

011925 Sermon "Meaning of the Miracle of the Wedding at Cana" John 2:1-11

I once heard about a young boy who received a caterpillar in a jar from his science teacher. Every day, he would rush home from school to check on it, expecting to see a butterfly. After three days of no change, he came to his mother, disappointed and confused. "Mom," he said, "I think my butterfly is broken. Nothing's happening!"

His mother smiled and explained that transformation takes time – first the caterpillar would build a chrysalis, and then, after about two weeks, the butterfly would emerge. The boy was shocked. "Two weeks! But can't we just help it change faster?"

How often are we like that young boy, wanting immediate transformation without understanding the process? Yet, interestingly, in our Gospel reading today, we encounter both immediate and gradual transformation. At the wedding in Cana, water doesn't gradually become wine – it changes instantly. But as we'll see, this miracle teaches us about both the immediate transformation of becoming God's children and the beautiful journey of growing in God's grace.

The first miracle of Jesus, turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, is an extraordinary story of transformation and provision. This miracle is the first of seven recorded in the Gospel of John, each revealing something profound about who Jesus is. People often wonder how water was suddenly turned into wine. But the passage is not focused on explaining the chemical process of transformation. Instead, it is a visible demonstration of an invisible spiritual reality - the transformation that occurs when we become children of God.

From the Jewish perspective at that time, the idea of God's salvation coming to Gentiles and them becoming people of God was unthinkable. Yet, the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine is a vivid illustration of the impossible becoming possible through God's power. John 1:12 says, "But to all who received him (Jesus), who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God." Just as water cannot turn itself into wine, so people cannot become children of God through their own effort. This is the work of God's grace.

This ties directly to the words of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:9, "Do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham." Transformation is the hallmark of the Christian life, and it begins with trusting Jesus.

John intentionally places this miracle in Chapter 2, followed by Jesus' teaching on being "born again" in Chapter 3. In John 3:5, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit." This progression is no coincidence. The transformation of water into wine illustrates the spiritual rebirth Jesus later describes.

This change can be seen as justifying grace, a central idea in the United Methodist Church (UMC). Justifying grace is the moment we are made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the initial work of grace that forgives our sins and brings us into a new intimate relationship with God, Abba, Father. However, this transformation is not the end of the journey. Just as the water turned into wine signifies a new beginning, so does justifying grace lead us into sanctifying grace—the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to make us more like Christ.

Sanctifying grace is the process by which we grow in holiness and mature in our faith. It involves a daily surrender to Jesus, allowing Him to continue transforming us from the inside out. While justifying grace changes our status before God, sanctifying grace changes our character, enabling us to reflect God's love and grace in every area of our lives.

In verse 5 Mary's instruction to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you," is a call to trust and obedience. At that time, water supply was not as good as it is today, so they had to draw water from a well and fill the jar. It was a lot of work. This was even during the busy time when they had to serve many guests.

Yet, the servants obeyed Jesus without hesitation, filling the jars to the brim with water. Their obedience paved the way for the miracle. Similarly, our transformation begins with trust and obedience. Are we willing to surrender to Jesus and follow His commands, even when we don't fully understand?

Obedience is not a passive act; it is an active expression of faith. When we trust Jesus and do what He asks, He transforms our lives in ways beyond our imagination. The water becoming wine is a picture of the new life we experience in Christ—a life of abundance, joy, and purpose. The master of the banquet remarked that the wine Jesus provided was of superior quality. This reminds us that the transformation Jesus brings is not merely an improvement but a complete renewal.

As we grow in sanctifying grace, the quality of our spiritual transformation deepens. We move from merely being forgiven to being empowered to live holy lives. Sanctifying grace enables us to bear the fruit of the Spirit and to love God and others with the love of Christ.

This miracle calls us to examine our own lives. Have you experienced the transformation Jesus offers? Are you living as people who have been born again by water and the Spirit? Transformation is not a one-time event but a lifelong journey of being made more like Christ. Through sanctifying grace, we are continually shaped into the image of God, reflecting God's glory in our daily lives.

It means a life in which your thoughts change, and your words and actions gradually align with what pleases God. It is a life where inner thoughts and words are consistent, and you treat others with genuine love, rejoicing with those who rejoice and grieving with those who grieve.

The transformation of water into wine at Cana is a sign of the greater transformation Jesus brings to our lives. Just as the wine was of better quality than what came before, so the life Jesus offers is abundantly better than anything we could achieve on our own.

As we reflect on this truth, let us draw near to God with the words of the hymn, "I Am Thine, O Lord." May it be our prayer and declaration of surrender, trust, and devotion:

"I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,
And it told Thy love to me;
But I long to rise in the arms of faith,
And be closer drawn to Thee."

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, may our lives echo this hymn as we live out the transformation Christ brings. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.