



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Signs

The Gospel of John

John 2:1–12

Steve Lombardo | September 19, 2021

Welcome to Village Bible Church. We're going to be in John 2. The first 12 verses will be our spiritual food for today.

I love preaching at Village Bible Church. I serve at the Plano campus and am thankful to be there. I'm thankful for your pastor, Pastor Tim. I love him very much. I've been on the preaching team with him for over seven years now and been his friend for longer than that. He's been a mentor to me. He loves you very much and told me to tell you that he'll be back next week. He's looking forward to that.

I'm really excited that we're now preaching systematically through the Scriptures. One of the things that's great about preaching verse by verse through a book is you get to see all the different parts. Yet that can also make it difficult, because inevitably there are places that are hard to deal with. Maybe there will be verses that are convicting. There are places in Scripture that require repentance.

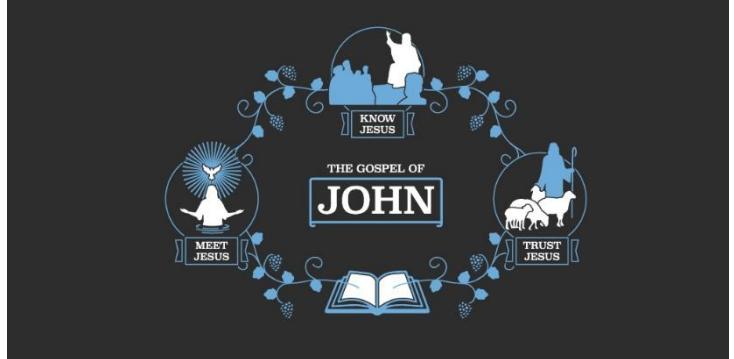
I don't know about you, but I like going my own way. When the Holy Spirit hits us through the preaching of His Word and calls us to turn and go God's way, that's not always the easiest thing to do. Yet here at Village we're going to look at all the verses. We're not going to skip over the hard parts and just go to the easy parts. If you've been here for a while, you know we're going to dive into all of it, including the hard parts.

Another criticism that comes up when we preach this way is that we sometimes don't address the issues that are currently hot topics in our culture. However, when we go systematically through the Bible, it speaks to all of our lives. Still, it can be tempting to speak a fiery message about things that everyone is talking about. We would get a lot of attention if we taught about vaccines right now. We could get everyone fighting and fired up. We don't do that, even though we know Jesus was challenged in similar ways. He was asked at one point about the Roman government. Think about all Israel had to deal with on a daily basis, being under Roman occupation. But Jesus never spoke about it, nor did He imply that He would work to get rid of the Romans. When He was asked about taxes, He responded, "Render to Caesar that which is Caesars, and render to God that which is God's" (Mark 12:17).

Jesus was revealing something greater than culture, greater than the day we live in. He was bringing the good news of His own glory—and that's why we also preach it and learn about it here. We ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see all that the Bible would teach us.

Eisegesis versus Exegesis

We're going to read the Scriptures without trying to put our own thoughts into them. That practice is called eisegesis. That happens when we start with our own perspective and experience, then interpret the texts through that view. That distorts our understanding of what is being taught. Let me give you an example. Romans 8:28—how many of you know that verse? About ten of you. At our Plano campus, 90% of us know Romans 8:28. It says, *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* What a great verse!



What I see in this verse is that God wants to bless me. God wants to give me all good things. I know that right now times might be tough. My money might be funny. But there is coming a day when God is going to bless my socks off. All things are working together for my good. I know people are talking garbage about me, but one day they're going to change. God will work all that together for my good. I don't really like my house that much. I don't really like the neighborhood I live in. But I know God is going to work it all together for good. I've got a glorious mansion coming, not only in heaven, but one that's coming here. That's what that verse kind of sounds like. I think that's actually why people like that verse.

But then Romans 8:29 says this: *"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son."* Wait a second. So my good, according to verse 29—because we're understanding the Scripture in its context—my good is being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Amen is right, but that's hard sometimes. And sometimes that's not perceived as a blessing. It's difficult because God is shaping me using the hard times. That means the difficult times are working for my good, to make me more like Jesus. But it's not for my personal blessings.

So we don't want to read into the text things that aren't there. Regarding our text today in John 2, people down through the centuries have read things into it. One way is that they've seen Mary as the mediator between the people and Jesus. When the groom and his family run out of wine, they go to Mary with their problem and ask her to go to Jesus. And she does. Some have used eisegesis to assume that we can do this as well. If we want to get something from Jesus, we can go to Mary and she'll go to Him on our behalf. Because she is Jesus' mom, He will listen to her more closely than He would to us, so we might get what we're requesting. That's why people pray to Mary as a mediator, but that's reading into the text something that isn't there. If this was true, then we could turn to all the other places in Scripture where people went to Jesus to ask Him for help, and He helped them. Why wouldn't they also be mediators. There were lots of men and women who came to Him for help. It's not that Mary is a mediator—that's reading into the text something that's not there.

Another thing I've seen as I've studied this text is how some people have turned this story into a commentary on the use of alcohol. There are those who want to say, because of this story, that alcohol is good for us to drink. They think, "After all, Jesus made it, so therefore I should drink alcohol. And the best wedding is the wedding that has alcohol. In fact, if you have a wedding, you should have open bars. It's biblical. Jesus made the wine there." It becomes a positive reinforcement for drinking.

Other people have looked at the same text and somehow manage to think the wine Jesus made was non-alcohol wine. "Actually, the alcohol in those days was more of a grape juice thing, so we should stay clear of alcoholic wine, because their wine was different." They're really reading something strange into the text here, because later, when they taste the wine Jesus made, they said, "Man, this is really good." Usually the best wine is served first, then after the people have drunk that, they bring out the bad wine. Why would their senses be dulled if they had only drunk grape juice? This interpretation danced around those things.

I get why they do this. Maybe you've struggled with alcohol yourself, or maybe some family member has been destroyed because of it. Maybe you've even lost a loved one in a drunk driving accident. There are plenty of horrendous stories surrounding alcohol. I understand why you would want to read this into the text. But we shouldn't because we are not to practice eisegesis. We want to practice exegesis, by God's mercy and grace.

Exegesis is bringing the meaning out of the text. Eisegesis reads into the text our own interpretations from our personal perspective. Exegesis is letting the text provide the interpretation of what's happening. In other words, by God's grace, we read it, not subjectively, but objectively. As we read the story, we ask God to open our eyes. The Holy Spirit then explains to us what the Scripture is saying. Then regardless of our personal perspective, hopefully we are changed into the image of Jesus. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to speak God's truth to us.

Jesus manifests His glory

So the big idea in our story today is this. For the first time in the Gospel of John, Jesus is manifesting His glory and the disciples believe in Who He is. Some people see seven signs in the Gospel of John that display this glory of Jesus to the disciples and this is the first of those: turning the water into wine. Later He fed the 5,000 men. He walked on water. The last one is when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. All of these are signs that allowed people to see the glory of God in Christ, so that we would believe that He is more than just a man; He is the Logos of God. He is God in the flesh who tabernacled among us.

These miracles always blessed people. They helped the wedding party. They fed thousands of people. Lazarus came back to life. Even though these things helped a lot of people, that wasn't the ultimate purpose. The purpose was so people would see the glory of God in Jesus and would believe in Him. That's why this story is here for us today. This first sign is here so we might believe.

In fact, this is the theme of the whole book of John. At the end, in John 20:31, John tells us the reason why these signs were recorded is so that "*you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" So let's look at this sign together today, letting it stir up faith in you to believe in Jesus and have life in His name.

In the good times

The first thing we see is that Jesus manifested His glory in the good times. Verses one and two tell us, "*On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.*" Weddings are fun, aren't they? They're great celebrations.

Back in that day, a wedding could last a whole week. It was a week of partying, of being with family and friends. It was a whole week of celebrating God bringing two people together to become one; God bringing two families together to produce a new family. What a great time of life!

Notice he says it was "*on the third day.*" What does John mean by that? Only here in the Gospel of John does he specifically count days. It happened back in chapter one. John the Baptist is questioned on the first day, then verse 29 tells us Jesus arrived on "*the next day.*" That's when John said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*"

Then in verse 35—*"The next day..."*—Jesus found John there with some of John's disciples. These men then followed Jesus. In verse 43 we read, *"The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee."* That's where Jesus found Philip and Nathaniel, giving Him five disciples by the end of chapter one.

Then we get to chapter two, which begins, *"On the third day..."* This means it's the seventh day of this whole sequence. What I think is happening—and what a lot of theologians who are smarter than me think—is this a reflection of the creation story in Genesis 1. God made everything in six days, then He rested on the seventh day. Here the Son, Who was with God and spoke things into creation as the Creator God, is now doing something new. On the seventh day, the day of rest, He actually creates new wine out of the water. This is something new God is doing through the Messiah. The world has never seen this before. Just like the first seven days of creation, this is the brand-new creation in the Messiah Jesus.

So on the third day, they're at a wedding. Jesus was invited and His mother was also there. It may have been the wedding of a relative. We aren't told who it was. His disciples were also there, at least the five we met in chapter one. Mary may have had the job of helping the family, because the servants came to her with their problem of running out of wine. By the way, I love that Jesus is part of the celebration and that His first miracle made the party go longer and gave the people more joy.

When I was growing up, I always had the idea that God was someone who wanted to steal my joy. Jesus was kind of a "Debby Downer." But here in the story, He's the guy you want at your party. Everything He does enables the party to go on and the people there are blessed.

As a point of application, I would encourage you to invite Jesus to all your parties. Invite Him into every part of your life. Ask Him to be part of your family. Ask Him to be part of your circumstances. Ask Him to be part of your home. Jesus is the best Person to have at any gathering. Here's something I wrote down—see if you agree with me. "It's easy to see and believe in God's glory when things are great, but it's also easy to forget His glory when the sun is always shining." Here's what I mean by that. When things are great, when something special happens, it's easy to glorify God and see His goodness.

When my kids were born, what a miraculous thing that was! Standing next to my little newborn baby son, putting my hand on his chest as they were looking him over, I exclaimed, "God, You are so good. I can't believe this blessing You've given me in my son." Tears welled up in my eyes as I experienced the glory of God manifested in this new creation that I was a part of. It was awesome. That happened when every one of my three kids were born, although it wasn't as astonishing the third time. It's easy to glorify God in these moments. Yet when things are good all the time, or even when it's the third round of something, we can forget how glorious God is.

In the bad times

A couple months ago I started having a toothache, which soon got pretty bad. I don't know about you, but if you get a toothache, you should probably go to the dentist. I somehow have the ability to imagine that it's going to get better on its own. But it didn't get better. We were headed to Bible camp when it really started hurting. I could count my heartbeats in my tooth. It was really bad. So I went to the dentist and started thinking to myself, "Man, life was really great when I didn't have this toothache." This is what I'm talking about.

When things are good, when our teeth aren't hurting, we forget that they could be hurting. When our back isn't giving us problems, we forget that our back could go out and cause a lot of problems. We forget that God has given us such good things in life.

God's glory was manifested through Jesus at this wedding. But it's also manifested in the bad times, when things are tough. John writes:

³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

This occurred in an honor-shame culture. It was much more Asian than Western. It was a big deal to run out of supplies for the feast. It was the groom's family's responsibility to make sure that those who had come for the week-long festivities would be provided for. And this family ran out of wine. They couldn't just run down to Jewel and grab a couple bottles of Boone's. It was a source of embarrassment. There is also some indication that back in that day, members of the bridal party could bring a lawsuit against the groom and his family for not providing all that was expected for the celebration. This was a bigger deal, a matter of shame in their culture.

So Mary went to Jesus Who responded, "Woman..." Part of the challenge of exegesis is understanding the translation. Sometimes words used in the original text, in this case Koine Greek, don't have the exact same sense as the original word. This word "Woman" can give us a wrong sense of how Jesus was addressing His mother. If you have the NIV, it translates it "Dear woman..." But in the Greek this was not a tender word. It's also not like we might hear the word "Woman..." If I went home after the service and said to my wife, "Woman, where's my food?" that wouldn't go well for me.

If you ask me how I would translate this, I would say, "Ma'am..." It's not discourteous, but it's not tender either. This is how Jesus addressed His mother. Why in the world would He say this? D.A. Carson writes, "We must not avoid the conclusion that Jesus, by rebuking His mother—however courteously—declares at the beginning of His ministry His utter freedom from any kind of human advice, agenda or manipulation."

Jesus' mother came to Him, and by saying, "Ma'am, My hour has not yet come; this is not My time," He was saying to her, "I don't listen to you as my mom anymore. I'm here on a mission from my heavenly Father; He tells Me where to go, what to do and when to do it. So you, woman, must approach Me the same way anyone else approaches Me—as the Messiah, as the Son of God. Our relationship is different now." That's hard.

One of the things we read about Mary's life is that a sword would pierce her heart. This was the little boy she raised. This was the boy who fell down when he was learning to walk; the boy she loved dearly. Jesus was saying to her, not in a dishonorable way, that things had changed. He was now on a different mission as the Son of God." So basically He was saying, "Don't tell Me what to do."

He also said, "*My hour has not yet come.*" That's a theme throughout the whole Gospel of John. "The hour" is foreshadowing the crucifixion and resurrection. We find Him saying that often, so we might wonder what He's talking about. Then we see it in the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ.

Maybe you're in a situation in your life where the wine has run out. You find yourself in need or hurting, without solutions to the problems you face. You can ask Jesus to show up and reveal His glory to you in the bad times and in the hard times. Jesus manifests His glory both in the good times and in the bad times.

In the riches of His grace

Finally, Jesus also manifests His glory through the riches of His grace. It was really good wine that He made. Verse six says, "Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim."

These big stone jars held a lot of water. The average bathtub holds about 20-30 gallons of water. That's what these held. John tells us they were used for purification in the ceremonial laws the Jews had. The water might have been used for the guests to wash their hands, or for the cleansing of the utensils used to serve the food. They were following the Jewish customs and the regulations of the law. The water in those pots represented the old order of Jewish traditions. When Jesus turned it into wine, it was like He was replacing the old ways with something new and better.

As a side note, wine in Jesus' days was about one-third to one-tenth of its fermented strength as the wine in our day. It might be more similar to our American beer in alcohol content. Undiluted wine was called "strong drink." That was more like our wine today. So they would take the equivalent of our wine and dilute it down before they drank it.

Jesus' wine was "good wine." The master of ceremonies tasted it and said, "Wow, this is great wine. Usually they serve the best wine first, but you've saved this until later." I'm not a wine guy, but I looked up good wine. Some of the best wine is called Romanée-Contican and costs \$19,000 a bottle. Now, I know a lot of you enjoy that kind of wine.

Seriously, in this passage it's like the master of ceremonies was saying, "Usually they start out with Romanée-Conti, then they take out the Boone's Farm." Jesus' wine was better than Romanée-Conti. Some of you are wine snobs. Jesus' wine was the best. Not only was it the best—which shows how gracious He is—there was also a lot of it. Everybody was provided for. Everybody was taken care of with this special heavenly wine.

There's a lot going on here. The grace, power and glory of Jesus was being manifested in this miracle, as He fulfilled the Old Testament Jewish law with something better—and that something better was better than anything anyone had ever experienced. It was a miracle and a powerful one at that. So can you see God's glory here. Does it build your faith?

One of the troubling parts of this story—and it continues throughout the life of Jesus—is that there were some who didn't believe. We're told that the disciples believed. But evidently there were others who saw His miracles but didn't believe. They didn't recognize the glory of God in what they had witnessed.

Do you see the glory of God being manifested in your life? Or is everything just a coincidence? Is everything just scientific and natural, or are your eyes opened to see Jesus working in your life and in the lives of the people around you? The Messiah has come. The Messianic age is here. Jesus has come with a new wine, a new system, a new creation. No longer do we sacrifice goats and spill their blood for the forgiveness of sin. Their spilled blood only pointed toward this Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Remember that on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32), the people took two goats. They killed one and put its blood in the Holy of Holies. That was for the propitiation of the wrath of God, to pay for the sin of the people. That goat lost its blood and life. Then the priest would place his hands on the head of the other goat, confessing the sins of the nation of Israel. Then that goat would be released to go out of the camp forever. That was for the expiation of sin. Not only was our sin propitiated by the blood of one goat, but it was also expiated, removed. It was both paid for and taken away.

We don't use goats anymore. Now it is the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ —Who takes away the sin of the world. He gave His blood for your sin, to pay the punishment you deserve. Not only that, He takes away your sin and gives you His own righteousness. That's the Lord of Hosts. That's the Messiah. That's the One Who turns water into wine.

Do you believe in Jesus today? Do you trust in Him? There is no one else like Him, none greater than Jesus. Only by seeing Jesus do we grow in our faith. Only by seeing Him do we gain victory over sin. Only by witnessing Him do we become more like Him. That's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*"

It's been my joy to show you Jesus this morning through the Gospel of John.