

“Searching for Treasure”

Introduction: Have you ever taken part in a treasure hunt? You know, where someone hides a bunch of clever clues and each one leads you to the next one until you finally reach the treasure? There is always great anticipation and exploration along the way! In many ways, John lays out his gospel like a giant treasure hunt. He sets the scene in chapter one by introducing us to a number of the players as they each receive an invitation to take part in the hunt – “Come and see,” “What do you want?” and “Follow me” are ways this invitation is made.

Then in chapter two, John begins to lay out the clues, some (but not all) of which he calls “signs.” These signs are really an outworking of what we heard Jesus promise Nathanael last week, that if he hung in there with Jesus and followed the clues along, that he would “see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (1:51). The clues, in other words, would begin to reveal the treasure that is Jesus, and the transforming love he is in the process of bringing from heaven to earth.

We find the first clue at a wedding that Jesus and his disciples, as well as his mother, have been invited to attend in the region of Galilee. Before that clue is laid out for us, we’ll hear the prophet Amos talk a bit about wine, which anticipates a significant aspect of John’s first clue.

I. Trouble in Paradise

A. We’re not sure how Jesus got on the guest list of this couple, but what we can say is that it reveals that Jesus was not afraid of having a good time, of celebrating a precious moment with family and friends. One of the only regrets of our wedding, some 35 years ago, was that we left early the next morning for our honeymoon and didn’t stay around to enjoy the company of those near and dear to us who had come, many of them, from quite a distance to be with us. No problem with that here. Weddings in first century Palestine didn’t last for just a few hours but for several days, even as much as a week!

B. Practically, it meant making sure there were enough provisions to sustain such an extended celebration, and if one ran short, it was considered to be a serious issue. So much so that the bride’s family could sue the groom’s family (which was financially responsible for it all) for a breach of hospitality. This would certainly not be the way to get a marriage off on the right foot! But that’s what happened here. Before the week had ended, the wine had run out. There was trouble in paradise!

C. Fortunately, it seems as if Mary was in a place where she could take note of this and when she did, out of concern for the couple I presume, she notified Jesus. “They have no more wine” she reported to him. It’s not clear just what she expected him to do about it, but if anybody could do anything, Mary knew that Jesus could. For his part, Jesus was not so ready to act. “Woman, why do you involve me?” he asked. This may strike us as a curt, even harsh response. Literally, he was saying something like, “What do we have in common?” By it, he seems to mean that as much as he loved his mother, that there was a higher authority to which he was oriented, that the real director of his life was his heavenly Father. In that regard, as he goes on to explain, “My hour has not yet come.” His “hour” as John uses the term, refers to his upcoming death on the cross, and it was far too early for that event to take place. Regardless, his mother knew that her son who was preparing to give his life for the world,

had a heart that cared, even for a single couple, so she simply turned to the servants and said, “Do whatever he tells you.”

D. Before we consider what it is that Jesus tells them, don’t miss this statement. It’s one of many statements in the NT that reveals if we want to have Jesus active in our lives, if we want what he does to bless us, if we want to experience the life he brings that is truly life, that we cannot afford to dismiss what he says but must seek to put his word into practice (cf. Ma. 7:24-27).

Illustration: Last week I had agreed to have breakfast with one of you (who shall remain nameless!). We had said that the day before we were scheduled to eat, we’d check in with each other as to time and place, which I did. But then entire day went by without my hearing from this person. The next morning, I sent another text and finally got a response. As this person explained, they had written a text the day before to respond to mine, but it never made it out of their draft folder. We can have such an incredible and powerful tool in our hands, but until we push send, it won’t do us a bit of good! “Do whatever he tells you,” says mom. Put what he says into practice.

II. The Sign of Wine

A. And so we hear Jesus instruct the servants to fill six stone jars which stood nearby with water. When the liquid is drawn out and brought to the wedding planner, he is astounded; it’s the best he’s tasted, not just on that day but maybe ever. The result of this action is a clue, a clue which reveals the glory of who Jesus is on several levels.

1. First, on an earthly, human level, we see the compassion of Jesus in his willingness to rescue a marriage that was in danger of getting off to a very rocky start. Marriage is a rich and often used metaphor in God’s grand story as is his love for us is depicted. It begins in the opening chapters of Genesis with a marriage in Eden between a couple named Adam and Eve, and ends in the closing chapters of Revelation with a marriage between the Lamb (Jesus) and God’s holy people (the church). In between, marriage pops up on many different occasions, picturing God not as a domineering or abusive husband, but as an ever-loving, ever-patient spouse who woos us to himself and attends to the needs of his people, his bride.

So it shouldn’t surprise us to see that the first event at which Jesus reveals his glory is a wedding, and even more, to see that Jesus cares deeply about marriages, so much so that, because he was invited, he goes to work. Turning water into wine, in order to rescue the best laid plans that threatened to go awry when the wine was gone. Is Jesus on your guest list? Because at some point the old wine will run out and struggles will happen. If invited, Jesus has the ability to help us forgive, to bring us perspective, and to keep us loving.

2. Second, by changing water into wine, Jesus gives us a clue as to the purification he would offer through his blood. The jars which were filled with water were not the kind of jars you’d find at a flea market up at Todd Farm but those used in a ritual rite of purification. Observant Jews would wash their hands in this water before entering the temple, and even before eating a meal, so that they could worship and eat in a state of purity. But by changing this water to wine, Jesus was cluing us into the fact that this ritual had fulfilled its purpose. It had pointed to the one who would come and now, through his blood, would forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness, as Jesus would declare at his last supper when lifting up a cup of wine.

The bottom line point is that we cannot really become pure in God's sight by washing ourselves. We can only become pure when we allow Jesus to wash us. The fact that Jesus began to reveal this at a wedding is really cool! It's cool because, it points to that great wedding between Christ and his church at the end of this present age, and how he makes us, his bride, spotless by washing our robes in his blood so that they become white, representing the purity that only he bring about.

3. We'll sing about this in a minute. Before we do, there is one more part of this clue of changing water into wine we want to note. And that is that this wedding, and really every wedding, has the ability to be a foretaste of the incredible joy that lies ahead for all who join their hearts with the groom who is Jesus. We see this in the amount of wine that Jesus produced. Each jar would have contained 20-30 gallons of water, meaning, if you do the math, that Jesus produced somewhere around 150 gallons of wine! Why so much? Well, the OT prophets, such as our reading from Amos, look to the age of the Messiah and the restoration he would bring about as being characterized by abundance, of a time when the wine would flow liberally. Amos actually gives us a picture of such a great abundance that the grapes are growing faster than they can be harvested as, at the same time, new wine drips and flows from the mountains and the hills (9:13).

This is not, we need to say, a picture of a world stumbling around in a drunken stupor! Drunkenness, in fact, was so frowned upon in the first century that the wine was heavily diluted with water. Rather, it is a picture of the age to come when we will be intoxicated by the joy of interrupted fellowship with God and his people, kind of like a wedding reception that never ends, or a fellowship hour at church when our kids just keep on playing together joyfully forever! We will never have to go home because we'll be home.

So this sign of wine, this clue, is a wonderful way to begin a treasure hunt for Jesus. It reveals the transforming power of his love as it speaks to his compassionate heart, as it points to the purity he brings, and as it anticipates the amazing and abundant joy that awaits us in the future God has for us.

May these pictures of his glory begin to fill and satisfy our longings as we continue our search for the fullness of the treasure that he is.