

O Lord, our God and our Father,
we thank you for the power of brothers and sisters singing
psalms and hymns and spiritual songs into our souls. We feel
them as the breath of heaven lifting us up, O God, into your
presence and reviving our souls. And now, Fathers, we listen to
your word. We pray you will speak, for your
servants are listening, O God. Come with the breath of heaven.
and light, and life, and bring it into our hearts, O Lord God,
and save the lost, and restore the backslider, and build us
all up in your most holy ways. For Jesus' sake, amen. Please
take your seats. If you would, turn with me in
your copy of the Word of God to John's Gospel, and chapter
two. We are stepping out of the prologue
of John's Gospel, and we're entering into the body of the work And John's gospel
falls into
two halves in the body. The first half scholars call
the Book of Signs. There are seven signs that point
beyond themselves to reveal the glory of Christ. And then in
the second half of the book, beginning in chapter 13, we have
Christ entering what's called the Book of Glory as he heads
toward the glory of Golgotha and his ultimate death, burial,
and resurrection on behalf of his people. And interspersed
through these books, you have the seven I am sayings. John loves seven, as you might

have realized if you read the book of Revelation, full of sevens. So this morning
then, we're in
chapter two and verse one. And please listen carefully.
This is the word of God. 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. And
when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have
no wine. And Jesus said to her, woman,
what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to his
servants,
or to the servants, do whatever he tells you. Now there were
six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification,
each holding 20 or 30 gallons. Jesus said to the servants, fill
the jars with water. And they filled them up to the
brim. And he said to them, now draw some out and take it to
the master of the feast. So they took it. When the master
of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not
know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the
water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom and
said to him, everyone serves the good wine first, and when
people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept
the good wine until now. This, the first of his signs,
Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory and
his disciples believed in him. After this, he went down to Capernaum
with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed
there for a few days. Well, I love every single thing

about weddings. It's one of my great delights as a pastor to officiate at the marriage of men and women in our congregations. I'm not the one doing the marrying.

Of course, God is the one marrying them, wedding them together.

But I officiate, and you get a ringside seat at the front.

I love as the doors open and the bride comes down. She glides down the aisle resplendent in her glory. I love seeing the husband look over his shoulder and see his wife for the first time, and just the look of dazzled, bedazzled adoration is a wonder to behold. I love seeing them take their

vows, looking at one another and pledging their truth. And sometimes there can be mishaps. Recently I had a bride try and put the wedding ring on the wrong hand and had to lean forward and say it's the other hand. And I've had more than one or two groomsmen faint. No bridesmaids actually have fainted, to your credit, ladies, in my time, but several groomsmen have over the years. And it can be amusing to see them exit suddenly. Stage left, as white as a ghost. Don't lock your knees, as they say. Well, this morning we come to a wedding in Cana. And there's a significant mishap. They've run out of wine. And wedding feasts back in those days would last a whole week.

And it was the responsibility of the groom to ensure that there was enough wine. The wine actually was the central part of the feast. And the feast was actually what sealed the deal. We sign covenants and agreements in those days, and still to this day in the nation near east, they seal the covenant over a meal. which we do at the Lord's Supper here as well in the New Covenant. It's a very Eastern thing to do. But it's the marriage feast that seals the deal. If people ever cast a doubt as to whether the couple were married, they didn't look to the marriage bed or to the marriage dwelling where they cohabitated. They went back and said, no,

we had a feast. It seals the deal. Right? And wine was the central element of that feast. It was like turkey at Thanksgiving. It wouldn't be Thanksgiving without it. And the rabbis had a saying, where there is no wine, there is no joy. And for the wine to run out in

the middle of the feast was an enormous embarrassment for the young grooms, and it was the kind of embarrassment that would follow him all of his days. He'd be known as the guy in Nazareth who didn't pony up with enough wine for the wedding feast, and it would scar his reputation all his days. Worse, there was a legal obligation too. Members of the bride's family could sue you if you didn't provide enough wine for the wedding. And so here's a guy in serious

trouble. But this story really isn't about a wedding and it's really not about wine either. It's about the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the first of his signs, and John is letting you know he numbers this one, he numbers the second one at the end of chapter four. This was the first

of his signs that Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory. It's the first evidence in history of what John said in John 1.14, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. Well, when did you see his glory? And John unpacks these seven signs in the book of signs. And it's the nature of the sign to point beyond itself. And these signs point away from themselves and they point to Jesus, the one who gives meaning to them and who reveals his glory through them. This is the first of his signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory. And as you read this, John's asking you, has Christ manifested his glory to you? Have you seen his glory? But what kind of glory is revealed in this story? And there are several things I want you to see this morning. First of all, it was a glory revealed in space and time. Look at the text. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana. On the third day, what's that? At the very least, it's an historical reference point. There was a day, a time, a place when Christ revealed his glory. Some authors spiritualize this. They'll talk about the third day. Maybe it's an echo of the resurrection, which happened, of course, on the third day. And that's a bit fanciful. It's a bit like the guys who

look at the five stones that David selected to fight Moses and think five. Oh, it must be the five books of Moses. That's what he used to think of the five stones fighting Goliath. No. David picked up five stones, because he might miss once. He might miss twice. He might even miss three times. But if he misses more than five times, it's done for the day, and he's a dead man, right? There's nothing more significant there than that, I think. But here, the third day, a better notion, perhaps, is that John has been numbering the days. If you look back in John chapter 1, you'll notice whenever John the Baptist begins his testimony on a day in verse 19, That's the first, that's day one. And then in verse 29, you have the next day, that's day two. And then verse 35, you have the next day, which is day three. And then in day, in verse 43, when Jesus calls Nathaniel, you have the next day, which is day four. And John Calvin translates chapter two, verse one, as three days later. So you take four days and you take three more days, and you get seven days. And that just might be reminiscent of the creation week, because remember, John began his gospel with Christ as the beginning of everything that ever had a beginning. All things came into being through him, and apart from him, nothing has come into being that has come into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And Christ is the great creator. And this gospel tells the story of the one who comes to not just

make all things, but to make all things new, to recreate the world and make all of the sad things of this world untrue again. And so as John launches into

a gospel about recreating power of Christ, he begins with this first seven days, just like the seven days in Genesis. I find that a little bit more persuasive, and it certainly falls in with John's love of seven. But whatever you see here, this is an historical moment. It was a day when Christ revealed his glory and provided wine. And wine, too, was a messianic hope. In the Old Testament, it said when Messiah came, there'd be abundance of wine, like in Amos 9, 13. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes, him who sows the seed. The mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine and they shall make gardens and set and eat, sorry, their fruit. And so it's pregnant with meaning that Christ in this first sign makes an abundance of wine, 180 gallons of the stuff, \$10,000 maybe of the finest wine. And he's saying Messiah is here and Messiah has come as he reveals his glory. in Cana, a place and time. Now actually, just a quick note about Cana. Cana is probably Kirbet Kana, which is nine miles north of Nazareth. It was Nathanael's hometown. This opening section of the book of signs begins and ends in Cana, chapter two, verse one is Cana, and then at the end of chapter four, we find Christ back again in Cana. And so scholars call this the Cana cycle. And what's interesting in these first chapter two, three, and four is that the theme here, and this is important, follow it with me, the theme is the oldness of Judaism contrasted with the newness of Christ, It's showing forth the barrenness and the bankruptcy of Judaism. So you have here a new cleansing, the water, the lukewarm, tepid, lukewarm water in these half-empty pots of cleansing, more about that later, transformed by the new wine. Then you talk about Christ cleanses the temple. Now in John's day, the temple had been destroyed. And Christ alludes that he is the new temple, a new place to meet God, a new cleansing, a new place to meet God. In chapter three, we'll meet Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, who's as dead as a hammer in his soul, and Christ offers him a new birth. In chapter four, You meet the outcast of outcasts. You go from the top of society to the bottom. Nicodemus, the teacher, all the way down to the Samaritan who were the outcast race. And in the outcast race, this woman is the outcast of the outcast. She comes at the heat of the day with her pot to get water because none of the Samaritans will go with her. She's too immoral for them. But she's not too immoral for

Jesus, and Jesus offers her a new start, perhaps even a new husband. He'll be her seventh husband.

And he teaches her a new way of worship in spirit and in truth that's available even for the likes of her. And then at the end of chapter four, you have a man's son who's dead, and Christ gives him new life. And so these chapters are all about the newness that Christ brings. Maybe you're here this morning, and your life's jaded, and you're longing for a new start. And maybe you really need a new birth, and Christ is just the savior for you. Christ is just the Savior for you. And maybe you're here this morning and you say to yourself, you know, all this stuff about miracles, I just can't believe that. Maybe you say, you know, I want to see a miracle myself. If he gave a miracle then in time and space all those years ago, why can't I have a miracle now? And I've got to tell you, my brother and my sister, maybe you're here, you don't share our faith, you might think that your problem is that you Don't believe, but you wish you did. Actually, the reverse is the problem with you. Your problem is that you do believe in God, and you wish you didn't. That's the way we all are by nature. Our hearts are hard to God. We suppress the truth. We look every day. We are surrounded by a galaxy full of evidences of God's creative power. and we close our hearts and our minds to it in unbelief. And if God sent you another miracle, you just find reasons to discount it as well. Like W.C. Fields once was, he was famously profane and he was reading his Bible and one of his friends said to him, you're reading a Bible? He said, yeah, I'm looking for loopholes. And that's what we're like outside of Christ. That's the way I was when I was that way, and that's the way you are now if you're outside of Christ. You don't really want to believe God, but yet the heavens every day, you look at the heavens and they proclaim the glory of God. Do you really think if you saw a miracle proclaiming the glory of God, you would see there what you don't see in the heavens that's so obvious before you? Now you can go back in space and time to Cana, this town, where there were servants who could testify. They saw this, and disciples. And don't forget, those disciples laid down their life to a man serving Christ. There are many people in history, Lennon called them the useful idiots, who laid their life down for a lie, but they thought it was true. You'll never find anyone laying their life down for a lie they helped to create. And yet the disciples did that because they saw his glory in space and time, and it changed them. That's the first thing. The second thing this morning, it's a glory revealed in space and time. It's a glory, secondly, that we cannot control. The timing of its revelation

is determined by God and not by us. You see that there in verse three and four. Mary comes and her language is very clipped. Wine, they have none. She's panicked. And Jesus said to her, woman, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. Now it's impossible to read those

words and not hear just a little bit of a rebuke to Mary. Now it sounds really harsh. Woman, right, is not nearly as cold in the ancient Near East ear as it would be to us. Remember on the cross as Jesus is dying and he looks down at his mother, his last words to his mother, and he says, woman, behold your son. It's not a cold, mean-spirited thing. In Northern Ireland, we say, woman, dear. It's slightly warmer than bless your heart, but woman, dear. And Christ is saying to her, Mom, you must no longer relate to me as my mother. And in terms of my mission, I can no longer relate to you as your son. You no longer call the shots.

You no longer set the agenda. That is my father's prerogative, not my earthly father, but my heavenly father. And I follow him. And it's amazing. Mary's response is a model of submissive faith. There's a huge swathe of the church that lifts Mary up and makes her almost, you know, Jesus isn't really concerned about you, is the theology. You gotta go to Mary and she'll get things done. But do you know in the New Testament, there's only one command that ever comes out of Mary's lips? And it's right here in this text.

Do whatever he says. It's a model of submissive faith.

One commentator said, Mary came as his mother and was rebuked, but then she came as a believer and she was welcomed. And she says, it's not for me to control him. Let him control you. Do whatever he says.

Christ is not a mobile miracle machine. He doesn't just come to solve your grocery problems. He's got bigger fish to fry.

My hour has not yet come. And that term points forward, it echoes through the gospel of John until at the end in John chapter 12 as we're ending the book of signs, just as we're teetering on the edge of the book of glory. And Jesus says those awesome words, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And he's speaking about his death.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. And then he says, Father, now

is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this purpose, I came to this hour. Oh, Father, glorify your name. And then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it before and I shall glorify it again. And with those awesome words we enter the book of glory as Christ goes down, down, down the Via Dolorosa until there's no more down left to go. Beneath the bottom of finite

misery as he becomes sin and the gravitational forces of the

wrath of God tear him apart as the sacrifice for your sins and mine. and the glory of God is revealed in the darkness of Golgotha. It's a glory that we cannot control. It's a glory that serves God's agenda and not ours. I often think, you know, at funerals, we pray for healing when people are sick or dear loved ones to us. But Jesus, you know, he prays at the end of John 17, Father, I want them to be with me, the ones you have given me, I want them to be with me where I am. that they might behold my glory. And at times I think we pray at cross purposes. We're praying for healing and Christ is praying, Father, bring them home. And often the Father says to his Son, not yet, my Son. And he grants our prayers for healing. But there'll come a day when he won't listen to your prayer. But he will listen to his son's prayer. Father, I want him home with me. I want her home with me, that she might behold my glory. And the father will say, oh, now, my child on earth, your hour has come. Enter your master's glory. And on that day, how glad we'll be that he didn't listen to the prayer for a little earthly healing as we shoot through the heavens into the presence of Christ. It's a glory that we cannot control, a glory revealed in space and time. Thirdly, a glory that transforms empty human rites and rituals. There are six stone jars there, that John says, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding 20 or 30 gallons. And they're half empty, they need to be filled with water before they can be transformed into wine. Now, what's going on here is a Jewish tradition. You can read about it in Mark 7. And it was a bad answer to a good question. The Old Testament, which is like a picture book, boys and girls, it's a comic book where God gives you pictures of spiritual realities. And one of those pictures is that sin is contagious. It spreads like the flu through an airport or through a community. And therefore, you cannot brush up against other sinners without being, without contagion, or catching the contagion of their defilement. And so we're constantly needing to be washed and cleansed. And the Jews had this idea, kind of building upon some of the washings of the Old Testament, that you couldn't eat food unless you had washed your hands first. Not for health reasons, but for soul reasons. And of course, the idea is sin, the stain of sin is something on the outside of you trying to get in. And that's a half truth. But the deeper truth is that sin is on the inside of us trying to get out. And it's one thing to wash your hands, it's quite another to wash your soul. And Jesus selects these six water pots, 180 gallons worth at most, or 120 gallons, It has them filled with water to contrast the lukewarm, insipid power of religion. Religion, even true religion, can't fix your soul. It can't cleanse you. The law can't cleanse you. It can only condemn you. Going to church can't cleanse you. Singing psalms, hymns, spiritual

songs can't cleanse you. Being in Christian ministry can't cleanse you. Being religious can't cleanse you. It's the theme of these opening three chapters, two, three, and four in the Book of Signs. Oh, but Christ says, I can cleanse you. Contrast the lukewarm water with the Chateau Neuf-du-Pape, the Dominus 2016, the finest wine that Christ makes, illustrating the power that Christ has to cleanse you. Are you aware this morning that sin has stained your heart, stained my heart? And Jesus says, I can fix you. I can cleanse you. I can wash you. Though your sins are red like scarlet, they shall be as snow. Though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, come to me. Let me sprinkle clean water upon you, not just on your head, but in your soul, and wash you from all unrighteousness." And then lastly this morning, It's a glory revealed in space and time. It's a glory that we cannot control. It's a glory that transforms the empty, bankrupt nature of human ritual and religion. And it's a glory that can only be seen by faith. This is the first of his signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in

him. It can only be seen by the eyes of faith. That's going to be a big theme in John's gospel. Remember at the end, Thomas will say, I will not believe unless I see and touch. And Jesus comes and says, we'll see and touch. But then John says, now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written 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. Remember when Christ restored Thomas, he says, blessed are you that you've seen and believe, but blessed are those who do not see but believe. Well, how do you not see but believe? And it's done, John says, by reading. These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. That it's in this book, the written Word of God, that the living Word of God reveals Himself to men and women and boys and girls. But you can only see Him by faith. Do we trust what God says? And the glory of his son shines into our hearts. And Jesus is saying to you this morning, some for the first time, some for the last time, some for the nth time, have you seen my glory? Have your eyes been opened to see in me the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, that in Christ I see the face of God and it's the face of a father? We see it by faith when we step out and trust our creator. You think, trust a book? Why would I trust an old book? Oh, because this book's unique, of all the books in the world. C.S. Lewis once said, why do I believe in the sun? Well, because I can see it. But I also believe in it because I can see all things by its light.

When you open this book, it makes sense of me. It makes sense of the world, why I am the way I am. Why I'm so selfish and self-centered and grubby in my soul? Why I have this yearning for a deep cleansing that nothing on earth can give? I feel like Lydia Macbeth washing my hands and never able to get the stain away. And then I come to this book and I see Christ. with his feet on the earth and his head in the heavens, his head and his hair white like wool, like snow, and his voice like the sound of many waters saying to me, come and call upon me and I will save you and I will cleanse you. And the wonderful thing here in this book, and I'll end here this morning, this wedding, Christ wasn't the groom at this wedding. He was just the guest. And the bride wasn't his, it was somebody else's. But there's coming a day, you know, Christian, when Christ comes to make all things new, and there'll be another wedding, a wedding to end all weddings. And in that day, he will appear in his glory and come down into the throne room, and the angels will bow their heads and cover their faces. And in that day, he will be the groom. and you will be his bride. And you'll look at him with trembling voice and say, you are mine? And he'll look back at you and say, yes, my beloved, and you are mine forever. Let's draw near to God in prayer. Father, We thank you for the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ. We pray you will speak to us and show us His beauty, that seeing we might live and be full of light. In Christ's name, amen.