

READING THE GOSPEL OF JOHN TOGETHER

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2. The Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2)

Welcome

1. How to read the Fourth Gospel
2. **The Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2)**
3. The Samaritan Woman (John 4)
4. The sequence of feasts (John 5-10)
5. The man born blind (John 9)
6. The washing of the feet (John 13)
7. Jesus's death (John 18-19)
8. Jesus' resurrection (John 20)

Sequence

- Read and reactions
- Historicity?
- OT Background
- NT Background
- Back to the story
- Potential for today

Reading and reactions

John 2:1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 9 When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Historicity

- Form of the usual miracle story:
 - Opening circumstances, need, failure
 - Person in need encounters the miracle worker
 - Words, gestures, substances used
 - Miracle happens, usually immediately
 - Reactions: confirmation, wonder, faith
- Unusual features here
 - The request is vague, oblique
 - The need is not especially tragic / not elsewhere
 - The miracle is indirect and "off-stage"
 - Confirmation unconnected to faith
 - The mother of Jesus
- Johannine features
 - Opening verse and "third day"
 - Unnamed mother of Jesus

- Implied petition and initial, apparent refusal
- Miracles in John are always spectacular
- “Whence” and “now”; v. 11

Kind of writing

- Exposition vv. 1-2
- Preparation for the miracle vv. 3-5
- Indirect description vv. 6-8
- Confirmation / conclusion vv. 9-10
- Comment of the narrator v. 11

- Dionysius, the God of wine
- Transformation of water into wine was understood as an theophany of the God
- Andros and Theos: the fountains poured wine
- Ellis: three empty jars on the “vigil” — wine!
- Beth Shean and Sepphoris: mosaics

OT Background

- Marriage symbolism for the covenant bond
 - Hosea (passim)
 - Isaiah 54:4-8
 - Isaiah 62:4-5
 - Jeremiah 2:2

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:4–5)

- The End-Time Banquet
- Exodus 24:9-11
- Amos 9:13-14
- Isaiah 25:6-10
- 2 Baruch 29:2-5 (see next slide)

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain. (Isaiah 25:6–10)

2 Baruch 29:2 For at that time I shall only protect those found in this land at that time. 3 And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts has been accomplished, the Anointed One will begin to be revealed. 4 And Behemoth will reveal itself from its place, and Leviathan will come from the sea, the two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation and which I shall have kept until that time. And they will be nourishment for all who are left. 5 The earth will also yield fruits ten thousand-fold. And on one vine will be a thousand branches, and one branch will produce a thousand clusters, and one cluster will produce a thousand grapes, and one grape will produce a cor of wine.

- Wine
 - Lack: disaster, catastrophe: Isaiah 16:10; Hosea 14:7; Jeremiah 31:12

- Abundance: joy, celebration, love Isaiah 25:6-10; Song of Song 1:2-4, 2:4; 1 Enoch 10:18-19 (see the next slide)

Song 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
 For your love is better than wine,
 3 your anointing oils are fragrant,
 your name is perfume poured out;
 therefore the maidens love you.
 4 Draw me after you, let us make haste.
 The king has brought me into his chambers.
 We will exult and rejoice in you;
 we will extol your love more than wine;
 rightly do they love you.

1 Enoch 10:18 And in those days the whole earth will be worked in righteousness, all of her planted with trees, and will find a blessing. 19 And they shall plant pleasant trees upon her - vines. And he who plants vine upon here will produce wine for plenitude. And every seed that is sown on her, one measure will yield a thousand (measures) and one measure of olives will yield ten measures of presses of oil.

Lady Wisdom, as hostess

Prov 9:1 Wisdom has built her house,
 she has hewn her seven pillars.
 2 She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,
 she has also set her table.
 3 She has sent out her servant girls, she calls
 from the highest places in the town,
 4 "You that are simple, turn in here!"
 To those without sense she says,
 5 "Come, eat of my bread
 and drink of the wine I have mixed.
 6 Lay aside immaturity, and live,
 and walk in the way of insight."

NT Background

Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

Mark 2:21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

Back to the story

- Symbolism of the wedding
 - The Marriage Feast of Cana
 - Cf. "friend of the bridegroom (3:29)
 - Cf. The Woman at the Well (Jn 4)
 - Cf. Myrrh and aloes (Jn 19:39)
 - Jesus himself is the Bridegroom
- Symbolism of the Wine
 - 4 mentions (mother, servants, steward, disciples)
 - The Allegory of the Vine (15:1-4)

- Jesus will drink the cup (18:11)
- Wine at the death of Jesus (19:29)
- Jesus himself is the New Wine

The feast once more

John 2:8 He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. 9 When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Back to the story

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:14–15)

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11)

In other words, our story is programmatic of the incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus

Potential for today

- Proclamation of the Kingdom
 - + love (John 3:16, 19, 35; 5:42; 8:42; 10:17; 11:5; 12:43; 13:1, 23, 34–35; 14:15, 21, 23–24, 28, 31; 15:9–10, 12–13, 17; 17:23–24, 26; 19:26; 21:7, 15–16, 20)
 - + joy (John 3:29; 4:36; 8:56; 11:15; 14:28; 15:11; 16:20–22, 24; 17:13; 19:3; 20:20)
 - + faith (John 1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22–24; 3:12, 15–16, 18, 36; 4:21, 39, 41–42, 48, 50, 53; 5:24, 38, 44, 46–47; 6:29–30, 35–36, 40, 47, 64, 69; 7:5, 31, 38–39, 48; 8:24, 30–31, 45–46; 9:18, 35–36, 38; 10:25–26, 37–38, 42; 11:15, 25–27, 40, 42, 45, 48; 12:3, 11, 36–39, 42, 44, 46; 13:19; 14:1, 10–12, 29; 16:9, 27, 30–31; 17:8, 20–21; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 27, 29, 31)

Nothing is more practical
than finding God,
that is, than falling in love
in a quite absolute, final way.

What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination,
will affect everything.

It will decide what will get you
out of bed in the morning,
what you will do with your evening,
how you will spend your weekends,
what you read,
who you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you
with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love, stay in love
and it will decide everything.

*Attributed to Pedro Arrupe, SJ (1907-1991)
Superior General of the Society of Jesus, 1961-1984*