

John 2:1-11 ¹ On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." ⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so, they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, ⁹ 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 ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ 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.

John 2:1-11

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"It is a Miracle. We Have Wine."

By Rob Ashmall

In our verses today, Jesus turns the water into wine. On the surface, turning water into wine seems like a peculiar choice for a first miracle. Especially when we hear Jesus's words in Matthew 11:18-19 which says; "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." Yet when looked at differently, it a perfect choice for a first miracle. It is a perfect choice because it defies what conventional wisdom says should happen. This is just as 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 which says; "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God."

God choose what is low and despised in the world. This is not only true of things but people.

Let's take the story of Daniel, He said;

"I was born and raised in the Church. Not only was I there every time the doors were opened, but by the age of twelve, I had my own set of keys and often was the one unlocking and locking those doors. My parents were nurturing and loving, and my church was dedicated to teaching and preaching and living out the Gospel.

At a young age, that church called out gifts in me and let me use them to serve. They saw a call on my life I did not realize until much later.

Around age ten, I realized my need for a Savior and accepted Jesus as my Lord. From that point on, I continued to grow in faith and stature and service.

My call to ministry emerged with time. By college, I founded and led campus ministry groups. Summers were spent serving at youth camps. The local church hired me as an intern.

Pretty soon after college, others helped me fully see my calling to vocational ministry. I accepted a call to serve the church where I interned during college. I served there for ten years.

During those ten years, I grew in many ways. I served on a wonderful staff, got engaged and married, went to graduate school and earned my master of divinity, and had three children. I served in a very fruitful and fulfilling ministry.

However, in my last two years, my mom died, my wife struggled with postpartum emotional issues, and three of our five pastoral staff retired, quit, or were fired. Pretty soon, I quietly carried grief, sorrow, and pain, which morphed into resentment, anger, burnout, and isolation.

I felt no safe place available to process and unload these burdens. Instead, I felt everyone needing me to help with their own heavy yokes.

So, I quietly fell into temptation and sin. I found momentary happiness that led to deeper shame and despair.

Well, that all ended with my arrest by the FBI in the church parking lot. The “picture-perfect” life fell apart for all to see on the evening news and newspaper front page. In one flash, I lost all freedom, career, house, truck, and presence with my family and friends. Eventually, my wife divorced me.

I hit rock bottom in a solitary cell in central VA. I had shed all the tears in my body, felt like a total failure, and felt abandoned by most of the Church. At that moment, I felt the weight of all I had lost. Then I sat on my bunk and saw the next Scripture I had been reading—a psalm. I do not remember which one, but I do remember the way He spoke to me. He told me, “I love you. You fell, but you are not a failure. I’ve got you.”

That moment—two months into my incarceration—started the rebuilding process in me.

I came to grips with a lot of the pride, self-reliance, and stubbornness that led me down my sinful path. I watched God rebuild me piece by piece—reusing the good pieces and throwing out the junk.

Still, I felt sure God could never use me in ministry again. I was sure that opportunity was squandered. But God’s Spirit spoke to me on that, too, once again revealing my vicious pride. He said, “If you really think your sin is bigger and stronger than My call, you better check My resume again.” All of a sudden, Scripture became a sixty-six-book testimony of comebacks and second chances to me.

Jonah 3:1 wrecked me beautifully one day. “Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time.” What?!

On this journey through my season of incarceration, I have learned much about patience, receiving and giving grace, trust, faith, and the beauty of the real Church.

God completely answered my prayer by sending me to a prison FAR from home but right where I can serve Him. In a snippet from what could be another whole story, on my first night in the dorm where I live, the dorm church leader said, “We have been praying for YOU, and now you’re here!” He was leaving within a few weeks, and the church had been actively praying for a leader, and the Spirit immediately told them it was me.

I am so blessed to serve the body of Christ here—teaching, preaching, praying, counseling, and leading music. It is the most fruitful season of ministry yet. People from across the compound try to get in our dorm for the church here. People from other prisons have heard about us before they arrive. God is doing beautiful things with a bunch of broken federal felons here.’

Another example of how God will come to rescue those others might not expect to be rescued presents itself to in the story of Eddie and Marsha. Eddie begins to tell the story: ““The desperation of wanting the drugs to be out of my life, and to straighten my life up – I remember sticking a gun so hard in my temple and crying. I wanted to end it.”

Drugs controlled Eddie's life for more than two decades, a habit that started when he was only fifteen. "I was supposed to be at a skating rink, that's where my mom dropped me off at. As soon as she got out of sight, me and another friend got in a car with another guy and that's the night I got introduced to marijuana."

"I thought I was supposed to do it because everybody else was doing it. It grew from there for I say three, four, five years, and I got introduced to cocaine. It got me the first time I tried it."

He began dealing to pay for his growing addiction. Soon Eddie had a new obsession. "I was selling little stuff; twenty-five dollar, fifty-dollar stuff, a hundred-dollar stuff. The more I sold the more money I could make – so the lust for money consumed me. And I went up to the next stage of selling ounces, and that led into pounds."

Money and drugs became the center of his life. His girlfriend, Marsha, saw how it affected Eddie. "We had already been doing drugs. I had started doing cocaine – probably a year before I met Eddie. I kind of knew what was going on, but I wasn't gonna dare say. I just let him do his thing as long as I could be with him."

Eddie and Marsha married ten years later. They tried to break their habits, but the addictions only got worse. Marsha says the addictions grew. "As the years went on, our drug habit became much more intense."

"Six or eight hundred dollars a day on cocaine – couple hundred dollars a day in meth amphetamines." Eddie explains, "And to keep the habit up, I had to sell, which kept me on the road a good bit of my days. I didn't see much of my wife a lot. That's when the other women started coming into my life."

Marsha knew there were consequences to asking about Eddie's involvements. "I knew what he was doing. If I brought it up - we fought, physically fought."

Eddie continues, "And it escalated from there."

Marsha tried to ease the pain. "I ran to other men to mend the hurt, the broken heart, the brokenness of my heart."

"My life was a void, was nothing. There was no hope in my life. My marriage was falling apart." This was only the beginning. The drug running finally caught up to him. For the first time in his life Eddie was arrested. "That was traumatizing really to me. I went and done eight months on that, and I got out and said, 'I'm done. I'm done with it.' But I wasn't."

"You sell drugs, you do drugs that many years, it's like going to your job. It's something you're used to doing and in a way it's the only thing you know. I ended up being arrested 12 times – stayed on probation for 10 or 12 years."

Marsha sought help at a Christian rehab clinic. She hoped it would encourage Eddie to clean up as well. "He was coming to see me at church, and we only had fifteen minutes before church, and fifteen minutes after church to spend time together."

"She would tell me about the Lord, and I would listen. It would touch my heart, but that meth, and that money, and the lust for women still had me. And I knew it still had me. And I still liked it."

Marsha refused to be discouraged. Instead, she prayed for Eddie. "The Word says to call those things that do not exist as though they do. And I began to call him a mighty man of God, and no matter what was going on in his life I was still saying, 'He's a mighty man of God.'"

Eddie continued to use and deal. He was arrested again and was sentenced to fifteen years. "Being in prison for eighteen months, the drugs were out of my system. You know I could think straight."

Things were coming together. I was reading my Bible every day, I was going to the services they had in prison, and I'd pray every night. This one night – it was flowing out of me so much that I was up all night. I felt the presence of the Lord. I cried. And I knew that night is when, I feel – honestly feel, the Lord said, 'You are in My hands now. I'm giving you, My Spirit. You are a changed man.'

Eddie was determined to start fresh. Shortly after, he was released from prison. "They put me on house arrest for eighteen months. I knew it had to be God's way of saying, 'Hey, this is your time to get right with Me.' I fed my spirit. I prayed. I learned to hear God's voice."

For the first time since he was fifteen Eddie was free of the addictions. "I had no desire from the day I left that jail to sell drugs again. After twenty-six years of drug addiction – didn't have it anymore. I didn't have a desire to go see other women. The Lord, it's like He reached in and took out that rock that was inside of me and put a new heart in me."

Marsha saw their lives change. "It was like God put a new love for each other in our hearts. All that other stuff in the past – that's what it is, it's the past."

"This is the person I want to be." says Eddie, "So if anybody's out there struggling, just about to give up, then just give the Lord a chance. If you don't have any hope, He'll give you hope. If you don't have any peace in your life, He'll give you peace."

"It worked for me. It worked for my wife. It can work for you."

These stories remind us that Jesus comes and finds us where we are. Matthew 18:12-14 reminds of this with Jesus's own words; "What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So, it is not the will of you Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost." God wants us all to be saved. It doesn't matter where we have been, what we have done, or who we have done it with. Jesus comes to find us to take us out of it and bring us into discipleship. He will use any means, even what may seem like unconventional, like the wine. The wine caught everyone's attention because culturally it was the most important thing at this point in the celebration. In the end, Jesus just wants us to kneel and follow Him. So today, let us remember that Jesus is here for us and is here for everyone else too. He is waiting with open arms. So let us be accepting of him when he comes. Let us help others to find Him. As we go out into the world today, let it be so.