

Sermon Text (John 2:1–11 ESV)

¹ On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. 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 this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When 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 ¹⁰ and said to him, “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.” ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Jesus Is Our Perfect Bridegroom

“I take you to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.” This marriage vow (or one that is similar to this) is said by a man who is about to be united in holy matrimony to the woman standing in front of him. That same marriage vow is also said by the woman, with the only difference being that the word “wife” is replaced by the word “husband.” It’s a beautiful vow, and it clearly articulates the commitment that the couple is making. They are vowing that, no matter how bad things get, no matter what their health is like, no matter what their financial situation is, even if they have to die for each other, they will stick together until the bitter end.

It is, indeed, a beautiful vow, but what does this vow imply? It implies that married life is going to be difficult. Every single one of you who has experienced married life probably doesn’t have to think too hard in order to realize just how true this is. Sure, on the outside, there were times when your married life probably looked just fine, idyllic even, but underneath the surface, you

were dealing with problems that you didn't want the rest of the world to know about. There may even be times when it doesn't seem to take too long at all for the problems to begin after the day has begun.

In our reading for today, there is a newlywed couple who came to realize this all too well. They had only just gotten married, and already, they were faced with a big problem: they had run out of wine. In Jesus' time, the Jewish wedding festivities usually lasted an entire week, which took place at the home of the groom after a procession from the bride's home to his took place. Many of the wedding guests would stay the entire week and not go to work. So, to run out of wine would be an embarrassment for the newlyweds. Fortunately, someone was attending the wedding festivities who could solve their problem: Jesus.

Both Jesus and his mother, Mary, were guests at the wedding. Mary was made aware of the problem that the newlyweds now faced (which probably meant that it was a relative of theirs who was getting married, or at least a very close friend of the family) and knew that her son and Savior, Jesus, could solve their problem. So, she found Jesus and said to him, "They have no wine" (verse 3).

Here, Mary gives us both an example of how to pray and an example of how not to pray. Even though he had yet to perform his first miracle, Mary believed that Jesus had the power to solve the wine problem that the newlyweds now faced, and so, she brought the problem to Jesus, confident that he would hear her and answer her. However, when she spoke to him, she wasn't treating him like her Savior; she was treating him like her son. Mary wanted Jesus to help the newlyweds, and she wanted him to work according to her timeline. This is why Jesus answered her by saying, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (verse 4).

When Jesus addressed his mother as “woman,” he wasn’t being disrespectful; this was actually a common and respectful greeting. With this response, Jesus was simply pointing out to Mary that it was not up to her to decide when he would reveal his glory. It was his Father in heaven who was directing his public ministry, not her.

Mary realized her mistake, and she also noticed that Jesus didn’t tell her, “No.” Instead, he told her, “Not yet.” Just as it was not yet time for Jesus to be lifted up on the cross so that he may die for our sins; it was also not yet time for him to reveal his glory by performing his first miracle. But that didn’t mean that Jesus wouldn’t solve the newlyweds’ problem. He fully intended to do so; it would just be on God’s time instead of on Mary’s time. So, Mary went to the servants and said to them, “Do whatever he tells you” (verse 5). And it wouldn’t be too much longer before Jesus did reveal his glory by performing his first miracle, changing the six stone jars of water into wine, and solving the newlyweds’ problem.

This was undoubtedly not the last problem that this newlywed couple ever faced. After all, married life is full of difficulties. And it doesn’t just stop with marriage; it continues on into the rest of family life as well. Taking care of children can prove to be a great challenge, especially when you just can’t seem to figure out what your children need. If it already seemed like you had financial problems, those problems can seem to get even worse when trying to provide for more people, not including what you need to pay in order to send your children to school. Sometimes it seems like children are actively trying to find new ways to get into trouble and cause problems. If brothers and sisters aren’t fighting with each other, they are fighting with their parents. And sometimes, families can get torn apart.

When faced with problems like these, we can follow Mary’s good example and turn to God for help in prayer, trusting that he has the power to help us. However, we can also follow Mary’s

bad example and expect that God is going to answer our prayers the way that we want him to and work within our timeline. But, just like he did to Mary, God shows us that he knows what's best for us and that he knows the perfect time to give us what is best for us. We may think that we know what the best solution to our family problems are, whatever they may be, but if things don't turn out the way that we were hoping them to, it doesn't mean that God didn't hear our prayers or that he doesn't love us. It means that God loves us so much that he wants to give us exactly what we need exactly when we need it. A good example of this is how he sent us the exact kind of Savior that we needed at exactly the right time.

God first promised that a Savior who would save us from our sins was coming shortly after the fall into sin. After God gives this promise, we see Eve thinking that God is going to send the Savior as soon as possible, assuming that her firstborn son, Cain, was the Savior that had been foretold not so long ago. However, God didn't send the promised Savior for thousands of years, and by the time the Savior did come, the Jews had come to expect a completely different kind of Savior. No longer did they expect a Savior who would save them from their sins; instead, they expected one who would save them from the Romans and give them their nation back. God didn't send us a Savior as soon as possible, like Eve wanted, nor did he send us a Savior who would overthrow our oppressive rulers and become an earthly king, like the Jews wanted. He sent us the exact kind of Savior that we needed, one who was without sin, but suffered the punishment that our sins deserved on the cross in our place. And that Savior was sent at the perfect time. As the apostle Paul says, “[W]hen the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4–5).

By his death on the cross, Jesus, our Savior, proved to love us in all of the ways we fail to love our spouses and our families. A husband and wife may vow to die for each other if they need to, but how many husbands and wives would actually be willing to do so if the situation arose? We may think that we would do it, but when we're actually in a situation like that, we may end up finding that it is more difficult to do it than we thought it would be. But Jesus was not like that. He knew exactly what was coming; he knew what he was going to have to do to save us; he knew that he would have to suffer and die on the cross to pay the price for our sins; and he willingly did it. He bore the burdens of all our problems on his shoulders. He laid down his life for his bride, the Church, which you have been made a part of through the waters of baptism, in which you were washed of your sins and made white as snow, like a bride on her wedding day. And because you have received the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice through the waters of baptism, you are guaranteed to partake in the wedding festivities, the marriage feast in heaven, which doesn't just last one day, nor an entire week, but is never ending.

And his innocent death on the cross is only one way that Jesus proves to perfectly love his bride, the Church. When we suffer through difficult times, we can be tempted to give up and let our family suffer through them alone, but Jesus says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). When we are faced with financial difficulties and we don't know how we will provide for our family, we can be tempted to fall into despair instead of turning to God for help and comfort, but the apostle Paul reminds us of God's providence, saying, "[M]y God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Even though we have vowed to our spouses that we will stick together until the bitter end, we can be tempted to leave them and our families if times get too tough, or maybe some

of us have felt the sting of betrayal, but Jesus says, “[B]ehold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

No matter how hard we try, it is impossible for us to keep our marriage vows perfectly, because we are by nature sinful and will continue to be plagued by our sinful natures until the day that God calls us home to the marriage feast in heaven. But Jesus, who laid down his life for his bride, the Church, in order to take away our sins, keeps his vows, his promises, perfectly, because he is our perfect bridegroom.