

## **The Life of the Party**

**John 2:1-11**

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Last time we preached on the invasion of the world by the Kingdom of God and discovered it was a sneak attack—an invasion from the inside out. And so the glory of God was veiled.

For six days in John chapter one, the word in flesh, Jesus, just walks around while these guys called disciples follow him. They follow and we ought to wonder: where are they going?

In Chapter 2 we come to this seventh day and John writes:

**John 2:11** "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did and manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him."

Today is the seventh day -- our Sabbath. If Jesus were to appear and do some miraculous sign the manifest his glory so we would believe what would you expect?

Maybe he'd stand on a mountain and be transfigured in brilliant light or calm the storm or hurricane headed for New Orleans or could you see him marching on the Capitol preaching "let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."

Could you see him walking through Denver general healing the sick and raising the dead. Could you see him walking down East Colfax transforming heroin laced needles and old syringes into textbooks and jobs. Or transforming guns into flowers, trees, and parks transforming old jugs of wine into sparkling spring water. Could you see him?

Well on the seventh day, in the Gospel of John chapter 2 verse one, in order to "manifest his glory" that we might believe. Jesus goes to a party and provides the booze: water into wine.

Sorry if that bugs you but in this church we uphold the authority of Scripture -- so let's give it a look.

**John 2:1** "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there."

Now the third day is obviously an allusion to the resurrection and the new age. But from the way John writes his gospel, the third day is also the seventh day from the description of creation in chapter 1.

In Genesis, there are six days of creation. Since time is relative to light and since we're still being created, this is still the sixth day. But on the seventh day creation is finished. The seventh day is the goal and that goal is eternal.

In John's Revelation, there are these amazing series of overlapping sevens: seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, and seven bowls. When the seventh seal is opened and the seventh trumpet and the seven thunders sounds, the seventh bowl of blood is poured out. There is a new earth and a great party, the wedding supper of the Lamb, and enough fluid from the great wine press to cover the land to the depth of a horse's bridle.

According to an ancient church documents from the second century A.D. (the anti-marcionite prologue to Luke), John received the revelation in exile on the island of Patmos, then later, in Ephesus, wrote the Gospel of John. That confirms a suspicion I've had ever since we studied the revelation and I wrote a book on that topic several years ago. See I think the Gospel of John is so different than Matthew, Mark, and Luke because on Patmos, Jesus revealed to John his story—the gospel from the perspective of heaven which caused John to remember events and dialogue, that years before had seemed insignificant or downright absurd. But now John sees: third day is the seventh day is the wedding feast. And Jesus provides the wine -- amazing blood red wine.

**John 2:2** "Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples."

They were following him and this is where they were headed. In that day a wedding party -- normally lasted a week. This seven day is like a whole new age.

**John 2:3** "when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "they have no wine."

Mary, mother of Jesus and picture of Mother Church says, "Jesus we need wine," as if she expects him to be the life of the party. Psalm 104:13, God makes wine too. Wine was like the life of the party. The rabbis had a saying "without wine there is no joy". Wine is a gift of God and yet Scripture is clear drunkenness is sin [we'll talk about that more next time].

But if you're an alcoholic, please don't drink and please don't worry. You will drink again, one day, with Jesus at the marriage supper of the lamb.

But in our story, the lack of wine is a big embarrassment and a terrible damper on the party.

So Mary says "Jesus they have no wine"

**John 2:4** "And Jesus said to her 'woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.'"

Now whenever a Bible verse strikes you as odd, pay extra attention. Why does he call her woman? Is he speaking to more than just his biological mother? And what is his hour? And is he going to provide more wine or not?

Jesus says, "woman, what you want me to do about it? My hour for making wine at the wedding feast has not yet come."

I love this next line; it proves that Mary really was Jesus's Jewish mother.

**John 2:5** "His mother said to the servants, 'do whatever he tells you.' Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jews Jewish rites of purification, each holding 20 or 30 gallons."

Now six is a really important number. It's a human number; it's the days of creation. And that the six jars were used for ritual cleansing, according to the law, is likewise hugely important. And that there is a fluid in the Revelation with which you can wash your garments white as snow and thus gain entrance to the wedding party and tree of life may also be significant.

**John 2:7-10** "Jesus said to the servants, 'fill the jars with water.' And they fill them the up to the brim. And he said to them, 'now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.' [He is like the headwaiter or party planner] 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 one. We have kept the good wine until now.'"

The party planner doesn't even know where the wine came from. He's just amazed that the good wine is served last. Normally you'd get folks liquored-up and then serve the cheap stuff. In this world, we assume people are trying to con us because almost always they are. But not Jesus. Maybe that's the real sign of another age -- the real miracle.

Now he really did turn water to wine and yet that happens all the time. I mean wine is water and earth mixed with light that turns to life and hangs as blood-red fruit on wood -- a vine or tree. See no one can explain how that works any better than they can explain how water and earthen pots could turn to wine in the presence of Jesus.

You know we just read that Jesus is the light and the life and through him all things are made--through him and his tree. So the wine in our communion cups is no less miraculous than the wine in those six water pots.

Well anyway, let's get this straight: for Jesus's inaugural miracle and sign--the sign that reveals where we're going when we follow him, the sign that tells us what the six days of creation are all about and why we travel through this world of sorrow and pain -- for

Jesus's inaugural sign which manifest his glory, he turns bath water into like 180 gallons of some really good wine in order to jumpstart a wedding party.

He really is the life of the party.

**John 2:11** "this, the first of his signs, Jesus David Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. [This manifests his glory: making wine for party] and his disciples believed in him."

They drank the wine -- then they believed in him. That doesn't mean they believed he existed, it means they believed in him -- they trusted his heart, they heard the music and joined the dance, they trusted the logos--the reason and the rhythm of the dance--the heart of God, and I get that.

"Jesus if this is really where we're going, well I'd like to follow even if it means picking up across."

I get that.

This is me on the happiest day of my life -- so far.



May 28, 1983: my wedding day. We invited everyone we knew -- our whole church, friends, relatives, over 500 people came to our wedding. And after the wedding all were invited to this huge banquet hall just off of I-70 near the Purina plant.



We didn't have wine, but we had beer. It was a party. See this is my cousin Tim and my cousin Steve. They worked construction, went hunting a lot, and lived in Golden. They're kind of rednecks. Right here between Aunt Peggy and Auth Betty is my friend Sharon Metzger. I talked to her last week. She runs a Christian TV station here in town.

See that's what made the party so great: not everyone was the same. My crazy cousins sat by the little old ladies that taught my Sunday school. They built a beer can pyramid under the table, and they had a truck pushing contest in the parking lot. And everybody seemed to be enjoying everybody else, like they stopped judging. There was this amazing diversity in a beautiful unity, which was their love for me and Susan.

We had these three old guys playing an organ, drum-set, and accordion--"The Columbine Aires"--and everybody danced with everybody.



It was like they forgot themselves and got lost in love for each other.



All giving and the giving was the greatest taking.



I lost myself. I mean I really had trouble remembering things. Like where I put the car keys. Where our luggage was. I lost myself, but not because I hated myself.



My self was so satisfied, so happy -- I wasn't worried about myself. I lost myself in the party, in utter amazement that someone as wonderful as Susan would love a dweeb like me.

Well it turns out that I left the car keys with my best man Dave Jones.



So he and my groomsmen got into the luggage and taped our underwear all over the car.



But I forgave them. I forgave everyone that day. It was easy; it was natural to forgive. The entire day was grace. Everyone was generous.



And that night the party continued.



We had dated and waited for five and a half years, but that night, diversity—male and female—was joined in unity. Communion in the sanctuary of the covenant. A dance of love that was life and produced life. I lost myself in ecstasy and everything was grace.

The happiest day of my life.

And I think God is saying "Peter that's what I'm about. So would you trust me even when you feel a cross strapped to your back."

And now let me say some of you felt a cross on your back even as you watched my little slideshow. Perhaps you're not married and want to be, or you are married and it feels like hell. Or perhaps you're troubled by your own sexuality. Perhaps you have battled an addiction to wine your whole life, or maybe you have a great marriage and enjoy fine wine and realize it's still not enough.

Well, do you see that wherever you are -- in sorrow or joy--the wedding party taps into the deepest desires of your heart--your longing for intimacy, communion, ecstasy, and joy? It's a longing for heaven, your home, the marriage supper of the Lamb. And the glory of God is his ability to give it to you, and that he has given it to you, and that he longs for you to receive it. If you really saw his glory I think you would really believe—trust—and if you really trusted you would want to follow, and you might even pick up a cross.

Have you discovered that following Jesus in this world is really hard? It's hard to be faithful when everyone else is unfaithful. It's hard to speak truth when everyone expects you to lie. It's hard to really love when our economy runs on greed. It's hard to lose yourself when your very flesh is constantly begging for attention. It's hard to pick up a cross but Jesus said "unless you bear your cross you can't be my disciple."

One morning this week, I was complaining to us Susan while getting dressed for work. I said "honey, I feel bad saying this, but sometimes I struggle with asking people to follow Jesus because it's just so hard." She said "of course you feel bad, you're asking them to carry across." And she's right.

I'm asking you to pick up a cross and follow Jesus...But look where we're going.

You know, on the morning of my wedding, nobody had to say,

"you better get up on time."

"You better brush your teeth."

"You really ought to wear something nice."

"You shouldn't shoot heroin, rob a liquor store, or sleep with strippers."

Now if I really didn't want to get married, I might do all that the night before and call it a bachelor party. But I desperately wanted to be married to Susan, and I didn't want anything to mess up the party to which I was going the following day.

And check this out:



This is a picture of me (that's my father who is performing the ceremony) signing my life away--literally signing my life away in joy. Before this moment I did what I wanted to do. I hung my ski posters wherever I wanted to hang them. I cashed my own paycheck, and spent my money as I pleased.

After this moment, it was no longer "me" but "we." I was only allowed to hang my ski posters in the garage—and we didn't have one. Every paycheck I simply handed to her. You see I gave her permission to hurt me, like no one else in this world, permission to pound the nails if that's what it took to prove my love. When I signed this covenant I signed my life away in ecstasy and for the joy that was set before me.

Imagine if I didn't see Susan sitting next to me and before me? And I signed my life away just because someone said it was good. Well it wouldn't feel good -- it would feel like hell. And I would think the good was hell because I couldn't see that the good was Susan.

Well, my dear, the good is Jesus.

And you see, this all raises a very important point and that is: the wedding party, that is the kingdom of heaven, isn't simply a place. It's also a state of mind. So faith in your destination changes the way you follow, but the way you follow changes your destination or at least when it is that you finally arrive.

What I mean is that although my wedding party was heaven for me, it may very well have been hell for someone else.

John Paul Sartre said Hell is other people. Well a party is other people and heaven is other people, and so heaven might feel like hell to John Paul Sartre. My wedding party may have been hell for someone else.

Perhaps they were abused as a child, and were now terrified of men and the thought of male and female joined as one filled them with dread.

Perhaps they themselves are an adulterer, and so they were offended and hiding in shame.

Perhaps they just idolize themselves and so weren't interested in anyone else.

Perhaps they were greedy and so pouted "it's my party and I'll cry if I want to, cry if I want to."

Perhaps they felt competitive with me, so my happiness made them angry. And so they felt sorry for themselves and hated me. Like the older brother hated his younger brother in the story last week. And so went to the outer darkness to stand in the field alone.

Whatever the case, a person like that is stuck in themselves, and so will not and cannot join the party. Surrounded by party but not at the party, for the party feels like hell. Perhaps hell is a self-imposed prison for party-pooper's.

In first Corinthians 6:9 Paul writes "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?"

Then Paul goes through a whole list of sins from greed to adultery, a list that would really stress you out if you read it slow for you realize you were guilty of most of the things on the list. Every sin is a refusal to love in truth and renders you unrighteous.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God and such were some of you. But you were washed.”

That is, the unrighteous do inherit the kingdom. But only after they've been washed with something that renders them no longer unrighteous -- it changes their nature inside and out.

If you are unrighteous, you can't enjoy a kingdom of righteousness.  
If you are greedy you can't enjoy a kingdom of generosity.  
If you are unfaithful you can't enjoy a kingdom of the faithfulness.  
If you're all about taking, you can't enjoy the party -- the Kingdom of love. In fact, love will burn your skin like the hottest fire.

If you think you are your sin, it will burn you. Sin keeps you from enjoying the party. Sin keeps you from joining the party. That's why God hates sin. Not because he's all offended, like you insulted his fragile ego with your big 'ol sin. No. It's because he desperately wants you at the party -- your party.

You see, there is one thing that would've absolutely destroyed the happiest day of my life. And that would have been if the happiest day of my life was not the happiest day of my bride's life.

Now listen to the Gospel: you are the bride of Christ. And in this world of space and time, in these six days, you are being prepared. You are being washed, and you are being dressed for your wedding and a party that is a honeymoon that will never end. And because I'm looking at you, I'm guessing that you're not ready yet like me. Your false. Addicted to yourself and terrified of love -- real love where you can lose yourself. So you don't truly love love and your groom is truth and love. You don't love love -- you love sin

But you see sin wrecks the party. And sin isn't just "sins," sin is living by the law and the power of the flesh. Sin is stealing fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sin is taking the place of God as the judge. Sin is living by those "my life scorecards" from three weeks ago. Sin is what traps you in yourself with your self--whether it's arrogance or shame—it's a prison of self.

See it's people that are stuck in themselves that wreck every party. And that's why the thing that saves so many parties is wine. Why? Because alcohol kills brain cells.

Booze helps people forget themselves and die to themselves and stop judging themselves and everybody around them. The problem is that it only works for a few hours and not well even then. It's only a sign and not the substance. So if you get addicted to the sign you miss the substance and are trapped even deeper in hell.

Alcohol is the sign, but Jesus makes the substance. Jesus makes wine for the party that will never end. Jesus said "Woman, [mother Church] woman my hour has not yet come."

And so he didn't make the substance that day, he made the sign. It wasn't his glory, but it revealed his glory "making wine."

"My hour has not yet come," however, John will make it exceptionally clear when Jesus's hour does come and just what his glory is.

**John 12:23** "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

**John 17:1** "He lifted his eyes and said, 'Father, the hour has come, glorify your son that the son may glorify you.'"

It was that night that he took a cup of wine saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood" --blood that is wine. In a few hours outside the city he would be crushed in the winepress of the wrath of God -- the judge judged in our place. He would become sin for us, and the wrath of God would crush him transforming our sin into the love of God poured out--the very life-blood of Jesus. With that blood he washes as white as snow and fills us with himself -- intoxicated with his love. He is the great bridegroom who romances us to himself at the cross. His cross as a winepress. And there he makes enough wind to fill the land to the depth of a horse's bridle.

I believe that is exactly what John saw on the island of Patmos.

**Revelation 14:19** "So the Angels swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1600 stadia."

And who is it that treads the winepress and makes this wine?

**Revelation 19:13** "He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is the word of God. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

He trampled the winepress alone. He suffered and died alone, and yet there he romances us to himself that we would die with him and rise with him, drink the wine together and never be alone.

When you come to the communion table you come to the winepress with his word. God cuts off the fruit he desires -- confessed sin, the first that befits repentance. Jesus takes your sin and transforms it into wine -- his blood, his life.

He really is the life of the party.

He frees us from the prison of sin, which is ourselves. His wine makes us lose ourselves and find ourselves in him. He washes us with his blood and fills us with his life. That life unites all things in love.

He really is the life of the party.

So when we reject him, we reject heaven for he is heaven. We reject him and his life whenever we sin for sin is the hatred of life. And life is love, and love is what holds a party together. We reject him when we sin. And then we reject him continuously when we refuse to confess that sin—when we refuse to trust his mercy, which is his wine, his life and love poured out. And that's how we trap ourselves in a party pooper's prison that turns into hell.

Yet even now, as I speak, the word of God is invading that prison -- your heart--your self. I know that you are terrified to surrender to Jesus because you see it involves a cross -- the death of self. But trust him. For that cross is also a winepress--the beginning of a party that never ends. Your sin keeps you from heaven. But confessed sin becomes the wine at the kingdom -- wine that jump-starts the party that never ends.

After the word tramples a wine press in Revelation 19, John sees a bride dressed in white in the party that never ends.

You are that bride, and Jesus is your groom.

Mary, who is a picture of this, Mary asks Jesus to make wine, and he did.

I want to show you two movie clips and then have communion. I want to show you three things that are all one thing.

The first is from the perspective of Earth, two thousand years ago.

The second is from the perspective of Heaven—the party that never ends.

The third is from the perspective of here and right now.

This is how Jesus makes wine.

He is the Life of the Party.

**Video Clip:** “The Passion;” “A Walk in the Clouds”

[1. From “The Passion,” Jesus is dying and nailed to the cross, the tree.]

[2. From a “Walk in the Clouds,” a party carries on as attractive, young men and women trample grapes in a winepress.]

3. And on the sixth day, he took bread and broke it saying, "this is my body which is given to you." And in the same manner he took the cup saying, "this is the covenant in my blood (blood that is wine, wine that is blood)."

Here and now. He invites you to his wedding banquet. If you want him, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup. Light cups are juice, dark cups are wine; they are both blood.

As you touch the body and blood to your lips, the bridegroom kisses you with his life.

The Father performs the ceremony and He is asking you, "Do you have this man to be your lawfully wedded husband; to have and to hold; to honor and obey as long as you both shall live such that death will never do you part?"

If so, say: "I will, and I do"

Well then...it's time to party.

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## Communion

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## Benediction

And so Lord, we look to the highest place like John did on the island of Patmos in the revelation. Along with every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and all that is within them we look to the highest place, the very throne of God and what do we see? Jesus--a lamb, as if it had been slain. It's You, making wine for our wedding party.

Jesus you are good. You are so good. So we worship you, we praise you. I think most of us can say together, we kind of, a little bit, sort of, at least with a mustard seed of faith--we actually want to follow you.

In your name we pray and we thank you.  
Amen.