

Abundant Life

John 2: 1-11 (January 16, 2022)

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2On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” ⁶Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. ⁹When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Historical Context

The mother of Jesus appears only twice in the Gospel of John, at the wedding at Cana and at the foot of the cross. While we are not told about her reoccurrence later in the Gospel, we get a hint of her return in Jesus’ reason for what seems to be a refusal of her request, “My hour has not yet come.” The mother of Jesus brackets his life, surrounds Jesus’ earthly ministry. She is at the beginning of his career and watches him die. She is the nurturing force when he is the Word made flesh, a shared parenthood with God, the father.

Theme: Abundant Life

When we think of Jesus’ miracles, we usually think of him helping those in desperate need—feeding the hungry, healing the blind and the lame, or even raising the dead. These account for most of Jesus’ miracles narrated in the Gospels; they are acts which relieve suffering, which restore life, health, and wholeness. It is perhaps a bit surprising, then, that the first miracle of Jesus’ ministry in John’s Gospel is one that seems almost frivolous.

John doesn’t even call this act a miracle, but a sign (*semeion* in Greek). It is the first of seven such signs in John’s Gospel. Signs point us to something beyond themselves, as road signs alert us to something that lies ahead of us. The sign of Jesus changing the water into wine points us to the source of all life and joy. This miracle is a sign that in Jesus, life, joy, and salvation have arrived. As Jesus will tell us, “I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly.”

Abundant life is more than mere existence or survival, and certainly more than an abundance of material things. Abundant life is to know and be known by the One through whom all life came into being. Of course, abundant life does not mean a life of ease, comfort, and luxury or an absence of sorrow and suffering. But it does mean that in Jesus we have an abundant, extravagant source of grace to sustain us, grace that is more than sufficient to provide where we fall short and to give us joy even amid sorrow and struggle. Abundant life means that in Christ we are joined to the source of true life, life that is rich and full and eternal, life that neither sorrow, nor suffering, nor death itself can destroy.