

Glory Revealed

John 2: 1 – 11

January 31, 2010

I. Introduction

- A. The writer of the gospel of John begins his testimony about Jesus with this message –
 - 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God
- A. All things came into being, or were created, by him
 - 1. Without him not one thing was created
- A. And this Word became flesh, became human, and lived among us
 - 1. We have seen his glory; the glory of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth
- A. From the rest of the gospel, it is clear that John was writing those words about Jesus
 - 1. Testifying to the glory he had seen as he walked and talked with Jesus
 - a. Have you ever thought about what that glory looked like?
- A. Our text for today, from the second chapter of John, concludes with the words –
 - 1. Jesus did this first of his miracles in Cana of Galilee
 - a. And in this miracle, or sign, Jesus' glory was revealed
 - 2. And his disciples, including John, saw his glory and believed in him
- A. If you believe this morning that Jesus is the Son of God, the creator of everything
 - 1. Lord of heaven and earth, then I would venture to guess
 - a. That you also have been convinced, at least in part
 - (1) Because you have seen/experienced signs that have revealed Jesus' glory
 - 2. Those signs come to us in many ways, and not all involve miracles
 - a. But they all point us to one truth – God came down and lived on the earth
 - (1) In human form, in the person who was named Jesus
- A. One of the most radical of all beliefs in Christianity, indeed of all religions
 - 1. It is the cornerstone, the foundation on which our faith is built
 - a. Jesus, God in human flesh, lived among us
 - (1) His first disciples saw, and recognized his glory, his divine nature
 - b. We have their eyewitness testimony as evidence on which to base our faith
 - 2. And I believe Jesus' disciples today are privileged to see that glory revealed, too
 - a. Through the power of the Holy Spirit that continues to live and dwell among us
- A. It may be hard for us to imagine, that something as important as Jesus' divine identity
 - 1. Would be shown through the miracle of changing water into wine

- A. After all, with our understanding of the dangers of over-indulgence
 - 1. In wine and other alcoholic beverages
 - a. We may even shrink from the idea that Jesus would do such a thing
 - 2. It may be helpful for us to remember that some of those dangers
 - a. Such as drinking and driving, were not so much of a risk in those days
- A. But what stands out to me in this story is that –
 - 1. One - This miracle was connected with – as so many of Jesus’ miracles were -
 - a. The stuff of ordinary, everyday life
 - (1) In this case, the refreshment served at a wedding celebration
 - 2. And - The motivation for doing this miracle was to help a friend in need
 - a. Not a spectacular display of supernatural power, but an act of caring
 - (1) Let’s take a closer look

II. John places this event very early in the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry

- A. The village of Cana, to the best of our knowledge, was located not far from Nazareth
 - 1. So the wedding may have involved relatives of Joseph or Mary
 - a. Or Jesus, and his mother, may simply have been invited as friends of the family
- A. It might seem strange to us that Jesus’ disciples were included as guests
 - 1. But weddings were community events, lasting for several days
 - a. Friends and neighbors were commonly welcomed at such events
- A. I don’t know how the hosts for this celebration had any idea
 - 1. How many people to expect or to prepare for
 - a. You can ask Dottie some time about weddings in Putnam County
 - (1) Just to the north of where we lived before we moved here
 - 2. I get the feeling that weddings in Cana were similar in some ways –
 - a. You just expect that all the people in the community will come
- A. And we aren’t told who was responsible for the misfortune of running out of wine
 - 1. But anyone who has invited guests into your home for a meal
 - a. Understands how embarrassing such a situation might have been
- A. We can imagine the word spreading around among the folks in charge
 - 1. And eventually to the guests at the celebration as well –
 - a. Hey, we’re out of wine. What are we going to do?
 - 2. Could somebody run down to neighborhood market and buy some more wine?
 - a. How many wineskins do we need? How much would it cost?

3. I'm only guessing that some of those questions would have been raised
 - a. But somehow, Mary the mother of Jesus, hears about the situation
 - (1) And brings the problem to Jesus for a solution
- A. I find it really intriguing to try to imagine what prompted Mary to do that
1. Had Jesus done something before that made her believe he was capable
 - a. Of dealing with this dilemma better than anyone else
 2. Did Mary, or even Jesus, bear some responsibility for providing the wine?
 - a. It doesn't sound like it, to hear Jesus' initial response
 - (1) Mary says - Son, the hosts have run out of wine
 - (a) And Jesus replies – So, why should we care about that?
 3. And then the statement that must have sounded really strange at the time –
 - a. My hour has not yet come
- A. The hour for miracle-working? The time to begin revealing his true identity?
1. I don't know all that is implied in those words, but one thing is clear
 - a. Once Jesus began performing public miracles, his whole life was changed
- A. The new understanding of Jesus that was given to his disciples that day
1. Was a positive result of displaying his miraculous power
 - a. But it was also the beginning of a challenge to the existing authorities
 2. If Jesus had the power to do miracles, then at the very least
 - a. He must be placed in the same category as the prophets of old
 - (1) Men who were considered to be in a position of greater authority
 - (a) Than kings or other rulers, certainly higher than other religious leaders
 3. In a very real sense, this miracle Jesus performed was also the first step
 - a. On a path that would lead him directly to the cross
- A. But Mary couldn't have understood all of that, and in her mind
1. There seems to have been an assurance that Jesus could/would do something
 - a. To help their relatives/friends out of this difficult social situation
 2. Not at all put off by Jesus' initial response, she says to the servants –
 - a. Just do whatever he tells you to do
- A. I would love to have seen the look on Jesus' face at that point
1. When your mother expresses that kind of confidence in your abilities
 - a. In public, no less – how are you going to say no?
 2. And so, Jesus tells the servants what they should do to resolve the problem

- A. If you had been one of the servants that Jesus spoke to that day
 - 1. How do you think you would have responded?
 - a. Not that they had much choice about it
 - (1) Servants were not in the habit of disagreeing with anyone
 - b. But can you imagine what they were thinking?
 - 2. We're out of wine, the guests are unhappy, our master is embarrassed
 - a. And this guy has us pouring water into these jars that are kept sanctified
 - (1) For the rituals of washing or cleansing for religious purification
 - (a) What in the world is going on here?
- A. But, as good servants always do when commanded, they filled the jars with water
 - 1. Not an easy task, when it involves over 100 gallons of water drawn from a well
 - a. And we might note that Jesus doesn't give the next instruction
 - (1) Until they had completed the first step of the process
 - b. You can let me know if you see any significance in that for us today
 - 2. The next part of the directions were even more curious than the previous one –
 - a. Now dip out a cupful of the water you poured into those jars
 - (1) And take it to the guy in charge of the refreshments
 - 3. What? This poor fellow is tearing his hair out because there's no wine to serve
 - a. And you're telling us to take him a glass of water to drink?
 - (1) That doesn't make any sense, in fact, it seems rather foolish
 - (a) But they were servants, they didn't argue, they did what Jesus said
- A. And when the chief steward takes a drink from the cup that is brought to him
 - 1. He declares it to be better than the wine that has been served earlier
 - a. Though, as John points out, he wasn't aware of how it was provided
 - 2. But the servants knew...and Mary knew, and Jesus' disciples knew
 - a. And what they knew revealed something to them about Jesus
 - (1) John says it revealed to them a little bit of glory
 - 3. I say a little bit, because we know now that there would be much more to come
 - a. But at the time, it was an important revelation, so much so
 - (1) That John says the disciples saw it, and believed...in Jesus
- A. What was it that they believed? That Jesus was a miracle-worker
 - 1. Well, that surely was a part of it, and along with that belief
 - a. Came a certain understanding that Jesus was not an ordinary man

2. Perhaps the first evidence that this man they were committed to following
 - a. Was really the Messiah that they hoped for and would come to believe in
- A. Someone has said that true miracles are the sign of divine intervention
1. And the manner in which this miracle was performed made it even more special
 - a. Jesus didn't say or do anything directly to the water as far as we know
 2. It was as though the water recognized its creator and obeyed his will
 - a. That, in itself spoke of the glory of the "incarnate Word"
- A. But even more astonishing than the miracle itself is the context in which it is done
1. It's as though, at the very beginning of his public ministry
 - a. Jesus is not only proclaiming his divinity, his power over creation
 2. But he is making a point about how his authority would be used
 - a. And as such, he demonstrates for his disciples and for us
 - (1) A characteristic of the nature of God
- A. Almighty God, who could bend all the forces of nature to conform to his will
1. Limits that authority to the simple act of helping out a friend in need
 - a. Of all the miracles that Jesus would perform during his earthly life
 - (1) What people remembered most was not his amazing display of power
 - (a) But the fact that "Jesus went about doing good"
 2. Yes, the miracles helped people to believe that Jesus was the Messiah
 - a. But they also gave them and us a picture of a certain kind of Messiah
- A. There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus could have become king over Israel
1. If he had chosen to do so, he could have overthrown the Roman empire
 - a. He could have ruled the world...just as Satan had tempted him to do
 - (1) In the wilderness not long before
 2. Instead, Jesus chose to identify himself with the nitty-gritty stuff of human existence
 - a. He chose to use his power, not to exercise authority over humanity
 - (1) But, as Greg Boyd puts it, to "come under" people in times of need
 - (a) And lift them up with the power of love
- A. It is with that same humble spirit that Jesus continues to come to us today
1. Knowing that he is walking a path that leads to rejection and suffering
 - a. Because we, just like the people who lived 2000 years ago
 - (1) Are often looking for a Messiah who will rule the world
 - b. Right all the wrongs, bless all the righteous people and punish all the evildoers

2. Instead, we find a Savior who shows his glory by washing his disciple's feet
 - a. And who wins his greatest victory by dying on a cross
 - A. And if we truly believe in Jesus, as those first disciples would come to do
 1. It means that we commit ourselves to walking that same path of humility
 - a. Allowing God to show his glory through us
 2. Not by some great act or display of God's power or authority
 - a. Although the transformation of a human heart from selfish pride
 - (1) To humble service is perhaps the greatest display of power one can imagine
 3. But God's glory is displayed in us whenever we do as Jesus did
 - a. Recognizing a need and doing whatever we can to help out
 - (1) Being willing to suffer in order to show love, even to our enemies
 - A. However, one of the neat little details about this recorded miracle of Jesus
 1. Is the abundance and quality of the wine that is produced
 - A. Besides all the other characteristics of God we might learn from this miracle
 1. We also learn that God is not stingy with his love
 - a. The storehouses of heaven never run low on God's blessings
 - A. As a fellow by the name of Vance Havner is quoted as saying –
 1. Too many times we miss so much because we live on the low level of the natural, the ordinary, the explainable. We leave no room for God to do the exceeding abundant thing above all that we can ask or think. End quote
 - A. And, as with the better-tasting wine, God always saves the best for last
 1. No matter how difficult this life may be, for those who choose to believe in Jesus
 - a. The best is yet to come!
- III. Have you seen enough evidence, enough signs, to convince you
- A. That Jesus really is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world
 1. If we are honestly looking, I believe there are signs to be seen
 - a. Perhaps in a simple act of caring that shows God's glory
 2. Perhaps when we experience God's love and caring shown to us
 - a. At a time when we are hurting or in need
 - A. Will you commit yourself to be a channel by which God's glory can be shown?
 1. Don't wait for the chance to do something big or spectacular
 - a. Just do the little things to help a friend or a neighbor
 2. If it's done in the spirit of Jesus, his glory will continue to be revealed today