

How would you describe the last wedding and reception you attended? Was it nice, or not so nice? Was it simple, or over-the-top? Was the food incredible, or forgettable? Did the bride and groom meet and greet all of their guests, or none of them?

In today’s lesson, we’ve been invited to a wedding and reception in the town of Cana. And who should show up? Jesus! Cana’s only a few miles north of his home town of Nazareth. And of all the things we could remember about his first miracle ... *how they ran out of wine, how he turned water into wine, how Jesus mother was there and gave Jesus “advice”* ... let’s remember this:

“JESUS SAVES THE BEST FOR LAST!”

Right now, we have a hard time searching for things for which we are thankful. Let’s pause to remember how our Lord fills our lives with good things. This wedding he attended is a reminder of that. Every wedding, well *almost* every wedding, is a celebration for the couple and for their families, relatives and friends. That’s what the wedding crowd was doing 21 centuries ago.

Besides weddings, God gives us lots of reasons to celebrate in our own lives. There are birthdays ... baptisms ... confirmations ... graduations ... engagements ... bridal and baby showers ... first job ... new house ... anniversaries ... retirements ... even funerals are a victory celebration for a Christian who has gone home.. And, as Sandy and I get older, each family get-together becomes a celebration, something we cherish. Life on earth is difficult, but there are plenty of occasions to celebrate.

Because God gives us earthly blessings, we don’t always see that his love is still hard at work when he chooses to withhold things from us.

At Cana’s wedding the couple ran out of wine. Perhaps that was due to the length of the celebration (they could last a week or more), or the couple’s lack of money. Whatever the reason, Mary wanted to make sure her son knew: **When**

the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” She knew he could help. Yes, she gave birth to him, but he was also Almighty God’s Almighty Son. There wasn’t anything he couldn’t do.

Jesus wasn’t quite ready to do anything about the wine situation. He responded: **“Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come.”** The situation didn’t require his immediate attention from his perspective as Savior.

Everything Jesus did while on earth was done for the sole purpose of saving sinners from hell. The timing wasn’t right for him to jump into action. There were things other than wine to consider; bigger things like: faith, forgiveness and salvation for sinners.

Jesus chose to wait and do nothing, for the moment. Jesus chose to wait another time. Before heading to Bethany to deal with his friend Lazarus he waited several days. We know how that turned out. In waiting, in doing nothing here, his plan and purpose were being carried out – even though you may have had to wait for your wine if you were attending the wedding.

It is easy to forget that God’s goal is for us to trust in him more and more, so we can share heaven with him when we aren’t here anymore. That’s why God promises – again and again – that everything that happens in our lives works towards that goal.

Like Mary, we too make requests of God for things which only he can provide. To feel healthier. To lick the cancer. To have the loneliness go away. To have family members back on speaking terms. To have children. To find a better job. To pay off the bills. To have athletic or musical ability. And when we don’t receive it in the time we’ve allotted, we figure God must have forgotten.

But that’s not the case at all. It’s simply not the right time. God’s desire for our salvation takes top

priority. God knows best. Trust him, for ultimately, JESUS SAVES THE BEST FOR LAST!

Like the wine at the wedding, our job, our money, our health, our patience runs out. We ask God to refill it. When nothing changes or improves we wonder why God has left us on hold?

Again, that's not the case. It's all timing, with our salvation being his top priority. God knows best. That's why JESUS SAVES THE BEST FOR LAST!

That was the case in Cana. When Jesus was ready to go to work, and not a moment earlier, he had the servants get busy: **"Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."**

Filling 6 jars with water was an unusual request, but they did it anyway. These weren't 6 water bottles, like we carry around with us. These were large stone jars that held between 20-30 gallons. Who knows how many times they had to walk back and forth from the town well to fill them? Who knows what they were thinking when they took some of that well water to the banquet master?

We do know ... something happened on the way. What the master tasted wasn't water. It was the best wine he ever had. It's not natural for water to turn into wine. If it did, our Altar Guild wouldn't have to purchase communion wine again. No, this was supernatural.

It certainly got the banquet master's attention, because he pulled the groom aside and criticized him: **"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink,"** before complimenting him: **"But you have saved the best till now."**

Not only had Jesus given this couple a very generous wedding gift (if calculations are correct, over 900 bottles of the highest quality wine), by SAVING THE BEST FOR LAST. The results were plentiful and tasty and glorious, **he revealed his glory**, and exactly what he wanted to happen by waiting, **His disciples believed in him.**

Jesus didn't do miracles to impress and amaze the onlookers. While he did help those in need, and strengthen the faith of his followers, his main purpose is they proved he was who he claimed to be – Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior. His life of perfect obedience to God's laws for us, and his death on the cross would cover every sin of every sinner. His miracles support his message.

A young woman had been given a short time to live. As she began to get her things in order, she contacted her pastor. She picked out hymns and Scripture that would serve as her final confession of faith, and also comfort her family at the funeral service.

"There's one more thing," she said. *"I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."* She noticed the look on her pastor's face: *"That surprises you, doesn't it?"* *"Yes, it does,"* he replied.

She explained, *"In all my years of attending church dinners, whenever the dishes from the main course were cleared away, someone would lean in and say, "Keep your fork." That's my favorite part. I knew something better was coming ... chocolate layer cake ... deep-dish apple pie.*

I want people to see my body in that casket with a fork in my right hand and wonder, *"What's with the fork?"* Then I want you to tell them: *"Keep your fork" means something better is coming. JESUS SAVES THE BEST – heaven – FOR LAST."*

At her funeral, the pastor explained the fork and its meaning. Neither the pastor, nor the people could not stop thinking about that fork. And I hope you don't either.