

November 24, 2002
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

The Christ of Common People
(Based on ideas by Daniel N. Berg)
John 2:1-11

This was the first miracle performed by Jesus. And it wasn't to heal someone but to protect someone from social embarrassment. Unfortunately, when believers discuss this miracle it's usually to make the point that it is ok to drink alcoholic beverages. Or it's becomes a debate whether Jesus turned the water into actual "wine" or grape juice. Well, I believe it was wine not grape juice. However I have seen the evil and heartache alcohol has caused and I would caution the use of it. But I think we focus on the wrong thing when we read this story. What we ought to see is the *commonplace (ordinary, everyday) and what God can do with it*. The wedding took place in Cana, such an unimportant village in Galilee that no one is exactly sure where it was located. A need arose and Jesus was told about it. Common water jars were available. Jesus commanded that the jars be filled to the brim with plain water. What goes in as water comes out as wine, good wine, the kind of wine usually given early in a celebration when the guess can tell the wine is good. The result is that the host is saved from embarrassment. Jesus takes the commonplace, fills it, renews it and uses it. The miracle account teaches that *the command of Jesus, coupled with whatever is available, no matter how common, can produce extraordinary results*.

1. The Crisis (vs. 1-3)

One of the worse things that could ever happen to my mom is to have people drop over and there be nothing, no food, to offer them. People make a surprise visit to her home, they come uninvited, a miraculously food starts appearing. I don't know where it comes from. It's divine food not for the taste necessarily but because it had no beginning and it has no end. It just always exists. It's not like it's a left over. On the other hand, you can say it has always been a left over because it was never an original meal. My mom and dad are not and never were rich. But somehow there was always plenty of food around for guests. Maybe it's a mother thing or perhaps an Italian mother thing but for her it would be a crisis and socially embarrassing if she ran out of food for her guests. It may seem insignificant to you, but to mom it would be a crisis.

The crisis in Cana might also seem insignificant. We could think of many other things that we would not want to go wrong at a wedding. Running out of wine may be one of them but not at the top of the list. And anyway, these days the problem at weddings is not the possibility of running out of something but how much food is thrown away. But 2000 years ago in Galilee people didn't have much. A celebration like a wedding was a time to indulge without feeling guilty. Wedding celebrations could last a week, but a host who disappointed family and friends would never live it down.

As a teen I was in a band. I remember on wedding we played at. We were only hired to play until 11pm. When it was nearing 11pm the bridegroom came to us and asked if we could play for another hour. We said we would but there would be an extra charge. The bridegroom said no problem then he started going to the guests and asking them to contribute money to pay us. One person said, "I didn't even want to come to your lousy wedding and now you want to charge me for the band!" And with that they started throwing bunches. Soon everyone was fighting. Men in tuxedos were fighting. Little old ladies were hitting men over the head with pocketbooks. Until the police came who took the bridegroom away in handcuffs while his new bride sobbed. He'll never live that down.

Especially in a small town like Cana, the bridegroom would always be considered cheap and stingy because he was the one who was skimpy on the wine at his wedding. So although not a national calamity, it would be a crisis for the bridegroom. However the bridegroom had invited the only guest who could help him. *Christ's presence is the ultimate solution to our crisis.* Let's think of our own lives. Just as it was revealed that there was a low inventory on the wine supply, *Christ's presence in our lives uncovers deficiencies we might never notice without Him.* When we invite Jesus to be a guest in our life, His presence (His perfect love, His holiness) reveals our lack of holy love. He makes us aware of our need. And He makes us sensitive to the needs around us.

2. The Commonplace (vs. 4-8)

Now lets talk about those "six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing." These were common in first-century Jewish homes. Their religious law required a ritual of washing not only before a meal but also between courses. And so large quantities of water were needed. 20 –30 gallons stored in these stone water jars would save many trips to the well.

When I was in the Dominican Republic I stayed at the home of a pastor. The home had no running water. In the center of the village there was a place to get water. People would walk there from their homes bringing a pot to fill. They would fill it as much as they could and still be able to carry it back to their homes. In their homes they kept a stone cistern filled with water. The water was used for bathing, cleaning and cooking. With no running water in the home, keeping the cistern would ensure that water was available without having to make many trips back to the well.

It has been said that the number seven in the Bible is a symbol of the perfect number or completeness. There were only six water jars. Something else was needed to make them complete. Jesus! Jesus makes our lives complete. God takes the common ordinary things and uses them in extraordinary ways. *He takes our empty lives and makes them complete, abundant lives.*

And when we yield our lives and the routine things of our lives to Him, there is no certainty that He will work a miracle as He did in Cana. There is certainty, however, that common things yielded to God can be use in uncommon ways to meet needs. *This*

miracle teaches that God uses common people as well as commonplace things. A Bible commentator once wrote that Moses lived 120 years: He spent the first 40 years of his life believing he was really somebody, the next 40 years realizing he was nobody, and the last 40 years discovering what God can get done with a nobody. Jesus used ordinary people, common people, servants to fill jars with water and the result was His first miracle. God wants to use you if you will offer yourself and all you have (no matter how small or common it may be) to Him.

Jesus wants to fill you with His Spirit, renew your nature and use you to bless others.

3. The Christ (vs. 9-11)

Finally I want to talk about Jesus for the story after all story is ultimately not about common people and commonplace things but about Christ. It is not about me; it is about Jesus and what He wants to do through me to meet human needs. Many people are in crisis over things much more serious than running out of wine at a celebration. Running out of wine at the wedding in Cana could have caused the celebration to cease. In many peoples lives the celebration has ceased. Family conflicts, troubled marriages, sickness, sorrow, sadness and heartache. The Lord is still calling us to bring what we have to Him and watch what He can do through it. He still commands us to fill our containers and to fill them full... to the brim. Let Him take our ordinary lives, renew them and use them to touch the world. Verse 11 says, "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him." Do whatever He commands you to do. His glory will be revealed through you and faith in Christ will be the outcome.