

Good News, Great Joy

Week 2: John 2:1-11

- If you have your Bibles, turn with me to John chapter 2.
- If you were with us last week, we kicked off our Christmas series: Good News, Great Joy over at East Hickory Church and we talked about the Good News that Matthew was declaring about the birth of Christ from his telling of the wise men, coming to see Jesus
- Now today, I want to fast forward a little bit from the Nativity story, and look at Jesus' first miracle at the wedding of Cana and how He alludes to the Great Joy that He has come to bring.
- To set the scene...
- Around 700 BC the Prophet Isaiah prophesied to the people of Israel:
 - ***“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And He will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” -Isaiah 25:6-9 (ESV)***
- Now 700 years later, there is a great feast going on in the land of Cana, a very hilly-mountainous region in the land of Israel.
 - There's a great feast going on because there is a wedding. I know weddings are normally a big deal, and a common wedding now-a-days takes like an entire day

- But the weddings festivities back then lasted normally 5-7 days. The entire village or town would be invited. Our wedding receptions normally last 3-4 hours, theirs lasted 3-4 days!
- And in the height of the celebration, a problem arises and Mary, the mother of Jesus, goes to the One she believes to have a solution... her Son.
- I believe, in this account, we learn that Jesus has come to bring Joy, why He comes to bring Joy, and how He comes to bring Joy.
- **John 2:1-11 (ESV)**
- PRAY
- *We're in the south. And in the south, if we're honest, the real life of any party is the food, isn't it? The company is 2nd, you could have bad company but great food, and it's still a good party. I was at a gathering not long ago, where the Copland was fantastic....but I still cant stop thinking about Cody England's pot roast! It made me a better Christian!*
- *I don't know how many weddings I've been to, where the food was the most talked about aspect of the wedding. I've been to a few weddings, surrounded by great friends, great people, it was a great time. But at the end of it, when we're asked how it went, the first thing we talked about was the food! You put out a good spread, you're going to have a good party.*
- *On the flip side, you can have great company at a party, but if the food is bad, this is most likely going to be a forgettable social event. And if you're the one hosting the party, and you see the food dwindling down and there's still people who haven't eaten yet, your heart is going to sink a little bit and you might start to panic. Because if the food runs out, the party runs out. So you gotta keep the food coming so the party keeps going!*

- Why is it, that the first sign that Jesus performs to show His Glory and who He is to His disciples, is essentially a party trick, to keep the party going??
 - *This is a valid question, because if you look at anyone who is running for any sort of public office or position, their first public address to announce who they are and what they stand for is so thoroughly vetted and thought through so that their message is clear*
- Jesus, and John the writer of this Gospel, are doing the same thing here. This is essentially Jesus' first public address in the book of John.
 - Because in verse 11, John is clear in saying that this story, *what Jesus did at this wedding*, is a manifestation of His Glory, of Who He is, and what He has come to do.
- Therefore, the setting here, has to be very intentional, because the atmosphere in which Jesus first reveals this, *is in itself* a statement of why He has come.
 - Now, if you're a non-cynical person, the number 1 emotion that you associate with a wedding is JOY!
 - A wedding is supposed to be a celebration! It's a celebration of Love, it's a celebration of Hope, It's a celebration of two people going on a journey of a new life together.
 - There is a joyous celebration...and the writer wants to make it abundantly clear that:
- **JESUS HAS COME TO BRING JOY**
- Now, sadly, I'm not sure how well this has been depicted to a lot of people now a days.
 - It's amazing how many stories I will hear of people who have grown up in the church, and then have since stopped going and one of the main reasons that they give is, "I just want to enjoy life now."

- But one of the quintessential reasons that Jesus has come is to enable you to enjoy life to the fullest!
- God has been intentional throughout all of scripture of wanting to relate a life with Him to a celebration! It's one of festive Joy!
 - Throughout the Old Testament, God refers to himself over and over as Bridegroom, and His people are His bride!
- In Matthew 9, when Jesus is asked why His disciples are not fasting, He responds, ***“Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?” -Matthew 9:15 (NKJV)***
 - Translation: Are the groomsman going to be depressed and anxious, when they are with the groom? Or are they going to celebrate Him?
- Jesus is saying, “I am the Bridegroom,” and anyone who grew up in Jewish culture would understand that Jesus is claiming His deity with that statement.
- Also, in the very next chapter after our passage today, in John chapter 3, John the Baptist is confronted with those who are telling him, “Hey, all of these people used to followed you but now they're going after this Jesus guy! What are you going to do??”
- And look at His response...John says, ***“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.” -John 3:29 (NKJV)***
 - John says, *“No, no, no, no, no... this is a cause for Joy and Celebration, because the Groom has arrived and the party has begun!”*
- And you know who the most annoying people at weddings are? The ones who complain about marriage the whole time!
 - There are those that all they do is crack these passive aggressive jokes constantly going on and on about how... *“You’re gonna lose your*

freedom! You're stuck now! It's not too late to get out!" (Haha...shut up!)

- There are those that don't like how their marriage is going, or how it went, so they try to project that onto the new marriage and put a damper on the celebration.
 - The root of it, comes from them focusing on themselves.
- If you want a recipe to how to lose joy in your life, make everything about you.
- *And I can't help but wonder, if we have too many Christians that have put a damper on the celebration that a life of Christ is supposed to be, because we are too focused on ourselves.*
- Think about it, what is the basis of the celebration of the wedding?
 - It's celebrating the love and union of the Bride and the Groom. And as soon as you shift your focus to anything other than that, you will miss out on the joy of that celebration.
- In the same way, the basis of the Celebration of the Christian life is found in people coming to know the Love of Christ and Uniting to their Savior.
 - And too many believers will lose the joy of this life because we will shift our focus away from that.
 - We'll focus more on the way we think things are supposed to be done, or those who don't believe the way that we believe, or scrutinize every little detail of each other's lives, when we are supposed to be focusing on doing everything we can to see people come to the Bridegroom as we did, and celebrate that!
- This is what Jesus was getting at when He said, ***"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."***- Luke 15:7 (NJKV)

- Jesus wants that same Joy that is felt in Heaven to be felt among us, and we can obtain that Joy if we can focus more on the Bridegroom and celebrating those that come to Him.
 - Celebrating those who have gone from death to life in Christ, and have had their eternity changed by the Love and Acceptance of God.
- This is why I am so convinced that church should be a celebration!
- I've have literally heard people say, *"You know I hear people talk about how they enjoyed the service today. I'm sick of hearing that, you're not here to enjoy it, you're here to worship."*
 - Ummmm, I disagree! I would go as far as to say, if you're not enjoying it, you're not worshipping.
 - Taste and see/ NOT JUST believe and know...He is intentional about incorporating these sensory emotions into worship
- Because God doesn't want robots, He wants a loving, joyous relationship
 - And He has proven over and over again in scripture, that He doesn't want this relationship with His people to JUST be like:
 - King to His Subjects or Shepherd to His Sheep....not even JUST a Father to His Children
 - But He also wants this to be the ultimate loving relationship, so intimate, so full of joy, that He wants to compare it to a Bride and Groom on their wedding day
 - Isn't that so relieving? Because how much time do we spend thinking about the way that God see's us?
- *Rachel and I are actually celebrating our 5 year anniversary today! Now I was 28-29 when we got married, so I was a little later than most of the people I went to college with.*

- Because when you go to a christian college, the social norm is to be engaged by your senior year, and married right after or shortly after you graduate.
- So in my early to mid-20's, my first few years out of college, I went to A LOT of weddings. And just when I was out of that stage, I met Rachel a couple of weeks before she graduated from Gardner-Webb, and we got to enter into that wedding cycle all over again with all of her college friends.
- And on top of that, I have had the privilege and the honor of being able to officiate close to a billion weddings... so to say the least, I've been to A LOT of weddings in my short almost 34 years.
- And now there is a trend among people who attend weddings, especially from the female side, that when the Bride enters, and everyone stands, they decide to not watch the Bride walk down the aisle.
- Instead, they want to see the way that the groom see's the bride. So it's a little awkward, either being the groom or the officiant, whenever you're standing up there, and you want to focus on the bride coming down the aisle, but you have all of these bodies facing one way, while almost breaking their necks turning to stare down the groom.
- But you know what? After all of the weddings I have been to, I have never, seen a Groom disappointed.
 - Whenever the Bride is done up in her bridal attire and has on the white dress, she is stunning to her groom in an entirely new way that she's never been before!
- And in the same way, you can have the confidence that no matter what you look like, on the inside or out, no matter what you have done where you have come from, or whatever your past has ever held, Jesus want's you to know that once you come to Him, He see's you the same way that a Groom see's His bride

- And you might ask how can this be possible, and the answer to that is found in this story as well: He can bring that kind of Joy to the relationship because:
- **JESUS HAS COME TO COVER SHAME**
- Now, its safe to say that once Mary finds out that there is no wine left at the party, she goes into a bit of a panic mode
- Because the party is nowhere near being over. And you can kind of compare it to if you're at a wedding and they are catering a dinner, and when half of the guests get served their food, they realize that they are out of food and there's still another 50-100 people left without, you can imagine how embarrassing that would be!
 - Now, in our culture, we'll get over it and move on. It might even turn into a funny story down the line.
- However, we don't understand what it means to live in an honor-shame culture.
 - We live in a very individualistic society, where it's me against the world and the basis of the American dream is making something of yourself
- But in an honor-shame culture, it is completely family based. And if you live honorably, you honor your whole extended family, but if you mess up, your entire family is shamed and it can hang over you and your family for generations.
- *I remember when I was a teenager I got in trouble on the military based that we were stationed at. And my dad had to stand before the disciplinary board for the base and answer for my mistake.*
- *And what made it worse, was that my dad was normally one of the guys sitting on that board, and now he's answering to them. And you could see how bad they all felt for him, because they knew how embarrassing it was. So you can imagine the guilt that I felt in that moment, and the embarrassment that my father felt.*

- Now, in an honor/shame culture, that sort of guilt and embarrassment would come even from something that would seem trivial to us like running out of wine at a wedding.
 - Especially since weddings were the biggest social event of their lives, that the entire town would have been a part of
 - Less of a Scof and more Pity
- That's what would have happened to this family if the word had gotten out that they ran out of wine
 - It would have been so awkward, everyone would have gotten quiet, everyone would have cringed...and then just slowly left the party
- And then that guilty/embarrassing feeling and that label of shame would not have just affected the bride and groom, but also each of their families, maybe even to the aunts and uncles and cousins.
- Also, everyone who worked on the wedding would have had their reputations and career's ruined
 - People's very livelihoods are on the line here
- Also, the Jewish people were also a very superstitious people, and in Jewish culture, according to the OT, wine was a symbol of God's blessings, joy, happiness, abundance, and new beginnings.
 - Therefore, if the wine ran out, that could be seen as a sign that God was not blessing this marriage...
- So Mary sees everything that's at stake here, and she takes the problem to Jesus
- Now why Jesus? He's not in charge of anything, He's just a guest. It's not His problem! But Mary knows exactly who He is, and she knows His Heart.
 - His Heart is to cover shame.

- She has spent the past 30 years of her life studying and getting to know the heart of Jesus.
 - If you look at the beginning of the book of Luke, and her interaction with the angels, the shepherds, the wise men, finding Him teaching in the Temple, what does Luke say she did?
 - *“She treasured up all these things in her heart.”*
 - She knows Him, better than anyone else on the planet does, she knows how much He cares!
- Which is why she doesn’t flinch at His response..and His response seems a little harsh...
- ***“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.’” -John 2:4 (ESV)***
- Now first off, I want to clarify, that I do NOT encourage any man to go home and address your mothers or wives in this manner.
- However, whenever Jesus says, “woman,” He’s not being disrespectful. This is a different culture. This is actually a term of endearment. We see Jesus address Mary this same way when He’s on the cross..
 - However, His response at first glance seems like the typical single person at the wedding.
 - We’ve all seen this guy, or this girl. Who is at the wedding but is so preoccupied with their singleness that its hard for them to enjoy themselves
- Now Jesus wouldn’t have been to this extreme
 - But what does the single person think about when they are at another wedding?
 - They’re thinking about their future wedding, and what it’s going to take in order to get there

- Now Jesus, in a sense, could have been doing the same thing...He's looking forward to a wedding, but not in the sense that you and I would.
- He would have been looking forward to the wedding that John describes towards the end of the book of Revelation, when he wrote: "***Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband...And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.***" -Revelation 21: 2,4 (NJKV)
- Now Jesus may have been sitting at this wedding and thinking about what it's going to take in order to make THAT wedding happen.
 - This won't be possible without Him covering the problem of sin, *and the shame that sin has clouded mankind with*, which is ultimately the reason why He came!
- And when Jesus says, "*My hour has not yet come,*" He isn't saying that, "I'm not ready to start doing miracles yet."
- Because every time that Jesus refers to "His Hour", He is referring to His death
- So essentially Jesus is saying, "*Woman, what does this have to do with me, I'm not ready to die yet.*"
 - Seem's like a pretty dark statement for a wedding
- But Jesus' death is ever before Him, He always knew that it was coming, and He knew that was the reason in which He came, because it was the way that in which He would cover our shame.
- I listened Dr. Tim Keller speak on this and he explained:
 - "***Jesus came primarily to die, not primarily to live. If Jesus came primarily to live, He would merely be an example. Therefore we would find our way to God by trying to live like Jesus. But if Jesus***

came primarily to die, He doesn't come as an example, He comes primarily as a Savior. If He came merely as an example He would be like any other founder of any other religion teaching, "This is the way to God," But Jesus says, "I'm God, come to find you." - Dr. Tim Keller

- Because He has come as our God and our Savior, He comes to bring Joy, and He gives us unending Joy because He has come to cover our shame with His blood, and in doing so,
- **JESUS HAS COME TO REPLACE THE SYSTEM**
- Every human being in our broken state develops a system in how we think we are supposed to live
 - If we choose to be religious, we also develop a system in how we believe we should live in order to maintain the favor of the higher power we choose to worship
 - Even those of us who chose to Worship The One True God can still find ourselves in this endless struggle of trying to appease God on our own behalf
- However, the only thing that pleases God is His Son, that's why it's impossible to please God without faith because it's impossible to please God without Jesus, and when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, Colossians says that we are "hidden in Him." That means when God looks at us, He doesn't see our sins and our faults and our failures, He sees the perfection of His Son.
 - Therefore, everything that we are and everything that we do, should be centered around Him. And He sets the precedent for everything that is done, in and through our lives.
 - He is the System
- Mary, who knows this better than anyone else at this time, takes the problem straight to Him

- He seemingly dismisses her, but I love her response so much
- She doesn't even acknowledge His answer, and doesn't even address Him again!
- She just turns to the servants and says, "Do whatever He says."
- *What we need to understand is that there is never any problem that is either too big, or too small for Jesus. Peter tells us to cast ALL of our cares upon Him, because He cares for us.*
- I've heard it said, "There is no problem that is outside of His detailed care."
- However, once we take the problem to Him, we need to leave it in His hands.
 - Because, how often do we take a problem to Jesus, and say, "*Hey, Jesus! Here's my problem, and here is how YOU need to fix it!*"
 - It's as if we give Him directions on how to be God
- But Mary understood that He cares too much to leave the problem alone, but she was wise enough to leave the solution up to Him.
- And like He normally does, He gives a solution... but not before a very confusing process.
 - And the way that He does it in this specific instance, shows us that He has come to replace the system
- You see, the Jews had their systems for purification for almost any public event. Because they understood, what every human being deeply understands: and that is that, There is something wrong with us.
 - We all, deep down, know that we are flawed
 - And the Jews lived in this constant tension of the known Holiness of God and the awareness for their own flaws.

- So they couldn't just simply walk into any event, especially any that had any religious connotation. They knew that something had to be done to cover their flaws...even if it was symbolic
- So at an event, such as a wedding, they would have these stone jars filled with purifying water, in which they would physically wash their hands and in doing so they would be symbolically washing themselves spiritually.
- Therefore it is no coincidence that Jesus tells them to take these jars that were meant for their perceived purification and turns their purifying waters into wine.
 - *And I'm not going to get into the debate on whether or not this wine was alcoholic or the percentage of alcohol that would have been in this wine, because it's simply not the point!!!*
- The point, is that Jesus took what was a hopeless, shameful situation and turned the water into wine: which was the symbol of God's blessing and joy!
- But further than that, when Jesus is at the last supper with His disciples what does He compare the wine to...His Blood
 - It's as if Jesus is saying, *"This system that you have for purifying yourselves is being done away with because the only thing that can purify you is My Blood."*
- You cannot come to Jesus and still try to operate the same way you always have.
 - He brings about a new reality, a new system
- You remember back when we talked about how Jesus was asked about why His disciples weren't fasting, and He said ***"Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?...Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put***

new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” -Matthew 9:15a,17 (NKJV)

- *The wineskins that Jesus is referring to, is the system of life that we have in place. We can't just add Jesus to our old system, He gives us an entirely New System and New way of life*
- So many people can't understand or get the most out of the Christian life because we try to simply ADD Jesus to our lives.
 - But Jesus cannot be added! Like we said last week... “He's either Lord of all or He's not Lord at all”
- *He doesn't want to merely ADD to your joy...He gives a completely NEW Joy. He gives you a NEW mind, and a NEW perspective. He wants to give you A NEW heart, a completely NEW life. FREE from shame, and FULL of Joy!*
- Because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and the Hope that He gives us. No matter what life throws at us, or how difficult things get, joy is always available to us.
- He gives us the opportunity to choose joy, because like Paul says, ***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”- Romans 8:18***
- That's why he also tells the Philippians ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” -Philippians 4:4 (ESV)***
- And the way that we stand and live in this joy, is shown in the way this scene finishes up
- *They draw some of the new wine out of the water jars and take it to the master of the feast (wedding coordinator/DJ/ Hype man)*
- He tastes it, and then makes this big scene telling them how awesome the Groom is for providing this incredible wine.
 - But the Groom had nothing to do with it!

- I'm reading this and I'm thinking, *"NO! Give credit where credit is due! These people need to speak up and tell them all what Jesus has done!! RIGHT?!"*
 - But then when you think about it, this is exactly how we come into a life with Jesus.
- We are completely empty, we have nothing to offer, but Jesus does all of the work and fills us to the brim, and we get to reap all of the benefits.
 - It's not fair, we may not be able to fully wrap our minds around it on this side of eternity...but it's grace. And it's available to all of us.
- As Dr Tim Keller describes the scene of the joyous party continuing on after the new wine has been passed around (the people not knowing that it actually represents the death of the One that made this joy possible) Jesus sits at the party, as Dr. Keller describes ***"He sat in the joy sipping the coming sorrow, so that we could sit in the sorrow sipping the coming joy."***
- *No matter how sorrowful life might get, we get to endure it with Joy because we know it'll only last for a moment.*
- *And because Jesus endured the sorrow of the Cross, and rose from the grave conquering death, we have an eternal Joy available to us that no form of worldly suffering can ever take away!*
- We have the opportunity to live in this unending joy, because of what Jesus did on the cross!
- We no longer have to live under the dark cloud of shame that our sin brought upon us, we don't have to live in fear of death because our eternity is secured!
- And no matter what hardship this world may throw at us, we know that when all things are fulfilled, we will be celebrating at the Great Feast that Isaiah described and the Great Wedding that John described in Revelation. And we will all say on that day:

- ***“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” - Isaiah 25:9***