

*John 2:1–25 (NIV2011)*

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,<sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.<sup>3</sup> When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

<sup>4</sup>"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

<sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup>Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so,<sup>9</sup> and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside<sup>10</sup> and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

<sup>11</sup>What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

<sup>12</sup>After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

<sup>13</sup>When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.<sup>15</sup> So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.<sup>16</sup> To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"<sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

<sup>18</sup>The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

<sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

<sup>20</sup>They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"<sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body.<sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

<sup>23</sup>Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.<sup>24</sup> But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.<sup>25</sup> He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

*This week, Jesus' ministry goes public. We'll see that most people Jesus encounters are clueless when it comes to knowing Jesus. Why is it so hard to embrace the real Jesus?*

And so we leave John's first chapter. In the last four studies, we took the time to see everything John wanted us to grasp about Jesus before plunging us headlong into the story. We learned that Jesus, this obviously very human carpenter from Nazareth, is the Messiah, the long-awaited king of Israel. As if that wasn't hard enough to comprehend, we learned that Jesus was in the beginning with God and *was* God, creator of the cosmos and the source of life. How could such a thing be? How could one man be both fully human and yet also the one Creator? John, of course, can't explain this; he can only tell us what he believes to be so.

Beginning in chapter two, John tells us the story of one encounter after another that Jesus has with the people of Judea, Galilee, and even Samaria. Some are ordinary people, such as Jesus' first followers. Some are people who hold considerable power

and influence. But all are clueless to what is happening amongst them, to *who* is happening. We begin with the story of a wedding.

### *A wedding in Cana*

Most of us like a good party and there are few parties better than a wedding. A joyous occasion shared by family and friends, weddings are dominated by lots of smiles, hugs, and fun. This is true now and it was true in Jesus' day. In fact, in Jesus' world, wedding feasts and festivals sometimes went on for days.

John tells us the story of a wedding in Cana, a village several miles north of Nazareth. Lots of family and many friends have come for the wedding feast, including Jesus, his mother, Mary, and some of Jesus' first followers.

Either, it was an unexpectedly good party or the host was a bit cheap, for as the festivities really got rolling the wine ran out. Mary mentions this to Jesus, presumably because she knows he could help out in a way no one else could. But Jesus is hesitant to reveal himself; it is too soon. Nonetheless, Mary tells the servants to do as Jesus tells them.

The host owns six very large jars (these probably stood several feet high) for holding water to be used in purification rites. Jesus tells the servers to fill the jars with water and serve some to the chief steward of the banquet. When they do so, the steward is astonished and commends the bridegroom, who is the host, for saving the best wine for last.

There are a few key points to take away from this story:

- When Jesus says to his mother, "My hour has not yet come," we are meant to look ahead to the cross, to his glorification. Jesus knows that once he begins his public ministry, there is only one place it can lead, for he will confront the evil powers of this world.
- Jesus distances himself a bit even from his own mother. He is not disrespectful, but he is also much more than Mary's son. He is Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Son of Man, and so on.
- It is significant that the jars used by Jesus are there to hold water used in Jewish purification rites. Surely, we are supposed to grasp that Jesus supplants the purification rites. It is an "out with the old, in with the new" moment. The large amount of wine provided becomes "symbolic of the lavish provision of the new age<sup>1</sup>."
- The changing of water into wine is a sign to the power that stands behind the miracle and is, explicitly, a signpost to the identity of Jesus. There are seven such signs in John's gospel.<sup>2</sup> These signs reveal Jesus' glory, i.e., they show that Jesus is who he claims to be.

### *Jesus clears the temple courts*

From the joy of a wedding, we move to a confrontation in the temple in Jerusalem. John tells us it is a short time before the Passover Festival and Jesus, like all Jewish men who are able, heads to Jerusalem for the festival.

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (174). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: InterVarsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>2</sup> In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus' miracles don't function as signs to Jesus' identity, they are manifestations of God's kingdom.

One day, Jesus goes to the temple. There, the “business” of animal sacrifice is going on as it does every day. Jews come from all over Judea and Galilee to offer a sacrifice for their sins. Most don’t want to be troubled to come with an animal of their own. Instead, they buy one from the merchants who have tables set up in the temple courts.<sup>3</sup> Sadly, moneychangers were also working in the temple courts, which was not in keeping with Jewish law at the time.

Try to imagine the scene. Jesus charges into the courtyards swinging a whip made of some ends of rope. Tables go flying, animals are sent running, and everyone stares in shock. Who is this guy?! Is he crazy?

#### Jesus, Meek and Mild?

*In his commentary on John, R. Kent Hughes shares the following observations about the meek and mild Jesus.*

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, is a concept that has been so overworked that many today preach and follow a Christ who has no resemblance to the Christ of the New Testament. That Jesus is an idol, drained of his deity—a weak, good-natured deity whose great aim is to let us off the hook.

Do not get me wrong. Jesus *is* meek and mild. In fact, he describes himself in that way in Matthew 11:29 when he invites those who have burdens to come to him. Dozens of Scriptures in the New Testament testify to his gentleness. But we need to balance this with other descriptions of our Lord. For instance, in Mark 3:5, the passage describing the man with the paralyzed hand, Jesus looked around at all those who were questioning whether or not he would heal on the Sabbath, and “he looked around at them in anger.” Jesus’ anger was a swelling wrath. There was nothing gentle in the fierce message he sent to Herod either: “Go tell that fox ...” (Luke 13:32), or in his response to Peter: “Out of my sight, Satan!” (Matthew 16:23). I am sure the Pharisees in the temple saw nothing of his gentleness, meekness, and mildness when he said, “You are like whitewashed tombs” (Matthew 23:27) and “You snakes! You brood of vipers. How will you escape being condemned to hell?” (v. 33). The scene described in our text is a wild scene! Men were grasping at their moneybags and tables as Jesus applied the whip to those not moving.

But the fact is, Jesus was as Godlike here as he was when he hung on the cross. He was revealing as much of God on this occasion as he did at Calvary.

As you’d expect, the leaders of the temple come running out to see what is going on and how Jesus possibly could think he has the authority to do such a thing. Isn’t it interesting that they don’t confront Jesus as if he was some sort of crazy man. Even in the chaos, they see something quite sane in Jesus.

Surely, the sign Jesus gives made no sense to them at all. “Destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days,” he tells them. They are incredulous. This man makes no sense at all! How could he build in three days what has been worked on for forty-six years? Crazy.

But we know what he meant, just as the disciples would come to understand. In the light of Jesus’ resurrection, his raising after three days, we can see that Jesus had focused the temple and authority over it on himself. After all, the temple was the place of God’s presence with his people and Jesus was the embodiment of that presence.

In the coming weeks, we’ll meet many people who encounter Jesus but cannot grasp who it is they have met. They are, in a word, “clueless,” blind just as the disciples prove to be blind.

But everything changes when the “temple” is raised. As we’ll see, when the disciples meet the resurrected Jesus, they believe. Even Thomas. We probably ought to ask ourselves why we’d think anyone would “get it” without the light of the resurrection. In the coming weeks, perhaps we can have sympathy for those who remain clueless in the gospel even as John presents to us clue after clue as to Jesus’ true identity.

<sup>3</sup> Your study Bible will have a diagram of the temple. The courts where the animals are being sold are just outside the temple proper and were as close to the actual temple as Gentiles could approach.

## Knowing what is in each of us

*John 2:23-25 remind us that Jesus knows each of us better than we know ourselves. Bruce Milne reflects on these verses in the following:*

The section concludes with an impressive claim for Jesus: *he knew what was in a man* (v. 25). This century has witnessed the dominance of Alexander Pope's maxim, 'the proper study of mankind is man'. In addition to the acceleration of the scientific analysis, in chemical and physical terms, of the human species, our time has also witnessed the emergence and burgeoning of the social sciences. Today, as never in our history, 'man/humanity' is under the microscope. Strikingly, for all our accumulated knowledge of ourselves, we have experienced an even deeper sense of alienation. Human personhood remains in many respects as great an enigma as it was to our primitive ancestors. The modern enigma is memorably captured by a contemporary writer [Richard Holloway]:

This is my dilemma: I am dust and ashes; frail, wayward, a set of predetermined behavioral responses, riddled with fears, beset with needs, the quintessence of dust, and unto dust I shall return.

But there is something else in me. Dust I may be, but troubled dust. Dust that dreams. Dust that has strange premonitions of transfiguration, of a glory in store, a destiny prepared, an inheritance that will one day be my own. So my life is stretched out in a painful dialectic between ashes and glory, between weakness and transfiguration. I am a rebel to myself, an exasperating enigma, this strange duality of dust and glory.

While these observations are not intended to dismiss the celebrated achievements of modern anthropology, John's claim that Jesus knows 'what is in' us demands attention and respect. What does Jesus teach us about the human person? At least two basic truths: the first is that we are morally flawed. His knowledge of us leads to his refusal to *entrust himself* to us (24). We pollute God's temple; we refuse him true worship; he cannot trust us (cf. Lk. 11:13 'though you are evil'; Mk. 7:20f.). It was this estimate of us which took him to the cross to die for our sins. Only through his travelling that terrible road can we be saved.

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection

*Rev. Arthur Jones has written some questions for our Connection Groups to consider as they discuss this week's passage:*

1. In the wedding story, Jesus is reluctant to involve himself, saying "my time has not yet come" and yet he fulfills his mother's request and "revealed his glory," making not just a small amount of wine, but between 120 and 180 gallons of wine. The point is not the miracle, but rather the one who made the miracle occur – Jesus reveals his true nature as God. Because of this act, the disciples put their faith in him. What led you to believe in Jesus? Has God ever done something dramatic and extravagant in your life or in the lives of others?
2. In the second story, Jesus reveals an entirely different part of his nature. All the gospels tell this story, but the other gospel writers focus on the abuses in the system while John writes that Jesus opposes any sense of a marketplace in the temple – a much more radical position. He is asked for a sign demonstrating his authority and points to his death and resurrection making his body the true temple of Israel. This is also a sign for us; Christ's resurrection gives credence to all scripture.
  - a. What do you think of this depiction of Jesus? Is an angry Jesus the image that comes to mind when you think of the gospels? Why do you think he got so angry?
  - b. How might God be angry with the religious institutions of today? If Christ entered St. Andrew today, what might he think?
3. In John 2, Jesus reveals his glory with a miracle and then begins his public ministry by overturning tables in the temple in Jerusalem. Even after Jesus overturns the tables, he still sacrifices himself for those that have disappointed him and crucified him. Even though we have all done things that disappoint and anger God, God loves us and invites us into following him ever more fully. How might this small group help us be more faithful in following God? How might this group help St. Andrew be more faithful in following God?

## *Daily Bible Readings*

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage.

<p><b>Monday, Psalm 69</b> Verse 9 from this psalm came to the disciples remembered Jesus' actions in the temple.</p>	<p><b>Tuesday, Malachi 2:17-3:5</b> The people's injustice has broken their covenant with God. God himself is going to come to the temple to put things right.</p>
<p><b>Wednesday, Matthew 9:14-17</b> Jesus speaks of new wine</p>	<p><b>Thursday, Matthew 22:1-14</b> Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet</p>
<p><b>Friday, John 20:19-23</b> The disciples meet the resurrected Jesus, the temple who was rebuilt in three days.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weekly Joys and Concerns</b></p>

