

That You May Believe in Miracles

John 2

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, June 17, 2018

Before we get started today, I want to wish a Happy Father's Day to everyone. I don't know what you guys got for Father's Day, but I got pajamas and a coffee cup. So, I think I racked up pretty good. I always promised myself I wouldn't be that dad who couldn't get like a normal cool gift, and so I got pajamas this year. It was good, very blessed.

Also, if you look around the room and wonder where some of the men are today and some of our ladies, our fishermen are having a great time this weekend. We've got 12 men who went out together fishing on a boat. I told them that sounded pretty Biblical. 12 men on a boat, something out of the Bible. I said, "To make it even more Biblical, why don't you guys try walking on water and just come back, and we'll talk about that." And so, we'll see how that goes.

My father-in-law is actually on the trip, and he's having a great time. I told him, "You can't go unless you learn some Canadian fish." And so, I was filling him in on the Canadian fish that I know about personally, like the Canadian big fish and the Canadian small fish. And that's all I know about Canadian fish. There's a Canadian river fish as well and Canadian sea fish. But they're having a great time and be praying for them, they're coming back tonight.

And that leads to our sermon for this morning. So, if you would, turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of John. Because this morning we're going to study the One who really did walk on water. The One who really did take 12 men out on a boat; the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you're new to us this morning, we're on the front end of a series on the life of Christ called the "That You May Believe" series. Which is an unusual title but it comes from the very end of the Gospel of John. I'll just read this to you. But John 20:31 tells us why John wrote this book. And he says, "These things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." John says, "I wrote this book so that you would believe. That was the whole idea behind this Gospel."

If you think about it, there's a lot of books that are written so that you would believe something. For instance, children's books are written so that you would make belief. That's one way this word is used. So, you would use your imagination and make things up. My kids like reading Winnie-the-Pooh books. And they talk about a little bear that likes honey and he walks and talks and wears a red shirt. But that's not real. You have to make it up and believe it. But that's not what John means when he uses the word "believe" here. It's a different idea.

Other books talk about the power of belief, and the idea is if you believe something strong enough, you can have the power to create it. You need to have a positive attitude and you'll succeed. I actually found a website that said, "You will get ahead in life if you say, 'I can, I will, I believe.'" But that's not what John means here either.

There's other books that talk about the hope of belief, which basically means you need to hope in something. That's the way they use this word "I believe" means "I hope" "I wish it".

But when John says, "I'm writing so that you may believe," he means, "I'm writing so that you may believe the truth. I'm writing so you would believe things that actually happened. And what actually happened," John says "is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The word "Christ" is another word for Messiah or a Saviour, the One who paid the price for your sins. And Son of God is another word for God. John says, "I'm writing so you would believe that and be saved."

The story is told of a wealthy church that did an invitation at the end of a service, and a prostitute walked forward. A woman who was very evil in the town and everyone gasped. They couldn't believe this lady was coming forward at the end. She grabbed the microphone and told the congregation, she said that, "Someone told me you could be saved through Jesus. They told me you could be forgiven at the cross, and I believe that and my whole life has been changed." To which the pastor picked up the microphone and he said, "When we invite people to Jesus, we'd better mean it." Because belief changes you.

That's why John wrote this gospel, so that you would believe in Christ and be changed and be different. Which is very important because of what we're going to talk about today. This morning, I want us to talk about the issue of miracles. We're going to start looking at the signs or the miracles that Jesus performed. "That's what I want you to believe in," John says. "It's one of the things I want you to know and be saved."

If you noticed in your bulletin when you came in this morning (I wrote these out for you), but the Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus performed 35 miracles (35 that we know about). Now, the last verse in the Gospel of John says, "There were many other things which Jesus did, and if they were written in detail, the whole world could not contain them." So, there are more than these miracles, way more. But these are just the ones that are listed in the gospels. And some of them are doubled up on. So, maybe Mark and Luke write about the same miracle multiple times.

But I wanted to read these out to you so that you know what we're talking about when we say Jesus did miracles. So, let me take you through that handout in your bulletin. In His three and a half years of ministry (we believe the Lord was with us for about three and a half years), this is what He did when it comes to the miraculous.

It says Jesus turned water into wine. He healed an official's son. He delivered a demoniac or a demon-possessed man in the synagogue, which is interesting because demons are not supposed to be in the synagogue. As you can imagine, that was an interesting thing to do.

He healed Peter's mother-in-law. He calls the first miraculous catch of fish. He cleansed a leper, He healed a leper. He healed a paralytic man. He healed a sick man at the pool of Bethesda. He healed a man with a withered hand. He healed a centurion's servant. He raised a widow's son from the dead. By the way, if you were a widow and your son died, you are completely destitute. That's why He did that.

He healed a blind man and a dumb spirit. He stopped a storm. He delivered a demoniac in Gadara. He healed a woman with a hemorrhage. He raised Jairus' daughter. He healed two blind men. He cast out a dumb spirit. He fed the 5,000. He walked on water. He cast out a demon from a Syrophenician's daughter. You could translate that from a Gentile's daughter, and you see the

implications there.

He healed a deaf person. He fed the 4,000 which was different from the 5,000. He healed the blind man at Bethsaida. He cast out a demon from a little boy. He found money in a fish's mouth. He healed a man born blind. He healed a woman who was sick for 18 years. He healed a man with dropsy. He raised Lazarus from the dead. Cleansed ten lepers. Healed blind Bartimaeus. He cursed a fig tree, which was the only destructive miracle that He did. The only time He destroyed something with a miracle. He healed the High Priest servant's ear. And He caused the second miraculous catch of fish.

That's quite a list, isn't it? It's pretty impressive. I mean if that's all you did, that's enough right there to fill up three and a half years of ministry. But it's only a small sampling, He did way more than that. And John says, "I want you to believe in these things. I want you to affirm that it's true, that it's a fact. That only the Christ, the Son of God could do something like this."

We might add as we're looking at this list, that nobody doubted the validity of these miracles. If you read the Gospels, nobody doubted that these were real. In John three, Nicodemus came to Him and said, "Rabbi, we know that You've come from God as a teacher, for no one can do the signs You do unless God is with Him." The "we" there that Nicodemus refers to, is the Pharisees. In other words, even His enemies knew that these things were miracles. They would eventually change their mind and say, "Satan did those miracles," which is an ultimate blasphemy, but they never doubted that they were supernatural.

And Jesus Himself alludes to this when He tells a group of Jews in John ten. He said, "If you don't believe Me, at least believe My works or My miracles so that you would understand that I am in the Father. This is how you can tell I'm the Messiah." Jesus says, "This is how you can tell I'm the Son of God, because I did miracles like this." A normal man couldn't do this, which is the point of this. Miracles are not the normal way of doing things. That's what makes them supernatural. That's what makes them a sign.

And we might add that they don't happen every day, not even in Bible times. I think oftentimes, we read the Bible and we think miracles just happened all the time. Like the people back then were just floating on air all the time because it was just miracle after miracle after miracle. Because every time you open the Bible, right? It's another miracle. Those of you that teach the kids downstairs with the flannel graphs, you do miracles all the time down there, right?

But that's not really the way it was. In fact, if you take the Bible as a whole, there are only five times when miracles occurred on a regular basis, only five. The beginning of Israel as a nation, the conquest of the Promised Land. The call of Israel to repent under Elijah and Elisha in the Book of Kings, the ministry of Jesus and the ministry the Apostles. Other than that, they didn't happen very often. Which is what made them so powerful. You guys understand if miracles happened all the time, they wouldn't be powerful, right? It wouldn't be a big deal.

So, for example, when Moses did the ten plagues over Egypt, the thing that got everyone's attention is that they didn't walk out on their porch and step on frogs every day, right? That was rare, it was unusual. They didn't wake up in the morning and have boils all over their skin. And that was the point of it. Miracles are very rare.

We could say it one more way, most of the people in the Bible never performed a single miracle. Do you know that? Something to think about. Most of the people never performed one. So, for instance, Adam and Eve to my knowledge, never did a miracle. They talked to a snake, I mean that's kind of miraculous, but that didn't go so well...I'm trying my Pastor jokes here, they're falling flat. But they didn't do one. There's only a handful of sinless people that have ever lived, right? Adam and Eve and Jesus - Adam and Eve never did a miracle.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never did one; the Fathers of Israel. They had a normal life like we did. David never did a miracle. Solomon never did a miracle. The Major Prophets didn't do one; Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel (again, not that I can tell). The Minor Prophets, other than Jonah who was swallowed by a whale, they didn't do miracles.

In the New Testament, we don't read of Timothy or Titus doing one. As a matter of fact, Timothy gets sick and Paul tells him to take a little wine for his stomach. He doesn't say, "Go heal yourself."

Here's something interesting, John the Baptist never did a miracle. Which is something to think about. Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke, He said, "I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John the Baptist." Jesus said, "This is the greatest man of all." He said, "This is the greatest prophet there ever was." And he never did a miracle, because they don't happen all the time. They were rare even in Bible times.

The Historian Philip Schaff said, "The one way you can tell a true miracle from a false one, is by how often it happens." He said, "If you study church history, false miracles happen all the time. They are very commonplace. It's the true miracles that are rare. That's what makes them stand out."

I say that to you just as a way of an introduction, because I'm guessing some of you may be wrestling with miracles today. We come to a passage like this one and this is hard for you to believe. You read about the Ten Plagues, about the frogs and the boils and you say, "I can't believe that. That's too much." Or you read about Jesus stopping a storm, and you say, "That's taking it too far." But let me just say on the front end here, that if it didn't take it too far, it wouldn't be a miracle, right?

Miracles by nature of what they are, they take it too far. The question is not, "Is this too much to believe?" The question is, "Does the Bible teach it? Does the Bible talk about miracles? Does it tell you they occurred?" And I want to tell you this morning that it does. And this morning, we want to look at the first miracle Jesus ever performed.

By the way, I could say it this way in a very practical level. In His book on miracles, C.S. Lewis says, "This is the result of having a personal God. He won't leave you alone. He can't help but do things that blow your mind." If you had an impersonal God, He wouldn't do that. If you had a distant God, He wouldn't bother you. But he says you have a personal God which means you're in for anything. And we see that here with Jesus' first miracle.

In John chapter two, the Lord Jesus turns water into wine. That's His first miracle, that's the first sign that the Scriptures tell us that He did. And just to set the stage for this, if you look in verse

one of this passage, it starts off by saying, “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee.”

Now, just to give you some background on that because it's very important. Cana was a small town in Galilee, the northernmost part of Israel. Israel was divided into three regions, provinces. Judea in the south (where Jerusalem was), Samaria in the middle and then you had Galilee up in the north where the fishermen lived; the country folk, the blue-collar people. This is not fishing like you're going on a vacation fishing, this is fishing like your livelihood. And it was a pretty rural area. There were some sizeable populations in Galilee, but the people were kind of country folk. They had an accent. They were the ones that were often kicking up revolts in Israel.

I come from the south, I'll tell you Southerners are easily agitated. Tennessee loses a football game, and they burn the town down. Galilee was kind of like that. Judea in the south was where the rich people lived, the aristocracy. Galilee was different, and Cana was the remote village on the western side of it, making it almost in the middle of nowhere. In fact, Cana was so small we don't even know where it was today. Archaeologists haven't found the ruins of Cana. We know the area, but we don't know the exact spot.

John 21:2 says Nathaniel was from there. So, this might be why they were going to this wedding. Nathaniel got invited back to Cana, and he brought Jesus along with some of the other disciples. In John chapter four, the Lord heals an official's son in Cana. But other than that, the Bible never mentions this town. It has three references and that's all.

And just before telling us where this miracle occurs in Cana of Galilee, verse one also tells us when it occurs. It says, “It happened on the third day.” That means the third day after Jesus' conversation with Nathaniel. So in chapter 1:43, the Lord meets Nathaniel and they have a conversation where Jesus says in verse 51, He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” And then three days later they go to a wedding.

Which is a little bit confusing on the timeline because seven days have actually passed since the beginning of John's Gospel. If you add the whole thing up, an entire week has gone by where the priests and Levites go to John the Baptist, and Jesus calls His first disciples and some other things happen. It's been a busy week. And to rest up, they go to a wedding, which brings us to our story.

So, if you're taking notes in John chapter two, I want to give you three marks of a Biblical miracle. When we talk about miracles in the Bible, what are we talking about? Let me give you three marks, or guidelines, for Biblical miracles. The section of John's Gospel is actually called The Book of Miracles. Because in John chapter two through 11, it's just miracle after miracle after miracle. But this one kicks the whole thing off, this is how it starts. And so, let's use this as a template, or a guide, for the other ones we'll see in the week to come. Here are three marks of a Biblical miracle.

The first one is this: it has a purpose. A Biblical miracle has a purpose. It doesn't happen just to happen, it's not a random event. When I was a younger man, I really wrestled with miracles in the Bible. Not because of the scientific issue with it, but because they seem so random to me. I

didn't understand what the point was. Well, Biblical miracles always had a point. Which is important, because this one really does seem random. And if you look at verse one, John tells us this, he says,

1 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."

Just to walk you through this passage, because the context is important, a wedding in the Ancient Near East in Israel was very different from what it is today. It actually had three stages to it. An Israeli wedding, a Jewish wedding in the first century, had three stages.

The first was the contract, where the parents of the bride and groom got together and made a contract for their kids, they made a match. The kids didn't have much say in it. As a matter of fact, some studies say the average relationship back then, or the average wedding, the girl would have been 13, 14. The boy would have been 15 or 16. But the parents got together and made a decision for them that was either put down on paper or it was said in front of witnesses and that was the contract. In the contract, they talked about the details of the marriage, where the couple would live, how they would provide for themselves. They also exchanged a dowry or a payment from the bride's father to the groom. That was part of their custom.

Which leads to the second stage which was the engagement period, where the couple was engaged or bound to each other; legally. They weren't husband and wife yet, but they were considered to be in a sense legally married already. They didn't live together, they didn't have relations together. But the contract had been made, the dowry had been given. So, the only way to get out of the engagement was to get a certificate of divorce.

If you remember when Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he wanted to divorce her. Remember, they hadn't been married yet. See that's the idea here, that's the culture behind that.

It's also important to mention that during this period of engagement that could last for about a year, the groom had to prove himself worthy of his bride. He had to hold a steady job, he had to support a family. He had to demonstrate character and maturity. If he couldn't do that, the engagement was off. If he couldn't show those things, the marriage was over. Her dad would step in, possibly demand the dowry back, cancel off the wedding.

Which leads to the third stage which is talked about here in John two, which was the actual wedding itself. The ceremony would be held at the bride's home or in her hometown. And afterwards, the couple would finally be married. And what is of interest to us this morning is that in a tiny village like Galilee, the whole town would be invited. It'd literally be a community affair. The whole village would come to the celebration, and there would be guests coming in from out of town who had to walk to get there or they had to ride a camel or a donkey or something. And so, the ceremony would last for a week. It can be a long affair.

Which is why verse three says, "They have no wine," or it says, "They've run out of wine." That's not because they drank a lot of it, that's because the celebration was so long. I mean drunkenness was frowned upon in first century Israel, so was gluttony. It was a very temperate

society. But they ran out of wine; the implication here is because of the groom's mistake. This guy messed up. During the ceremony, it was the groom's job too to pay for everything. It was his job to provide the food and the drinks. If you remember, I've read some commentaries that said in a society like this one, it was very seldom that anybody would ever be full. I mean food, drink, it was not very commonplace. We go down to Tim Hortons and we can get full for what, \$6? They couldn't do that.

So, an event like this was a big deal. It was his job to make sure everything was provided. And if they ran out, it could imply that he wasn't ready to be married yet. The trial period was still going on during the ceremony, the engagement period was still in effect, and this could ruin the whole thing.

I was thinking about this, I thought, "You know, I just showed up at my wedding in a tuxedo and nervous. That's all I did." This is a different thing. We actually had a chocolate fountain and I remember thinking, "Well, if all the chocolate runs out, you know, they got chocolate at McDonalds down the road." That wasn't the way here.

You can add to this also, that in rural Galilee or anywhere really at that time, you had two beverages. You had water and you had wine, and that was really it. You didn't have a chocolate fountain, you didn't have soda punch; water and wine. And water was for everyday use and wine was for celebrations. It was for festive occasions. And if the wine ran out, the celebration was kind of over, in a sense. And the point is this was an embarrassing thing for this young man, it was humiliating. It could have some big cultural implications in his life at a young age.

So, Mary comes to Jesus and says, "They have no wine." That's the emergency, that's the concern. Nazareth was in the vicinity of Cana toward the center southwest of Galilee, or where we think Cana was. And so, Jesus' family somehow knew this young couple. Some think they might have been related to them. So, Mary comes to Jesus and says, "They have no wine." And Jesus answer's very interesting in verse four. He says, "Woman, what does this have to do with us?" Now, you read that in the 21st century and you say, "That sounds very demeaning. That title woman there." But it was actually the term *gunē* which meant something like "madam" or "Mrs". It was a term of respect.

And with it, Jesus says, "Madam, My hour has not yet come," or "My hour to do miracles. My time to show myself as the Messiah, that hasn't come yet. So, why bring this up?" And Jesus goes on to show us that He's not mad at Mary, because He does the miracle. He gives in to her request. But I want to stop here for a moment and point something out to you, that you might have seen in this passage or you might not have thought about.

But Jesus helps this couple out because He's not against having a good time. Did you see that? Jesus is not against having a good time. Here we are in John chapter two, and you see right off the bat that although He's a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering, He's not a gloom and doom Messiah. He's not a killjoy Saviour. He came to enjoy Himself here in a sinless way. Maybe that's another way to say that. You can enjoy yourself and not sin. You can kick back and relax and still please God.

I've heard it said that some Christians are saved everywhere but on their face, because they never

smile. I mean Jesus didn't do that, He smiled. I don't think Mary would have come up to Him for help if He would have been frowning all the time at the wedding. That wouldn't make sense, right? "Now go to sourpuss, He's not going to help anybody."

In the third century AD, a monk asked his teacher what he should do to become a Christian; what he had to forsake. And he was told this, he said, "You need to forsake coloured clothes for one thing. Get rid of everything in your ..." We'd be okay with that in BC because everybody wears black all the time. So, we'd be all right with that. But he said, "Get rid of everything in your wardrobe that is not white and stop sleeping on soft pillows because that will ruin yourself control." He says, "Sell all your musical instruments, and don't eat any more white bread." He said, "You cannot, if you're sincere about Christ, take warm baths or shave your beard, because to shave is to go against what God has created."

Some of you who have beards will be encouraged by that, or if you don't eat white bread. But some Christians live like that, right? How do you become a Christian? "Well, you've got to give up this and give up that. Don't do this and don't do that," to the point that they're miserable. Now, there is self-control in the Christian life, and we do repent of sin. But you're not godlier just because you're miserable.

Jesus was a great example of that. I was thinking of different things He did to have fun. He played with children, do you remember that? Children came up to Him and He said, "Don't cast the children away." You can't play with children and then not smile or cry. It's like the two different...you know. But He smiled, He played with children. He went fishing partly for work, but it seems like times, He was out in the Sea of Galilee for recreation. And He goes to a wedding here, a seven-day wedding, a week-long wedding, because he was not against having fun.

In fact, this was a charge His enemies brought against Him. In Matthew 11, Jesus' enemies said, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'"

It then leads to another application to this passage. Jesus was not against compassion here. You don't have a gloom and doom Messiah, but you don't have a cold one either. You don't have an indifferent Saviour. Jesus cares about your struggles, He cares about your pain. Jesus tells Mary that His time has not yet come. His time to reveal Himself, His time to display His power. But He does the miracle anyway, because He cares about people. He didn't want to see this young man ruined.

In fact, if you look at Jesus' miracles, that list I just put in your bulletin, if you look at them one by one, you'll notice that this was the point of all of them: He was helping people. And they were all done to help someone except for the cursing of the fig tree. That was a very unusual one, the only destructive one. But other than that, Jesus was like a walking hospital in Israel. He was like a healing factory doing one healing after another.

If you think about it, the Lord could have done anything He wanted to on this earth. As the Son of God, He could have started an army and taken over Israel. That way, He could've made Himself king and gotten into politics. He could have built a seminary and started a mega church

or a mega synagogue on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He could've written books and made money, but He chose to heal people. Because that's the kind of savior He was.

D. L Moody said he came to faith in Christ because a Sunday School teacher wept over his sins. Moody said, "I never wept over my sins." He said, "I never cried over them, but that man did and it changed my life." Jesus wept over people's sins. He knew when to smile, but He also knew when to hold someone's hand and weep. Which is what He's doing here in a sense. Look, He didn't have to do this. Do you guys get that? He could be the Messiah and never help this couple out.

But He does, and that leads to the next mark of a Biblical miracle. And that is: that it has a surprise to it. It has a purpose or a reason, that is to show mercy and compassion, to show that He cared. But it also has a surprise, it has a startling effect. Like I told you before, that's what made it a miracle. It does things that are out of the ordinary. And if you look in verses five through ten, John tells us what this looks like, this out of the ordinary event.

In verse five, it says,

5 His mother said of the servants, "Whatever He [Jesus] says to you, go 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."

Now, like we did in the first part of this chapter, I want to say a few words about the background here. But verse six starts out by saying, "Now, there were six stone waterpots there for the Jewish custom of purification." According to Leviticus 11:33, clay jars could not be used for purification in the Old Testament, because they were dirty. The clay could break off and mix in the water and make you unclean if you used it.

So, the Jews used stones jars for their purification. They used them to wash their hands in before they ate. They used them to wash their feet in after they travelled. There were no paved roads back then. All the roads were dirt, especially to a town like Cana. A town like Cana may not have had any roads at all. And everyone wore sandals which means their feet were dirty after travelling.

You guys remember when Jesus washed the disciples' feet? You guys remember that story? The interesting thing about that story is at the time it took place, it was the rainy season in Israel. The disciples' feet would have actually been muddy. Here, we don't know when this took place, but it seems like the feet would be covered in dirt. And when they went to a fancy event like a wedding, stone jars were placed near the door to wash your hands and your feet off.

Now, you wouldn't put your feet in the stone jars, that would be kind of gross. But you would have a ladle or a spoon to take it out and pour on them. Or maybe you put your hand, dip your

hand in the jar and put it on your feet. And clean them that way, multiple times if necessary. So, the water stayed dirty or at least the jars stayed kind of dirty during the feast. By the way, you wouldn't want to drink from them...get that idea? Okay, good.

Now, the verse tells us how big these jars were. This is also interesting. Verse six says, "They contained twenty or thirty gallons each." Literally in Greek, that means two or three *metrétés* from which we get the word "meter". A *metrétés* was a Roman standard of weight that equaled about 38 liters or ten gallons in our day. And verse six says there were six of them coming to about 20 or 30 gallons each or 113 liters each. Now, if you add it all up, that's about 150 gallons worth of water. I brought a milk carton here today to show you how big this is. I'll set it right here so you guys can look at that. But if you can imagine 150 of those, that's how much water we're talking about here. This was a large miracle. It was a big event.

One author said that, "If all this water was turned into wine, it could be enough to fill 2,000 glasses worth. And if that wine was diluted with water, it could fill 3,000 glasses worth." It was huge.

It might also be worth pointing out that Jesus says in this verse to "Fill the waterpots with water." And just a couple thoughts on that. One thought is this, if these things were filled with that much wine and this was toward the end of the wedding, then there would have been a lot of wine left over that the young man could sell and make a profit off of. Remember this is a poor town, these are poor people. So, this was in a sense, Jesus' wedding gift on top of what's consumed at the wedding.

Also, the reason He says, "Fill the waterpots with water," is to show that He didn't slip anything into it. Now, Jesus didn't use any magic potions or tricks, He didn't sprinkle any powder into the jars, because there was no room for that. Which is important, because when this miracle was done, somebody would want to know where all the wine came from. Somebody would want to know how it showed up in these waterpots. And the servants could say, "Jesus did it."

I also want you to notice the change that occurred in this. If you look in verses eight through nine, it says this was an immediate change, if you noticed that. It was an immediate transformation. The servants poured water into the jars and they took it to the master, and poof, it was changed. There was no word spoken, Jesus didn't wave His hands over it or any of that, it just changed.

And verse ten tells you what kind of wine it changed into. Verse ten says, "And he said to him, 'Every man serves the good wine first and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.'" If you notice, he says, "This was the good wine." He doesn't even say, "A good wine." He says, "the good wine." In other words, this was the best that had been served so far.

Now, if you put yourself in that context back then, if you were a disciple watching as the headwaiter did this, you would probably be saying, "Don't drink that." Right? Or if you were a little sarcastic like me, you'd be watching and saying, "I wonder if that tastes like feet?" Right? "I wonder if that tastes like dirty hands or soapy water or something," right? These were not the jars you drink from. That's just the point. These were the jars you clean yourself off with. And

the man says this is the best wine he had tasted so far. So, not only did Jesus turn the water into wine, but He took jars that were used for something else and He made the best wine out of those.

Just a note on this headwaiter. The term “headwaiter” means “superintendent of the room of the three couches”. Aren't you glad you have an English translation of the Bible and not the original Greek? “Superintendent of the room of the three couches”- that's a mouthful. But it referred to the guy who basically oversaw the wedding. He ran the feast, he set up chairs, he took care of the guest list, and he took care of the wine as well. Which means he knew what good wine tasted like.

Now, whether he knew that all the wine had run out, we don't know. Maybe, he did know and he's the one who told Mary about it. But the point here, in verse ten, is that he calls the bridegroom aside and he brags on him for providing the very best stuff. Which would have brought honour to this young man. It would have showed that he was ready for a bride. It would have saved the wedding. And I bring this up to show you that Jesus didn't perform parlor tricks, did He? He didn't play games with His miracles. You read a story like this and you think He's just playing games. It was nothing like this. The surprise was real, it was undeniable. Everyone who saw this was moved.

I mention that because there seems to be a lot of parlor tricks going on in the church today, would you agree? There seems to be a lot of playing games with miracles. I could say the name of several TV preachers, and I think we would all cringe at some of the ridiculous things they've done in the name of Christ. Or I could mention several TV channels and we would all cringe. They do silly things, foolish things like asking for \$54 million for a private jet because their old jet wasn't fast enough. I don't know if you guys saw that in the news. Or several years ago, in the 1980s, another one said that God would kill him if he didn't raise \$8 million for a project he was working on. He said God would strike him dead.

They use miracles to legitimize those requests. And Jesus never used miracles that way. He never used a single miracle to get rich. I mean in this one, He never made a dime. The young couple it looks like, didn't even know who He was. Or if they knew He was, they don't talk to Him in this passage because He was anonymous, He did it for free. I mean in that whole list I gave you, find one of them where he made money. There was the one where Peter found the coin in the fish's mouth, but that was used to pay the temple tax. Jesus didn't use that to make money.

In fact, I've heard it said that if all the preachers on TV could really heal people like Jesus, then they would do it in hospitals and not in crusades. They would march down to the local hospital because that's what Jesus would have done.

Richard Mayhue in His book *The Healing Promise* points out some other differences between Jesus' miracles and modern-day ones that aren't real. He says Jesus' miracles were immediate, they were public; somebody saw them. They took place on an ordinary, unplanned occasion. In other words, He didn't stage a big crusade and say, “Line all the sick people up and say, ‘I'm going to heal everybody now.’” They were complete and irreversible, and they were undeniable even to detractors. Even Jesus' enemies knew the miracles were real. And that's nothing like a lot of the stuff we see today.

John MacArthur said it this way, he said, “The gift of healing has been claimed through the centuries by Christians and pagans alike.” In other words, Christians are not the only ones who profess miracles, pagan religions do as well. He says, “Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has led the way in claiming the power to heal. They have boasted of healing people with the bones of John the Baptist or Peter or fragments of the cross... Lourdes, a Catholic shrine in France has supposedly been the site of countless miracles. One town in Yugoslavia has drawn more than 15 million people in less than a decade with things like this. They come in search of a miracle from the Virgin Mary, who supposedly appeared to six children there in 1981.”

But he goes on to say, “Oriental psychic healers say they do bloodless surgery. They wave their hands over afflicted organs and say incantations. Supposedly people are cured. Witch doctors and shamans even claim to raise the dead. Occultists use black magic to do lying wonders in the healing arts. Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science claimed to have healed people through telepathy.” He says, “Satan has always held people in his dominion by means of counterfeit miracles and charlatans and tricksters.”

Jesus never did that. He never did one counterfeit miracle. He was no charlatan. This was the real thing. And that leads to a third mark of a Biblical miracle. They have a purpose to show compassion and mercy. They have a surprise, an undeniable surprise, an indisputable surprise. That leads to a third mark of a Biblical miracle, and we'll wrap it up with this one: they have an audience. They have an audience.

There's no point in doing a miracle if you don't have an audience, right? It just wouldn't make sense. And verse 11 talks about the audience this way, it says, “This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”

Before this miracle, if you remember, a week has gone by in the life of the disciples, and Jesus hasn't performed a miracle yet. So before this time, the other Gospels tell us Jesus has been tempted by the devil, He's been baptized by John the Baptist, but He hasn't done any miracles. And now He does this first one. And as a result, the verse says, “His disciples believed in Him.” They believe He was the Son of God, they believed He was the Messiah.

Now, how many disciples were there, we don't know. Chapter one mentions Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathaniel. There might have been more, because John doesn't always give their names. But the point is that they saw it and believed. They saw it and trusted in Him, they knew this was real.

I mention this again because some of you may be struggling with this. Like I said, some of you may not know whether to believe in miracles or not. But I just want to show you as you read this passage, that the men who saw this believed. That's saying something, right? The men who saw this didn't struggle with it, they knew what that was. They knew water doesn't turn into wine on that level, you can't do that. They knew that was a miracle.

If you're wrestling with that this morning, I hope that hits home with you. I hope it has an impact. Because let me tell you how serious this is, you can't be a Christian if you don't believe in miracles, amen? This is a miraculous religion. It's a religion of miracles from start to finish. Jesus becoming man was a miracle. We talked about that last week. One author called that the

grand miracle, the biggest miracle there ever was.

And then Jesus dying on a cross was a miracle. God dying is miraculous. The resurrection was a miracle, His ascension into heaven was a miracle, His sending us the Holy Ghost was a miracle. It was just one miracle after another miracle after another miracle. The way this world started was a miracle. God spoke and it happened. Our new birth in Christ is a miracle. It's one miracle after another. And to deny the miraculous is to deny all of that. To deny something like turning water into wine is to say that none of that could really happen. We can say it this way, you can't believe in the church if you don't believe in miracles, because the church is full of miracles.

Did anybody in here become a Christian naturally? In fact, if you went around the room and you asked our people here at Grace Fellowship, "What did Jesus do for you?" You would hear about miracle after miracle after miracle. "I once was a drug user and Jesus saved me. I once was a proud angry man, and He changed my heart. I once was a gossiping bitter woman, and the Lord got a hold on me." It's just one miracle after another.

You know, an alcoholic once became a Christian and he was asked if he still believed in miracles, and he said, "I do." He said, "Not only did Jesus turn water into wine, but He turned my whiskey into furniture, and He turned my bourbon into groceries and clothes and foods for my kids, and I would say that's a miracle." Amen?

In fact, if you're struggling with this today, if you're wrestling with a passage like this, whether it's true or not, I want to encourage you to talk to someone in our church after the service. Just go up to one of our people and ask them how they became a Christian, and they will testify to this.

Let me say this one other way, because this is important, and we'll close with this. When the Son of God comes, do you think He won't do miracles? I mean seriously, when the Messiah comes, do you think He won't do amazing things? Do you think He won't heal people and help them? Do you think He won't save a wedding and rescue a young man from disaster? Of course He's going to do that. Which is another way of saying, Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Messiah. Won't you believe in Him today. I want you to believe in the One who turned water into wine. And let's ask the Lord for help and trusting in Him with this.

Father, we do live in an age where miracles are in many ways mocked. They're not only mocked outside the church, but sometimes they're even made fun of inside the church. And yet Lord, as we just talked about this morning, everything is at stake if we don't trust in this. Everything is at stake if we don't get it. And so, we pray for Your help at the front of the study of John to trust in Jesus from start to finish. To not only believe in Him at the end of the Gospel when He dies on the cross and rises from the dead, Father we want to believe in Him at the front of it too. We want to trust in Him right here in this miracle in Galilee, in Cana of all places.

Father, I pray for the believing. Those who are saved here this morning who have trusted in Christ and experienced the miracle of a new birth. Lord, with a passage like this, I pray it would bless their hearts and bless their souls as they remember the power of Christ and His mercy and grace, and reaching out to people who are hurting and in need.

Lord, if there's any here today who don't know Christ and they have not trusted in Him, I pray that this would be a passage that would shake them up. Lord, I pray as they read about Jesus

doing something out of the ordinary, I pray He would do something out of the ordinary in their hearts today, and save them.

Father, we thank You for Christ. We thank You not only for the books of the Bible that give us the doctrine about Him, Lord, we thank You for the books that tell us the stories like this one here that are true and reliable and accurate. May we believe them today and bring You glory. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.