**A Jesus Epiphany: The Wine Sign**

Exodus 33:12-33; Romans 12:6-16; [John 2:1-11](https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/scripture/sermons-on-john-2-1-11?keyword=John+2%3A1-11&ref=SermonPrint); Ps. 128 1.20.19

**Summary: What was the purpose of "signs" in Jesus ministry? And what did this particular sign have to say to us?**

INTRO: The Chicago suburb of Oak Lawn had a problem - motorists weren't coming to a complete stop at stop signs. So in 2007 the Mayor came up with a creative solution. He added a second, smaller octagonal sign the town's 50 or so stop signs that read:

“STOP --And smell the roses”

"STOP -- No really, you gotta stop"

"STOP -- Or I’m Telling Your Mom,"

"STOP -- In the naaaame of love."

And – it worked!!! People stopped at the stop signs. The additional signs were so imaginative and humorous people laughed and obeyed the Stop sign. Everybody laughed… except the Illinois Department of Transportation which deemed the signs violations of the Federal Uniform Traffic Control Act, and threatened to withhold funds if the signs weren't removed. Sadly, the Mayor had to comply. (Uncle John’s Endlessly Engrossing Bathroom Reader, p. 253)

The Mayor believed that if he could just get the motorists to pay attention, then he could get his message across. The message… STOP! It was an important message… he was using special signs to get it across.

Signs have always been used to get messages across to people. Whether square, rectangular, triangular, or octagonal… there is a message tied to the sign. Sometimes the sign’s message is very important and even critical

In our text this morning we’re told: *“This (changing water into wine) was the first of his SIGNS, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”* John 2:11

One scholar went through the Gospels and found at least 35 different miracle or signs that Jesus did during His ministry. But John explained at the end of his Gospel: *“Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”* (John 21:25) In other words, Jesus probably did a whole lot more MIRACLES during His ministry, but these 35 or so that are listed in the Gospels were intended to teach us something. They were like SIGNPOSTS showing us God’s message.

In fact, that WAS the purpose of miracles. When Peter preached at Pentecost he said: *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and SIGNS…”* Acts 2:22

And later in the book of the Gospel of John we’re told *“Now Jesus did many other SIGNS in the presence of the disciples, which are not written 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 20:30-31

In other words… the miracles that Jesus did were intended to get people to say: PAY ATTENTION! This is the Son of God… this is THE ONE you need to listen to!

Now, I’m going to repeat a SIGN is something that God used to tell us something. There was a message there… something God wanted us to see about Jesus. And so for the better part of this sermon we’re going to focus on the purpose of Biblical signs in general and of this particular sign in John 2.

Miracles are God’s signature. Back in Exodus we read of one of the miracles that God did through Moses, and the magicians who were consulted by the Pharaoh were astonished and warned Pharaoh: *“This is the finger of God.”* (Exodus 8:19) Miracles were the times when God interceded in the course of human history.

The signs God used were intended to get people’s attention. In fact, that’s exactly what Jesus said these miracles were for. A little later on in the gospel of John Jesus is challenged to PROVE who He is. Ordinarily, in order to prove something like this you’d need at least 2 or 3 witnesses, but Jesus tells his audience – He has five witnesses.

1. There was John the Baptist’s testimony.

2. There was the testimony of the Father (when Jesus was baptized by John)

3. There was the testimony of Biblical prophecy.

4. And then there was the testimony of the miracles He did: *“…the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.”* John 5:36

Essentially, Jesus’ miracles were CALLING CARDS. They were done by Jesus to give credibility and authority to His ministry. Or as it says in our text today of His first sign – it “*manifested His glory.”* (John 2:11)

Now, let’s go back to the miracle in our text today where Jesus turned the water into wine. This miracle was not part of Jesus’ original game plan. We’re told *“When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”*

What’s Jesus saying??? He’s saying this wasn’t what He planned on. This wasn’t part of the game plan. He knows exactly what He intends to do and when He intends to do it… and here His momma is calling audibles on Him.

Now bear in mind – this is the 1st SIGN Jesus has ever done. He hasn’t done anything like this before. And Mary has never seen Him do anything miraculous before. But somehow she knows He can do something.

She says to the servants, *“Do whatever he tells you*” (John 2:5) and then she kinda just walks away.

Now, this is JESUS – King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

This is Jesus – the Son of God, having stepped down out of Heaven.

This is Jesus – who spoke in the beginning and the heavens and earth snapped into existence.

This is Jesus – who will one day come back a 2nd TIME and will judge the living and the dead.

Does He listen to his Mother? Yes, He does. He listens to her. He honors her. And He does exactly what she asks of him. Now, it wasn’t according to the game plan… and yet Jesus honored her request.

Did you realize– that if you are a Christian - God has given you the same promise? You can ask whatever you like of God and He’ll listen to you. Jesus said “… *if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”* (Matthew 17:20) Once you’re a Christian – you can boldly approach the throne of God and you can ask whatever you want to ask in faith… and if it doesn’t violate some vast eternal plan - God will do it for you. Now granted there may be reasons why God MIGHT NOT do what you ask, but the point is this - ask anyway. Ask in faith! There are people who won’t ask God for something because they’re afraid He won’t want to do it, but Jesus didn’t want to do this either… but He did, because His momma asked in faith.

The 2nd thing that I’m seeing here is –since His momma asked – Jesus was gonna do this right. We’re told *“there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.” Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.”* John 2:6-7

But these were not just any old stone jars – these were jars that were used for purification. Jesus could have had the servants use pots and pans. He could have told them use the jars that OTHER wine had been stored in. But instead He instructs them to fill THESE jars - jars for purification. These jars were not used for wine… they were used for water.

So why use these jars? Well, a couple of thoughts come to mind. First, since these jars never had wine in them, no one can accuse Jesus of simply finding jars that HAD had wine in them and fudging a little here. These jars had never had even the hint of the flavor of wine. Thus, when the water in the jars turned to wine, there was no question where this wine had come from – this was a miracle.

Secondly, I’m thinking Jesus used jars dedicated to purification… because that’s why He came. Zechariah prophesied about the coming of the Messiah Jesus and said: *“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.”* (Zechariah 13:1)

You see, I believe that when Jesus chose those stone jars for purification He did it deliberately because - this was the purpose of His ministry. The reason He came was to purify people from the stain and filth of their sins and uncleanness.

God has done the same thing with water baptism. It’s a picture of the purification God does in our lives when we become Christians. 1 Peter 3:21 tells us *“Baptism, which corresponds to (the water of Noah’s flood), now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

Baptism is part of what God asks us to do to accept His salvation. But there’s nothing magical in the water. It’s not like you’re washing dirt from your body but it is the way we appeal to God for a clear conscience. In Romans 6, God compares this simple concept of going under water to being buried with Christ… and then risen with Him to live a new life. You’re not really being buried in a grave – but that’s the imagery God wants to place in our minds. At the point where we’re buried in the waters – we die to our past. Ad when we rise out of that watery grave we are resurrected to live a new life.

Lastly, in this FIRST sign Jesus performed Mary says something powerful, even though I don’t think she would have realized how significant her words were. We’re told *“His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’”*

Now think about this: what if the servants hadn’t done what Jesus told them to do… would the water still have turned to wine? Possibly not.

Consider this then: if we do not do what Jesus asks us to do… we run the risk of Him not doing miraculous things in our lives either.

There are churches who don’t do what Jesus says to do.

There are preachers who don’t do what Jesus says to do.

There are Elders, and Sunday School teachers, and regular folks at church who don’t do what Jesus says to do.

But If you’re a Christian, this is non-negotiable. If Jesus tells you to do something… that’s what you do. Especially if you want Him to do mighty things in your life, your family, your job and your church.

In Acts 2 Peter(who learned from Jesus) has just been preaching to the crowds about Jesus – that He was the fulfillment of prophecy, the one promised throughout the Old Testament and that the folks in this audience had been responsible for His crucifixion. The people in the crowd are so convicted by what they’ve heard that they interrupt Peter and ask…*“Brothers, what shall we DO?”*

Peter tells them what to DO: *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Acts 2:38

What did Peter tell the crowds to “do?” Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. They asked a direct question and he gave them a direct answer. This is what you “do” to be saved.

In Acts 16:30 we’re told of a jailer from the city of Philippi who asked Paul and Silas: *“Sirs, what must I DO to be saved?”* If Paul had been part of some modern day denominations he would have rebuked the jailer for asking what he could do since he couldn’t do anything to be saved. But Paul doesn’t rebuke him. Instead he tells him: *“’Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And (the jailer took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.”* Acts 16:31-33

What did Paul and Silas tell the jailer to “do”? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But bear in mind this is a gentile who has never heard about Jesus before. So for the next hour or so Paul and Silas tell him and his family what “believing in Jesus” means.

And then they baptize the Jailer and his family. When do they baptize them? At midnight. Why not wait until the weekend? Why not wait until “Easter?” Why not wait until the next morning? Why? Because that’s part of our response of belief to accept God’s free gift of salvation without delay.

CLOSE: Our questions for today, do you believe Jesus? Have you invited Him to be the Lord and King in your life? Have you submitted to baptism?

**Let us pray:** Lord, we thank You for the wine sign and all the other signs and wonders that prove You are God. Give us rock solid faith that we may prevail through the storms of this life and be a blessing to others in the struggles they face. In Jesus’ name. Amen.