do whatever he tells you.

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish purification rites, each holding 20 or 30 gallons. Jesus said to the servants, fill the jars with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

And he said to them, now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. So they took it. Notice how these servants behaved. When Jesus told them to fill the jars with water, they didn't balk, complain, doubt, or debate.

They filled up the jars to the brim. And when Jesus said to them to draw out some wine and take it to the master of the feast, they didn't waver.

They took it. Is there any better definition of a disciple of Christ than what Jesus' mother says to the servants? To do whatever he tells you.

[ 29 : 50 ] To do everything he commands to the utmost, filling up your water jars of obedience to the brim, drawing out the wine of his salvation and serving it up faithfully.

In our everyday obedience, we must trust Christ and obey. We must be like these servants. And in particular, one area of obedience that we have before us every day that I want to highlight is we have the privilege of serving up the wine of salvation in particular to our families, our fellow church members and unbelieving friends.

May we do as Jesus says and serve up the wine of salvation to them, which means may we be drinking deeply of the wine of his salvation ourselves, tasting and seeing that he is good so that we're eager to share it with others.

I would encourage you and especially encourage husbands and fathers this morning to redouble your efforts to serve this good wine of the gospel to your families.

Consider what rhythms have you established or could you establish in the new year to make sure that you are daily remembering and living in the good of the truths of the gospel as well as learning and celebrating and sharing and applying these truths with your family.

[ 31 : 22 ] As we discussed earlier, the key to effective repentance and trusting obedience, the key to a relentless pursuit of sanctification is to live with a settled security in the grace of God.

May we ourselves every day live and remind ourselves of that settled security that we have in Christ. Help us to remember that we should help ourselves to remember that we though we are sinners that we are united to Christ that we are loved by our heavenly father that we have a glorious eternal future all because of Jesus life, death, and resurrection.

May we remind our wives and our children and everyone that we touch about those truths. So remember, we have the good wine now and we can drink from it every day.

May we do so and overflow with joy and gratitude that may spill over into everyone that we touch. So in conclusion, in examining the first sign of Jesus, we have seen much of the lavish, generous kindness of God.

We have seen Jesus command of the physical elements. We have seen Jesus transformation of old, barren customs into new, life-giving, truly purifying realities. We have seen Jesus providing the good wine of the gospel now to us.

[ 32 : 53 ] And we have seen that we can now obey Jesus as disciples and trustingly do as he says. Jesus' transformation of water into wine, it was a sign.

It testified to Jesus' goodness in a way that mere words could not. And unlike the signs capturing my attention about wall drug in South Dakota, that just pointed to a simple drug store.

This sign and all the others point to greatness and glory. The greatness and glory of our Christ and essentially the authenticity of his message.

How kind of Jesus to provide this sign. Therefore, this morning let us leave this message rejoicing, crying dayenu, rejoicing in the hope of God's rock-solid acceptance of us in Christ, rejoicing in the goodness of our new covenant promises, and rejoicing in the privilege we have to be Jesus' servants, serving up this new, good, fresh, strong wine of salvation to our family, church, friends, community, and beyond.

Water into wine, barren into life-giving, powerless into powerful, ceremonial into truly clean.

[ 34 : 20 ] thank God. Let's pray. Dear God, we praise you because you are holy.

You are a holy God, and that you welcome us into your presence because of what Jesus did for us. Lord, we thank you for that. We thank you that we have total, rock-solid acceptance because of Christ.

Lord, help us to remember that every day and throughout the day. Lord, help us to do that. Holy Spirit, empower us to do that. Lord, help us then to live lives of love, love for you and love for others because we want to see other people experience your grace.

Praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. All right, now for communion this morning, I want to draw our attention to a few additional symbols from this passage for it's just pregnant with significant meaning.

First, Jesus revealed himself in his first sign at a wedding feast at Cana, and Jesus will end the age with another marriage supper. Revelation 19, And the angel said to me, Write this, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[ 35 : 41 ] And he said to me, These are the true words of God. In addition, on the cross, Jesus drank the cup of sour wine, so we could drink the rich cup of his new wine, and look forward to that wedding feast when we will drink deeply of the cup of his salvation and fellowship with him.

Third, Jesus revealed himself on this third day of his first week of ministry, and as we know, he will rise on the third day after his crucifixion, the hour he truly came for, his final, completing, victorious sign.

At this wedding at Cana, he said that his hour had not yet come, truly his hour would come, and he would fulfill all righteousness at that time. This whole story, as pregnant with meaning as it is, all points to one ultimate story, the story of the gospel that we've been talking about all morning.

Just how God is good and glorious, we've all sinned against him, and that God sacrificed Jesus so we could be forgiven of our sins, freed from their power, entering deeply of the fellowship with God that is ours in Christ.

John writes in the first chapter of his gospel, John 1, 14, and the word became flesh and dwelled among us, and we've seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth.

[ 37 : 16 ] In Jesus' sign at the wedding at Cana, he first manifested his glory and the disciples believed in him. May we today believe again, believe deeper, or maybe for the first time, in a son of God who can literally transform water into wine, who can transform an old covenant into a new, who can turn repeated hopelessness and emptiness into true, complete, eternal, hope, joy, and celebratory salvation.

1 Corinthians 11, 23-26, for I receive from the Lord what else I deliver to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it, and said this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me, for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Come to the table this morning and let us proclaim this glorious Christ's death together in joy, hope, and victorious celebration. of the celebration.

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