

When You Run Out

On Sunday, we explored the deeper meaning of the story recorded in John 2 where, at a wedding, Jesus turns water into wine.

1. Warm up question. First century Jewish weddings typically included 7 days of feasting. Running out of wine in the midst of the feasting was a disaster! What's the biggest wedding disaster you've ever witnessed?
2. Read John 2:1-11. At its most basic level, this story is simply meant to be a "miracle of authentication." In other words, it was an event that began to reveal who Jesus was – someone special, someone entrusted with extraordinary power, so much power that even the elements obeyed him. Let's make sure we understand the story on this basic level before digging into its deeper meaning.
 - a. How do you think the bride and groom felt when they heard they had run out of wine at their wedding?
 - b. When Mary told Jesus, "They have no wine," how do you interpret her statement? Was she just filling him in? Was she hinting at something? Was she implicitly making a request?
 - c. How do you interpret Jesus' response to Mary in verse 4? In what tone of voice do you suppose he said this? And what was his point?
 - d. How do you interpret Mary's response in verse 5? In what tone of voice do you suppose she said this?
 - e. When Jesus told the servants what to do – i.e., fill the jugs with water and serve it – what do you think they thought?
 - f. As word about the new wine, and how it came to be, began to spread at the wedding, how do you suppose the wedding guests responded? What role did this miracle play in getting Jesus' ministry off the ground?
3. Now that we've explored how the miracle at Cana helped launch Jesus' ministry, let's dig into its deeper meaning. The first great clue as to the deeper meaning of this miracle story is found in verse 3 where it says, "***the wine gave out.***" In other words, this is a story about what we should do "when we run out." On Sunday, Jeff described how Richard Hancock felt after spending 12 years providing end-of-life care for his husband, step-mother, Dad, and Mom. After all this, Richard experienced a "deep emptiness." He says, "I had no energy left. I was isolated. I stopped caring for myself. I just stayed in my house with the windows closed. I had no one." In one way or another, we will all find ourselves in that place at one time or another.
 - a. Looking back across your life, tell us about a time when you felt enormously depleted? What words would you use to describe how you felt at that time?

- b. In what part of your life right now are you feeling like giving up and giving out?
 - c. Have you ever seen someone who just quit on life? What happened to them?
4. Although the story in John 2 begins with the disaster of running out of wine, it ends with six 25-gallon jugs filled to the brim with the best possible wine – better than the wine served at the start of the wedding. The key phrase in this part of the story is found in verse 9: “[*they*] **did not know where it came from.**” In other words, this part of the story reminds us that, when we run out, there is an unseen power that often pops up where we least expect it. Tell us about a time in your life when you have witnessed the unseen power of God at work in amazing ways.
5. When times are hard, how do we get from that place of utter depletion to that place of utter amazement? The answer is found in the middle part of our Gospel story. Mary brings the problem to Jesus, tells the servants to await his instructions, then says, “**Do whatever he tells you.**” Three key steps are implicit in this sequence:

When you feel utterly depleted . . .

- Step 1: Bring your emptiness to Jesus; pour out your heart to him.
- Step 2: Await instructions; do NOT move until you’re told.
- Step 3: When Jesus speaks, do whatever he tells you!

- a. Waiting for God is not easy. We usually want quick, easy solutions. Here are two key quotes about waiting for God. What thoughts or insights do you glean from these quotes?

Luci Shaw says: “I’m an impatient, restless person. Slowing down and waiting seems like a waste of time. Yet waiting [is] an inevitable part of the human condition. Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Romans 8:22-25 resonates with me: ‘Waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting.’ (Message Bible.) During a time of waiting, God is vibrantly at work within us.”

Eugene Peterson says: “In prayer, we are aware that God is in action and that when the circumstances are ready, when others are in the right place, and when our hearts are prepared, God will call us into action. ***Waiting in prayer is a disciplined refusal to act before God acts.***”

- b. When we feel lost, confused, and depleted, why is it so important to go into the waiting and listening mode?
- c. In Question 3b above, some of us identified something happening in our life right now where we feel like giving up and giving out. Using the 3-step model of John 2, which steps have you already taken and what’s the next step for you?