

Many years ago, 2 young men were working their way through Stanford University. As they noticed their funds getting precariously low, they came up with a novel idea. They would engage the famous pianist Ignace Paderewski for a recital. They would charge for the concert, and after paying the pianist's fee, they would use their profit to pay their room and board. When they contacted Paderewski's manager, they were told he would come for a guarantee of \$2,000. So the 2 young men signed a contract in great hopes that whatever they brought in over \$2,000 they could split for their schooling.

The young men worked hard in promoting the piano concert, but after the gala event was finished and all the monies were counted, they found that they had only grossed \$1,600. The 2 young men approached the world-famous pianist sheepishly. They gave him the entire \$1,600 along with a promissory note for \$400 explaining that true to their word they would raise the extra money and get it to him as soon as humanly possible. Their unspoken plan was to drop out of school and work to raise the money.

As Paderewski's received the money and the promissory note, he shook his head and said, "No, boys, this will never do." He tore up the note right in front of their eyes and then returned the money back to them with the instruction, "You take this \$1,600 back and then take all of your expenses out of it. Then you take 10% of the money left for your work, and I will be satisfied with whatever is left." Needless to say, the 2 young men were overjoyed. They continued their schooling at Stanford and both graduated with honors.

Years rolled by. World War 1 came and left. Padrewski who was now the premier of Poland was struggling to feed thousands of his citizens during a severe famine. There was only one person in the world whom he thought could really help him in his dilemma. That man was Herbert Hoover who was then in charge of the Food and Relief Bureau of our country. Padrewski was amazed at Hoover's generosity as thousands of tons of food poured into Poland in response to his request. After the eastern European country had weathered the famine successfully, Padrewski invited Hoover to Poland to publicly thank him for his help. Imagine his amazement when Hoover responded with a smile, "We were happy to help the Polish people. Besides you don't remember it, Mr. Padrewski, but you once helped me when I was in real trouble as a student at Stanford University."

When we see someone who is willing to pitch in and help another who is in some kind of trouble our hearts are warmed within us. We feel this way because we know that God has modeled kindness for us, and that he is pleased when we serve one another in compassion. In fact, Jesus Christ himself, the complete image of God in human flesh, spent the majority of his time upon this earth in public ministry going about doing good for others.

We are going to look at the very first miracle that Jesus performed this morning. It is recorded for us in the first 11 verses of John chapter 2. This miracle was performed to help a Jewish family out of a very embarrassing situation.

As you are turning to John 2, let me introduce the theme of the next few weeks

to you. Every book in the entire Bible has a key theme that ties the book together as a long piece of thread forms a piece of cloth into a garment. In many books, the theme must be surmised from the overall study of the book. There are times, however, when the author clearly states his theme in a specific passage so that there can be no misunderstanding of his intent. Such is the case in the writings of John. Both in his gospel and his epistles, in each book he clearly states his overall theme.

The theme of the gospel of John is found in John 20:30,31.

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

John only records 7 major miracles of Jesus Christ, far less than the other gospel accounts. He freely admits that there were many other miracles that Jesus did. But John had a specific purpose in choosing these 7 miracles. These miracles were the threads that John chose to weave his gospel account together and they were chosen by John to engender faith in his readers- faith in Jesus Christ as the redeemer Messiah sent from above who gives spiritual life to those who trust in him. Now this is critical to understand because the Christian life is a life of faith. A person becomes a child of God thru trusting in Jesus Christ as his Savior, and a person grows in the Lord as his or her faith is strengthened. So John's gospel is an important book to study in connection with our growth in grace. And the miracles that form the threads that weave this book together are critical for our

consideration for they will help us in the growth and strengthening of our faith.

We would like to begin a series looking at the 7 miracles that Jesus performed recorded in the gospel of John. In each case we will see that there is a progression. Jesus performed the miracle so that those who observed it might progressively grow in faith.

1. John 2:1-11- Jesus turns water into wine. A very simple miracle when compared to some of the others. A miracle that flowed forth from Christ's desire just to help a family in a potentially embarrassing situation. But a miracle that evoked an increase in faith from the disciples for the account ends with the words "He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him." 2:11.

2. Then we move on to 2 miracles that reveal Christ's power over physical sickness. And these are progressive in nature. In John 4:46-53 we find Jesus healing a royal official's son. The result was the official and his household believed (4:53)

3. Then Christ moved to an even more difficult healing. This time the scene was an open and public one, at the pool of Bethesda. This time it was not a child, but one who had been an invalid for some 38 years. Yet in John 5:1-15, Jesus healed this disabled invalid effortlessly, and many this time were put at a crossroads of whether to believe in Jesus Christ or not.

4. Following these 2 healings, we find Jesus performing 2 miracles over nature. The first of these found in John 6:1-14 is one of the most popular of all of Jesus' miracles, found in all 4 gospel accounts. In this situation, Jesus faced a humanly impossible situation, the feeding of 5,000 men along with women and

children from 5 loaves and 2 fish. Yet he did so to the extent that 12 baskets of remains were collected, and the result was that many believed on him because he met their physical needs.

5. Later in John 6:16-24, Jesus performed the miracle of walking on the water in the midst of a storm. This impressive miracle over the natural elements caused the disciple's faith in Christ to grow and develop more fully.

6. The final 2 miracles recorded by John for the purpose of our seeing Jesus Christ as the son of God and believing on his name for all of our needs reach the climax of presenting Jesus Christ as the Messiah sent from God. In John 9:1-7, Jesus heals a man who had been born blind. This specific miracle was different from other physical healings in that it had been given prophetically as a Messianic sign, so in reality Christ was presenting himself as the Messiah sent from God. The result of this miracle was that this man believed Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah.

7. The final of the seven miracles was the raising of Lazarus from the dead recorded in John 11. This bringing forth of one who had been in the grave deceased for 4 days was recognized by all who witnessed it as the pinnacle of Christ's power. In fact, people came from all over Israel after this event just to interview Lazarus and find out if the reported miracle had actually occurred. This miracle presented Jesus Christ as the author of Life who is able to give life to all who believe on him.

So each of these miracles is selected for a specific purpose, and we need to keep this purpose in mind. Our purpose then as we embark upon our journey of

studying them together is that our faith in Christ will grow as we see him as the one who is able to meet all human needs.

With this background let's look at the first of all his miracles, the turning of water into wine in the city of Cana as he was beginning his public ministry.

We see that this first miracle falls into 3 sections. In the first section, we see Jesus and his mother, meeting his mother's emotional needs. In the second section, we see Jesus and the servants, meeting their dilemma, the physical needs of the host of the wedding celebration. In the final section, we see Jesus and his disciples, meeting their spiritual need. Let's look at the example of Christ meeting these emotional, physical and spiritual needs in this miracle.

1. Now there has been much discussion and even some criticism leveled at Jesus for this conversation that he had with his mother before this miracle. Most of the criticism comes from a misunderstanding of what Christ said stemming from some unfortunate translations in some of the earlier versions of the Bible. The King James Translation renders the fourth verse, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." This statement sounds rather harsh, doesn't it? And it has lead some to criticize Jesus for speaking in such a way to his mother.

More modern translations have softened Christ's words. The New International Version that we just said, "Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come." But still, Jesus doesn't sound very helpful at this point, does he? I think that we can see the picture more clearly as we understand the historic situation.

Mary has been living under a silent burden for the majority of her life. Before Christ's birth, it was revealed to her that her son was to be the Messiah of God. Yet who would believe such a thing, so she did what was wise- instead of trying to convince people, she pondered these things in her heart. And so the child was born, and from all outward appearances, he was just like any other child. Joseph knew the truth, Mary knew the truth, some of Mary's close relatives like Elizabeth knew the truth, the shepherds and the wise men knew the truth, but for most of the neighbors, they just shook their heads and whispered about this child obviously conceived out of wedlock. Mary must have lived under the shadow of these rumors for many years. She knew, however, that one day her reputation would be vindicated. One day, Christ would present himself as the son of God, and the truth would be known. And now such a time could have come. Here is a time when you can perform a public miracle and prove your divine nature to others. They are short on wine at the wedding feast. So Mary immediately seeks out Jesus to solve their problem. And her approach implies that she is still approaching Jesus naturally as a mother would approach her son.

Jesus, however, now had begun his public ministry. He had started down that road that would lead to the cross in the father's will. And it was impossible for him to continue the same relationship with his mother as he had as a carpenter's apprentice. He would now continue to be Mary's son, but he would also need to become Mary's savior and Lord. And so in gentleness and courtesy, Jesus says to his mother, "Dear mom, don't try to push me into the position of Messiahship too quickly. My time for that is not quite ready yet. We have to go according to the

will of the Father. You are going to have to trust me now as Lord to walk in His will according to his timetable." And Mary, the spiritually sensitive woman that she was, saw the truth that Jesus was trying to give to her, and began to give the rope to him that he needed to do the will of God.

What a difficult move it would be to slip from that position of being a son to that of being the Lord. To move from being submissive as a child to being authoritative as the master. How easy it would have been to cut the chains in an abrupt and heartless manner. But Jesus never did that. He was able to become Mary's Savior without ever ceasing to be her son. He was able to continue to meet her emotional needs while providing the payment for her spiritual needs. One of the most tender scenes in the entire Bible is found at the foot of the cross where Jesus before thinking of his own physical dehydration and thirst makes sure that his mother's needs will first be met.

Jesus is able to meet our emotional needs. He knows them and he is willing and able to meet every one of them.

2. Scene 2 moves to view Christ and the servants. READ 2:6-10.

JN 2:6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

JN 2:7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

JN 2:8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

Now in viewing Jesus Christ and the servants we are also introduced to the host's dilemma. This family had committed a terrible cultural blunder in running out of beverage at this marriage feast.

We don't have time to go into all of the cultural ramifications of this host's miscalculation, but let's just say that this situation presented more than just a social embarrassment to the host. The Near Eastern peoples took their wedding feasts very seriously in Christ's day, and there was a strong element of reciprocity about weddings. In other words, when people had been entertained at a wedding feast of a friend, it was not just optional for them to reciprocate when the time of their child's wedding came, but it was obligatory. J. Duncan Derret in his valuable discussion of the cultural background gives case studies that have been found where one person actually took legal action and sued another person because they failed to provide an appropriate wedding gift. Now if we see this situation in that light, we soon realize that more than just social embarrassment was at stake here. It was possible that the family could have been humiliated by a lawsuit. And the implication is not that the host, whoever it might have been (many commentators surmise that it was very likely a relative of Christ's family), had run out of wine

due to lack of planning, but that the family was poor and that they had made the minimum provision hoping for the best because they didn't have the money for more. Christ's wonderful provision creating some 150 or so gallons for them would have not only provided totally for all the needs of this festive gathering but it would have also provided a handsome wedding gift for this family that well could have been in financial need.

The point is that Jesus walked into the situation and rescued the host from what was a crippling liability, and added to the blessing by giving the married couple an unexpected asset. He met the physical need and relieved the embarrassment of the situation and perhaps even more than that.

By the way, I should just make a comment concerning this miracle in light of our modern day social problem with alcohol for many have gone to one of 2 extremes in interpreting this miracle. They have either tried to change the reading of wine to mean unfermented grape juice in an attempt to remove Jesus from making any fermented wine or they have tried to use this miracle to say that Jesus is condoning the use of alcoholic beverages implying that we should drink alcoholic beverages today. Either extreme in my opinion misses the point of the cultural setting and attempts to read in modern American life to this passage more than we should.

First of all, the people in Christ's time did not have either the refrigeration or the preservatives that we have today to keep grape juice from beginning to ferment. And the juice that was squeezed at harvest time had to last until the next harvest season, so it was practically impossible to keep it from at least a measure

of fermentation. The Greek word used here is oinos, the term translated wine throughout the N.T. But we must also recognize that the wine of Christ's day was much different than distilled alcohol today. The natural fermentation provided much less alcoholic content. And we further know that the normal, cultural practice was to mix the wine 6-8 parts of water with 1 part of wine. It is most obvious that one of the major purposes was to purify the water that was often contaminated with germs from stagnating in the cisterns of Palestine. So to make a realistic comparison, we would have to imagine hardened apple cider or natural grape juice mixed with 6-8 parts of water. Certainly, it was most normal to be able to drink the beverage with a meal without much significant alcoholic content. It was certainly possible to get drunk if the wine was taken in quantities without being diluted, but this was not the normal practice and drunkenness was strongly prohibited in the Bible.

So in light of the great social evils that alcohol has brought about in our day, we certainly can say with clarity that Jesus was not giving his stamp of approval upon drunkenness by making wine, but rather he was just making the recognized beverage used in his day.

The major point of Christ's interaction with the servants was that Jesus was interested in the physical needs of this family, and he in love and kindness met those physical needs.

3. But there is one more scene. We will not dwell on this one because it will continue to be a major theme throughout our study. The third scene presents Christ with the disciples, and John simply says "He thus revealed his glory, and his

disciples believed on him." The disciples saw this miracle first hand. As a result of this they saw the power that Jesus had within him. In this way, Christ's glory was revealed. And having seen Jesus Christ, they then believed in him. So then Jesus met their spiritual needs as they were willing to trust in him more fully.

Jesus Christ is concerned with every single one of our needs. So often we dissect ourselves and attempt to isolate certain areas. But God looks upon us holistically, as a person. Christ is concerned for our emotional wellbeing, he desires to meet every one of our needs in this area. He can only do so, however, if we are in a right relationship with him. Just as Mary had to accept a proper relationship with Christ, so we must recognize him to be Lord and Master in our lives if He is able to meet these needs within us. As long as we try to usurp his rightful authority, we are going to struggle in emotional turmoil. We will try to carry the burden of the responsibilities of being God when we have not been created for that purpose. But as we submit to a proper relationship with him, he is able to meet these needs in our life. He delights in meeting our emotional needs.

Christ also delights in meeting our physical needs. We can just imagine the joy that it brought to His heart to turn this situation around from one of social embarrassment at best and further legal financial loss at worst to one of great blessing with the giving of an unexpected financial asset. But we must remember that this great blessing from Christ upon this family would have never been realized if it had not been for the obedience of those servants. Christ asked them to fill the pots with water. Without any obedience at all, no water would have been there to be turned into wine. With partial obedience, not as much financial

gain would have been realized. But these servants were complete in their obedience- the Bible says that they filled all the jars to the brim. So as we are fully obedient to Jesus Christ, he delights in meeting our needs, and he is able to meet all of our physical needs.

But Christ also desires to meet our spiritual needs, and these are the most important of all. As we see his person and work, and as we choose to trust in him more fully, the Lord Jesus Christ will provide all that is needed for our redemptive needs.

What are you needs this morning? Jesus Christ stands ready and willing to meet you in your time of need. Will you trust him for your specific need this morning?