

1 Corinthians 12:1-11**John 2:1-11****Introduction**

As you know my father was in the Royal Air Force which meant that when I was growing up my father was the commander of a fighter squadron, and part of the role that he and my mother had was to care for the officers, the airmen and their families. This called for a lot of entertaining, we had some legendary parties – especially at Christmas and the New Year for the whole squadron and my mother became expert at catering for large numbers. She was incredibly organised about it and I think some of this has rubbed off on me. I have a horror of not having enough food in the house and like to be able to rustle up a meal at a moment's notice. I also have a horror of not having enough to give my guests and as a result I always over cater.

Can you imagine what it would be like to hold an important party such as a wedding feast and to realise half way through that there wasn't enough to feed your guests. It wouldn't just be inconvenient, but a social disaster. In Jesus' times it would also be a disgrace. Hospitality was paramount in the near eastern culture of those times and failing to cater for your guests would be an unthinkable disgrace. The family would have to live with the shame for a long time to come and the bridal couple would probably see it as bringing bad luck on their married life.

With that in mind it is easy to see why Mary, Jesus' mother was concerned. This wasn't just about a good party ruined it was about the status and social standing of a family. Even so, was it really something that should have concerned the Son of God come to earth to redeem God's people? All the other miracles recorded in the Gospels are about meeting human need at its most basic. Jesus offered healing of physical illness and deformity, forgiveness of sin and failure and showed his power over creation in the way he controlled storms and provided food for a weary and hungry crowd.

Isn't providing wine for a party a bit frivolous? From Jesus' response when Mary first brings the need to his notice you might think so. But this, the first miracle Jesus performed was much more than a frivolous gesture or a bowing to his mother's request.

John, when he writes about Jesus' miracles and acts of power talks about them as 'signs'. And here in this passage he says, "What Jesus did here at Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him.

In the Gospels we see the signs being times as those moments when heaven is opened and the transforming power of God bursts into the present world. Jesus promised transformation – the different dimension of

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reality that comes into being when He is present and when, as Mary tells the servants, people do whatever Jesus tells them to.

When we realise that we see the hidden significance of this seemingly trivial miracle:

- The wedding is a foretaste of the great heavenly feast in store for God's people described in Revelation.
- The water jars, used for the Jewish purification rites, are a sign that God is doing a new thing from within the old Jewish system, bringing purification to Israel and the world in a new way.

After this sign or miracle Jesus addresses himself to other kinds of problems and the more serious issues that afflict human beings. But in this sign we are already witnessing the strange compassion of Jesus which comes when people are in need and deals with that need in unexpected ways.

We can consider this miracle on two levels. On the first level we see that Jesus, knowing he has the power to make a difference to an upsetting situation that at best caused embarrassment to his hosts and at worst would cause utter humiliation, intervened to bring help in a very practical way. He produced wine from nothing. But not only did he produce wine, he produced gallons of the very finest quality vintage. This is a demonstration of the generosity of Jesus. He not only solved a problem for the host he did so in a generous and thoughtful way.

The second level in which we can view this miracle is to see that the transformation of water into wine is meant by John to signify the effect that Jesus had and can still have today on people's lives. Jesus came, as he says later in John's Gospel (chapter 10:10), that we might have life and have it in all its fullness. Jesus is not interested in simply bringing life and forgiveness to bruised hearts and souls he is interested in ensuring that the life that we have is as full as it can possibly be. This is shown in the imagery of the miracle. Instead of popping down to the off licence for a couple more cases of budget wine he provided the wedding guests with 720 litres or for those like me still think in imperial units 158 gallons of the finest wine. That is indeed a demonstration of life in all its fullness. But a very important aspect of this miracle is that it wouldn't have happened if Mary hadn't asked Jesus to intervene and if the servants hadn't done exactly what he told them to.

I think that very often in our daily lives there are things that we consider too trivial and unimportant to bring to Jesus. In fact even when we are very distressed by something or dealing with a serious problem such as illness, or unemployment or issues in our relationships we feel that it is

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too insignificant to bother God with. "Why should he be interested in my small problem when he has the whole world to bother about?" is something I have so often heard from people who are in deep trouble but who don't feel comfortable asking God to help.

The fact of the matter is that God created us, knows us to the depth of our being and is interested in everything that concerns us. He wants us to have life in abundance, to be fulfilled and to fully meet our potential and he is more than willing to bring transformation into situation we are struggling with but we don't consider asking him for help. We may feel that it would be a failure to ask for help, or as I've already said that he is too busy to be bothered with us, or that pride stops us reaching out.

One of the things I have discovered through my life is that God is a gentleman. He never pushes his way in or intrudes where he isn't wanted. He knows how to help us and is more than able to transform our worst situations but he will not intervene unless we ask him for help. He is like a parent who respects their child's autonomy and allows the child to find their own way but stands ready to offer help and wisdom as soon as asked.

We may think our concerns too trivial for God or that he is not interested in us enjoying ourselves or being happy. *Tell Gerard Hughes story about the man who thought Jesus would be frowning.*

God loves us. He has gone to enormous lengths to bring us back to him and he wants the very best for us. All we need to do is to ask him for his transforming help.

But equally the miracle wouldn't have occurred if the servants hadn't done exactly what Jesus told them to. They could easily have thought they knew better and simply drawn the water and taken that to the steward. They might have thought, "We won't need all that. Let's just fill one jar" Jesus' instructions may not have seemed sensible to them but they obeyed Mary and did exactly what Jesus told them to. He used this obedience to perform the miracle with its attendant significance.

We so often miss out on transformation of situations in our lives because we are reluctant to ask God for help and then sometimes when we do finally ask him for help we can be wary of what we believe he is asking us to do and adapt the instructions.

What Jesus wants us to know is that there isn't any situation too trivial or frivolous for him to be interested in or for him to want to transform for us. But that we do need to bring that situation to him and ask him to use his

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transforming power in our lives. We also need to trust him enough to do as he tells us so that he can bring healing and transformation in his own, individual and often very surprising way.

I'd like us to take a moment now just to think quietly about those areas of our lives where we are struggling. It might be something that seems trivial or frivolous or it might be something big that is making life very difficult.

May I now invite you to bring that area to Jesus and ask for him to reach out into the situation and bring his transforming power into your life? He may not transform the situation in the way we expect him to but ask him to help you trust him enough to allow him to work in his own way to bring life in all its fullness to you.

Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to come