“Water to Wine” (Part 1)
February 17, 2013
Text: John 2:1-5

In today’s text we find Jesus & His mother Mary together at a wedding, in the village of Cana, 9 mi. N. of Nazareth. Mary seems to be a widow by now, but she is still the same kind, humble, loving person she was when Gabriel informed her she was to have a baby by the H.S., and she responded=> “Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

It had prob. been a month & a 1/2 since Mary had last seen Jesus. Since then, He had undergone a 40 day fast, and Satan’s terrible temptation, in the Judean wilderness. He had also been baptized, anointed with the H.S., proclaimed by God to be His Son, and proclaimed by John the Baptist to be the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

He had then acquired 6 followers/disciples, named=> Andrew/John/Peter/James/Philip/Nathanael.

During the wedding festivities at Cana, compassionate/caring Mary will become aware that the host is running out of wine for his guests. She will impose on her Son Jesus to remedy this potentially embarrassing situation.
Jesus’ response will prob. hurt Mary, addressing her as
“Woman” rather than “Mother,” and then saying to
her=⇒ “What do I have to do with you?”

Why would Jesus treat His mother like that?
Because her heart was holding on to a role in her Son’s life that
was no longer valid, but was hard for her to relinquish—
motherhood.
He, being the ideal Son, had always submitted to her, to
one degree or another.
But now He’d begun His ministry, & was going about His
Father’s business full time, doing His Heavenly
Father’s will.
He needed to break free from His mother’s authority
altogether.
Mary would have to learn to stop thinking of Jesus merely as her
Son, and begin to look upon Him as her Savior/Lord.
She would no longer have the right to expect special favors
from Him, simply because she was His mother.
No one—not even Jesus’ mother—has an inside track w/ Him.
He is God, and His will is sovereign.
The Catholic Church does not seem to appreciate/accept this
truth that Jesus taught Mary in today’s text.
According to that church’s own literature, it views Mary as=⇒
“a compassionate mediator between mankind & her son,
Jesus.”
That’s exactly what Mary was trying to be at the wedding, for which X rebuked her.

Thus the Catholic Church perpetuates Mary’s error of taking upon herself an illegitimate role as mediator.

There is no need at all for a mediator between mankind and Jesus.

He said=> “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden (Mt 11:28), not “Come to My mother.”

True believers understand that “There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus” (I Tim 2:5).

The Catholic Church acknowledges X is the only mediator between God/man, but then adds a secondary role as mediator for Mary that is “preparatory/supportive”;

A role which many Catholics are beginning to call the “Mediatrix,” between Jesus and other people.

That’s why most Catholics don’t have a personal relationship w/ Jesus, but w/ Mary (whom they assume has a personal relationship w/ Jesus).

Today’s text prohibits Mary’s having any such mediatorial role at all.

Jesus’ rebuke of His mother was necessary, and we should learn from it ourselves.

Mary herself graciously accepted it, then shrank back to her rightful place w/o pouting, her faith being as strong as ever.
You/I may at times impose on our Lord as Mary did, trying to force His hand w/ our prayers/fastings, running ahead of Him rather than following Him, and seeking His will. When Jesus disappoints us by not answering our prayers, or even rebukes us because those prayers are arrogant/presumptuous, we need to take Mary’s advice to the waiters at the wedding=>

“Whatever He says to you, do it.”

Mary stopped doing what had earned her Jesus’ reproof, quietly thought about her error, then passed on to the servants the wisdom she had learned from the incident, which she might have explained like this=>

*“Don’t get ahead of Jesus as I did, trying to lead Him, but instead, follow His lead.”
*“Don’t try to press Him to conform to your desires for what you think should be done, but assume He knows best.”
*“Quietly wait till He speaks, then be quick to obey Him.”
*“Don’t grieve the Lord as I did, but seek to please Him.”

This morning I hope to teach both you/myself these lessons, as we study the 1st 1/2 of John’s narrative about the wedding at Cana.

Our text, John 2:1-5, can be subdivided into 4 scenes=>

The Reunion, the Request, the Rebuke, & the Response.
*The Reunion*

[John 2:1]=&gt; “And on the third day [after Nathanael became a follower of Jesus (vss 46-51)] there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;”

Although we can’t be completely sure where “Cana” was located, most scholars believe it was about 9 miles N. of Nazareth.

Today the site is an uninhabited ruin.

Nathanael was a resident of Cana (Jn 21:2).

**Weddings like this were major social events among the Jews.**

In a day when the media didn’t exist, entertainment was scarce, and travel was so slow that many people rarely left their village, most of life was simply working/eating/sleeping.

Weddings were a real break in the monotony, & lasted for several days.

It all started w/ the bridegroom leading a procession from his house to the bride’s house, accompanied by friends w/ tambourines, & sometimes a band.

Because it was at night, most of those in the procession carried oil lamps or even torches.

It was there at the bride’s house that the official wedding ceremony took place.

The bride was adorned w/ jewels, & she was always veiled, and would remain so for the next week.
Afterward, the bridegroom escorted the bride to his house, where a week of festivities began, complete with love-songs, dancing, games, and speeches honoring the bride/groom. The couple reined over it all in festal clothes as king/queen, occasionally joining, in a dance.

At the end of the week, the bride’s parents escorted her into the bridal chamber, from which the couple officially emerged the next morning as husband/wife.

I don’t want to miss this opportunity to point out that Jesus honored/endorsed wedding ceremonies, and marriage-in-general, by attending & performing His first miracle, at this wedding in Cana.

Marriage was ordained by God to give stability/permanence to the relationship between a man and a woman.

I believe a society is only as strong/healthy as its marriages, because that indicates at a very personal level a people’s willingness to keep its commitments.

When a man/woman form such a sacred union, committing themselves to one another in a vow before God;

And do so in the presence of witnesses who can hold them accountable to keep that commitment=>

* They shield their home from the ravages of personal selfishness.

* They give each-other/their-children the blessing of stability/security.
* And they add a layer of strength to the moral/social fabric of their whole society.

**John says of the wedding at Cana in our text, “the mother of Jesus was there,” and his wording indicates that she had already been there for awhile, when Jesus arrived.**

This raises some questions about Mary’s role in the wedding=>

* Why does she seem to know before most of the other wedding guests, that they’re running out of wine?
* Why do the servants obey her commands if she is just another guest, and a woman guest at that?

Mary may have been serving as some sort of coordinator for the wedding or the festivities that followed.

Either in a paid capacity, or as a helpful volunteer.

**[Verse 2]=> “and Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding.”**

**This is the first occurrence in John of the phrase “His disciples,” because this group had only been formed 3 days earlier.**

That leaves us w/ more questions=> How did the groom know to invite Jesus’ disciples, if they’d just become His disciples? Apart from being X’s disciples, they would prob. have been thought of as unknown party crashers.

For that matter, it had only been a week since Jesus’ baptism, so how could He have become a recognized
religious teacher/leader w/ disciples in such a short time?

Jesus had only been in the Galilee area for 3 days, and w/ no means of rapid communication, how would the invitation have reached Him, & how could He have responded to let the groom know He and His disciples would be attending?

Given the fact that the groom was responsible for feeding all his guests for a whole week, the addition of 7 grown men to the guest list would represent a rather substantial financial burden.

The truth is that we don’t really know how all this played out.

* Maybe Nathanael, being from Cana himself, somehow met with the bridegroom, explained the situation of X’s disciples to him, & received the invitation; then took word back to X.

* Or Maybe Mary’s involvement in the wedding somehow resulted in her making the arrangements, and getting word to Jesus.

We don’t know for certain, but fortunately it really doesn’t matter.

What matters is that this wedding became a reunion of Jesus w/ His mother, for the week-long wedding.

It also became the setting in which X performed His 1st miracle.
* The Request

[Verse 3]=> “And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’”

This was prob. more of a crisis than it might seem to us.

A bridegroom was fully responsible for providing his guests with food/drink all week long, or as long as the festivities lasted.

Failure to do so would have been considered a disgrace, & he could even be sued by the bride’s family.

When the wine became scarce, Mary must have sensed the social pressure this bridegroom was feeling.

So she came to Jesus making an indirect request that He do something to solve the problem & relieve the groom’s distress.

Sons often know when their mothers are about to lean on them for a favor like this.

I always knew that whenever my Mom started a sentence w/ the word “Honey,” I was about to get such a request.

Jesus had never done a miracle before—His turning water into wine would be the 1st miracle He’d ever performed.

* So it’s possible that Mary wasn’t actually expecting a miracle, since she’d never seen Him do one.

She had undoubtedly learned to rely on Jesus’ creativity and resourcefulness to solve problems at home.

That may be all she was expecting/seeking from Him now.
Joseph seems to have died, since we hear nothing about him after Luke 2 (when Jesus was 12). Jesus had taken up Joseph’s trade, becoming a carpenter Himself (Mk 6:3), and He had prob. taken over Joseph’s place in the family, as its main bread-winner as well, for Mary & her daughters.

A widow usually depended heavily on her firstborn, esp. if he were a son.

Jesus would have been such a model Son that Mary could hardly have avoided depending on Him.

* On the other hand, Jesus’ words in verse 4, “My hour has not yet come,” may suggest Mary actually was seeking a miracle.

Though she’d never seen Him perform one, she knew what Gabriel had said before His birth (Lk 1:32)=>

“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.”

Mary knew her Son was the Messiah, & she prob. felt He should manifest His divine power, so He’d begin to receive the recognition He deserved.

Mothers tend to think like that.

Jewish mothers are no different.

Mary, like most Jews, prob. had faulty notions about Messiah.
She didn’t realize that during Jesus’ first advent, He would be the suffering Messiah prophesied in Isaiah 53.

The wine at celebrations like this was real/fermented wine.

In verse 10, the headwaiter will tell the host/bridegroom=>

“Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer.”

“Drunk freely” (methusko) actually means to become intoxicated/drunk.

It’s the same word used in Eph 5:18=> “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

So any notion they were merely drinking grape juice is undoubtedly incorrect.

But because drunkenness is so fiercely condemned in both the OT/NT, wine was diluted w/ water, to somewhere between 1/3 & 1/10 it’s normal alcoholic strength.

It had less alcohol content than American beer.

Undiluted wine, called “strong drink,” was severely frowned upon because of Scriptures like Prov 20:1=>

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.”

* The Rebuke

[Verse 4]=> “And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come.’”

Jesus’ addressing His mother as “Woman” could not have been an expression of disrespect/dishonor.
He is the One who wrote in the 5th Commandment=>

“Honor your father and your mother” (Ex 20:12).

“Woman” would be roughly equivalent to our “Ma’am.”

But on the other hand, it certainly was not a term of endearment. Jesus’ question, “What do I have to do with you?” is lit. “What to Me & to you?” (an idiomatic expression of estrangement often used by demons as they spoke to Jesus).

Jesus was asking Mary what there was in common between them in the matter at hand. She had her own agenda, and He was seeking to do the will of His Heavenly Father.

There is even a hint of reproach in the question, that is intended to put distance between Jesus & His mother. This is what commentator D.A. Carson calls “a measured rebuke.”

He says X was declaring His independence from all human advice/manipulation as He embarked on His ministry.

**It had to be painful for Mary who had borne/nurtured, cared for, taught, & now come to rely on Jesus as a provider.**

And yet every time Mary/Jesus encounter one another from now on, X will continue to distance Himself from His mother. Apparently, her apron strings held on tenaciously.

For her soul’s sake, He had to keep cutting them, and did so right up to the end, addressing her as “Woman” even on the cross (John 19:26).
E.g. in Mt 12, the crowds listening to Jesus will inform Him that she is waiting to speak to Him.

He will respond (12:48) => “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?”

Then He’ll add (12:50) => “Whoever does the will of My 

Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

X could never allow anyone to impose/presume on Him, as if the person he shared some intimacy/familiarity w/ our Lord, other than a humble trust in Him for the salvation of his soul.

Peter tried treating Jesus like an equal in Mk 8, rebuking X for saying the priests/scribes were going to kill Him.

This was the kind of familiarity that breeds contempt.

Jesus’ response was blistering=> “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's” (Mk 8:33).

We are not Jesus’ buddies, we’re His servants, whom He graciously condescended to refer to as His “friends” in the Upper Room.

* When leaders in the “Word of Faith” movement claim that Xns should expect, claim & even demand healing from God because He cannot be glorified in sickness & disease, their presumption is far worse than Mary’s—it’s blasphemous.
* When Catholics teach their people to pray to Mary, asking her to “command her Son” to do something, that too is blasphemy.

**The reason Jesus gave for His abrupt treatment of Mary was**

“My hour is not yet come.”

What neither Mary or any of His own disciples understood was that His hour of glorification would come on a cross.

Jesus repeatedly said, “My hour [or time] is not yet come.”

Finally, right before His death, Jesus said=>

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

Then He added this ominous warning=>

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:23f).

The hour of Jesus’ glorification was the hour of His death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and ultimate glorification in His Father’s presence.

Someday Jesus will return to earth in glory, but not until His Second Advent—which Mary didn’t understand/foresee.

She seems to have believed that at the 1st manifestation of His divine nature/power, people would acclaim Him as Messiah, and carry Him off in triumph.

**There is no way Jesus could have allowed Mary or any other human being to control the timing of His presentation to Israel as Messiah.**
In fact, He did everything He could to keep that a secret. That had to be completely under God’s control/timing, because the minute the religious leaders realized that’s who Jesus really was, they would inevitably kill Him.
And they did.

* The Response (of Mary to the rebuke)

If Mary hadn’t been such a godly woman, she would have left the wedding to cry/pout all alone—but she didn’t.
She shook off the rebuke, humbled her heart, and demonstrated the perseverance of her faith.
There is much that we can/should learn from Mary’s response and her example.

[Verse 5]⇒ “His mother said to the servants, ‘Whichever He says to you, do it.’”

Mary’s first instruction to the servants/us was not to do as she had done, but rather do whatever X said to do.
1st, this implies a preparedness of heart to obey Jesus, content to sit/do-nothing until He gives the command.
Guests might start putting pressure on the servants to get them more wine, but they were to wait for X’s voice.
In moments like that, our inclination is to say, “I can’t just sit here; I’ve got to do something, even if it’s wrong.”
But faith that obeys the Lord is prepared to wait on Him, not to go off into some frenetic blunderburst.
When there’s nothing we can do ourselves to change or influence a situation, we may foolishly use prayer as a way of trying to coerce God to do, what we think needs to be done.

We may even pray a lot, or get a lot of other people to pray with us, hoping to ramp up the pressure on God, as if He were a politician counting votes.

Instead, we should wait on Him, & seek His will, not making Mary’s mistake of imposing our will on Him. Does that mean the only prayer we ever pray is “Thy will be done”?

No, but that is to be the underlying attitude of all our prayers for specific needs & specific requests=> an attitude of humble submission to X’s will.

2nd, Mary told the servants “*Whatever He says to you, do it.*”

We, X’s servants, are not to be selective in our obedience either.

X was going to tell the servants to fill w/ water the large stone containers used for hand-washing, in order to solve this wine crisis.

It seemed to make no sense, & it was a lot of work on their part.

But God almost always works in unpredictable ways, so the servants were to do whatever Jesus told them.
We don’t obey Him only when His commands in the Word make sense to us, or agree w/ our own opinions; That would actually mean we’ll do whatever we like. If there is any command in the Bible that rubs us the wrong way, that is the point at which our obedience to X is tested. Nor do we obey only as long as we’re sure that our obedience will pay off in some benefit to ourselves. The results/benefits of our obedience are X’s business, ours is the faithfulness of our obedience. X even said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, & take up his cross & follow Me” (Mk 8:34).

Jesus is our Captain, and we are soldiers, who don’t pick thru His orders/commands to decide which one’s we’ll obey. Nor do we wait for a convenient time, to obey our Lord. Delayed obedience, is nothing but timed disobedience. I should pray, & you should pray, “Lord, help me to do whatever You have said, keeping my own willfulness from interfering w/ Your will in my life. “Crucify my will, & live Your life, through me.”
Paul (Gal 2:20)=> “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.”

3rd, Mary told the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

She did not say, “Whatever He tells you to do, go out and find someone else to do it.”

If God causes us to cross paths with someone who needs help that we can reasonably give, we should give it. That means more than our giving him directions to the food bank, or referring him to a government agency, or even to the church.

Imagine our standing before our Lord and hearing Him say “I was hungry, & you referred Me to someone else.”

Obviously, there is need for wisdom/discretion in such matters, because our benevolence can be misused/abused.

But if X is going to live through us, & He is clearly impressing some need on our hearts, telling us to minister to someone, we are to do whatever He says.

If what he needs is the gospel, give it to him

We obey our Lord because He is worthy of our obedience.

Mary’s Son is the perfect Man, and perfect God, united in one majestic nature, that rises nobly above every other human being on earth.
He is sovereign God, whose very existence puts the lie to human ego, that insists, “My will is supreme, and my will is the most important thing!”
No, X’s will is sovereign.
He is also the Savior who, out of love for His sinful creatures, sacrificed His life to redeem them from their sin.
Why should we take Mary’s advice & do whatever Jesus tells us?
Because He deserves that from us, just as He deserves our love/worship/devotion/adoration.
1. In today’s text we find Jesus and His mother Mary together at a wedding in the village of Cana 9 miles north of Nazareth.

2. Mary would have to learn to stop thinking of Jesus merely as her Son and begin to look upon Him as her Savior and Lord.

3. Mary stopped doing what had earned her Jesus’ reproof, then passed on the wisdom she had learned from the incident.

**Our text, John 2:1-5, can be subdivided into four scenes…**

* The Reunion

[Verse 2]

4. Weddings like this were major social events among the Jews.

5. Marriage was ordained by God to give stability and permanence to the relationship between a man and a woman.

6. Mary may have been serving as some sort of coordinator for the wedding or the festivities that followed.

* The Request

[Verse 3]

7. This wedding became a reunion of Jesus with His mother; it also became the setting in which Christ performed His first miracle.

8. Mary knew her Son was the Messiah, and she probably felt He should manifest His divine power so He would begin to receive the recognition He deserved.
**The Rebuке**

[Verse 4]

9. Jesus’ addressing His mother as “*Woman*” could not have been an expression of disrespect; but on the other hand, it certainly was [8 not] a term of endearment.

Ex 20:12; Mt 12:48, 50

10. Christ could never allow anyone to impose or presume on Him as if he shared some familiarity with our Lord other than a humble [12 trust] in Him for the salvation of his soul.

Mk 8:33; Jn 12:23-24

**The Response**

[Verse 5]

11. Mary’s instruction first implies a preparedness of heart to obey Jesus, content to sit and do [16 nothing] until He gives the command.

12. Second, Mary told the servants “Whatever He says to you, do it”; we, Christ’s servants, are not to be [20 selective] in our obedience.

Mk 8:34

13. Third, Mary told the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it”; she did not say, “Go out and find someone [10 else] to do it.”

14. Why should we take Mary’s advice and do whatever Jesus tells us? Because He [18 deserves] that from us.