

Jesus Gives Us More Than We Ask For

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My daughter just got married and it was one of the happiest days of my life. As she and her husband entered the reception, I cried tears of joy. *This was more than I could have even asked for.* There were years of loss and despair in my life and in my both my daughters' lives, and ten years ago I couldn't have imagined a day this joyful.

After reflecting on everything that happened last weekend, I opened to John 2:1-11, the wedding at Cana, with anticipation. For those unfamiliar with the account, Jesus and his disciples were invited to a wedding at Cana in Galilee, which his mother was also attending. The wine at the wedding feast ran out, and Jesus's mother came to him and said, "They have no wine." Jesus didn't tell her he'd fix it but rather said, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." Scripture doesn't record Jesus or his mother having any more interaction, but his mother then said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Jesus told the servants to fill the six stone jars that each held 20 to 30 gallons of water for purification with more water and then to take it to the master of the feast. They filled the jars to the brim, and when the master of the feast tasted the water that had become wine, he exclaimed to the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." (John 2:1-11).

So much in the passage resonated with me, and these are my main takeaways:

Jesus wants to increase our joy

Jesus chose a wedding, an event marked by joy, laughter, and celebration for his first recorded miracle.

The first time he displayed his power publicly was not a monumental crisis — no one was starving or dying or in unspeakable agony. Certainly running out of wine would have been a major embarrassment to the family but having plentiful wine was more of a luxury than a need. And yet **Jesus wanted the wedding party and guests to have more than the bare necessities; he wanted to add to the joy of the wedding celebration.** *As I read, I was reminded that Jesus cares about every detail of my life. Nothing that impacts me is unimportant to him. He is after my joy. He wants to protect me from humiliation. He invites me to celebration and delight as I turn to him.*

I need to ask the Lord for more than I do. Too often I subtly screen my requests, focusing on the ones that seem most godly and significant and ignoring anything that seems trivial. Wine at a wedding might have fallen into the latter category, but clearly the Lord did not see this as unimportant. He wants me to bring to him the simple things that I worry about. The situations where I feel embarrassed, unprepared, or inadequate. ***He doesn't condemn or judge me for what I'm asking so I don't need to filter my requests and make them all seem serious and spiritual — I just need to bring them to him.***

Jesus bids us to trust him

At Cana, Mary didn't know what Jesus would do after she told him about the wine shortage. He didn't indicate to her that he would do anything. Sometimes when I bring a concern to the Lord, I leave my prayer time feeling empty, wondering if anything will change at all. When I don't sense any confirmation, I wonder if my request was heard, let alone acted upon. But I find hope in what the angel said to the prophet Daniel,

“Your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.” (Daniel 10:12). Like Mary, we can trust that Jesus has heard us, and will always do what is best for us.

After I have brought my need to God, I must obey what he tells me. I look around after I pray to see how God might be answering or directing me. **That was a critical part of how George Mueller prayed – he made a specific request and then immediately looked to see how God was answering him.** While the answer wasn’t always what Mueller expected, he always expected there would be an answer.

Through our obedience, Jesus turns the ordinary into extraordinary

In the wedding at Cana, Jesus asked the servants to do something simple, so simple they may have questioned whether it would do any good. The servant who was drawing the water from the purification jar and taking it to the master of the feast may have felt foolish, fearful of what the master of the feast would say. It didn’t make sense. The servant couldn’t have known that this ordinary act would produce something so extraordinary.

I remember when my ex-husband left, I begged God to bring something good out of my pain and to help me not be bitter. I did very ordinary things in response, journaling my feelings, releasing them to God, and him to help me forgive. It never felt like I was doing anything special but what God did in exchange was breathtaking. At my daughter’s wedding, my husband Joel and I were able to sit at a table with my ex-husband and his wife, their children, and his parents. And I loved being with them. We laughed together and I realized how forgiveness had changed all of us. *Though the everyday steps of obedience seemed insignificant at the time, the Lord used my ordinary actions to bring about an extraordinary change in me.*

The Lord gives us more than we ask for

Whoever was responsible for the wine shortage at Cana was probably panicking. There are and were so many details to keep track of in planning a wedding, but wine supply back then was one of the most critical. If discovered, this mistake could have led to criticism, gossip, and humiliation among the community. **And yet precisely because of their need, they received wine that was far better than they had before. Their need was the catalyst to receive a greater blessing because when Jesus transforms anything, it becomes richer, fuller, and more satisfying.** What began as a humbling problem became a wedding highlight and symbol of delight.

We all have places in our lives that we wish weren’t difficult, painful, or broken. We agonize over our mistakes, replay missed opportunities, long for situations to be easier. ***No one welcomes loss or need; suffering always comes uninvited. And yet suffering and finding God’s grace in it is one of the most soul-satisfying, joy-producing, God-glorifying experiences in life. Encountering God in suffering is better than never having suffered at all.***

*I’ve underlined the words “Everyone serves the good wine first...but you have kept the good wine until now” (John 2:10) in every Bible I have because that beautifully describes life in Christ. The good wine keeps getting better the more we know the Lord. Most things in the world lose their appeal over time. Things that once enthralled us soon get old and we look for new things to satisfy us. But life in Christ is the opposite. It gets richer over time. **The more I know Jesus, the more joy I have in him, and the better I understand that our Lord always saves the best wine until the end.***