

September 9, 2012 - Jesus and the Newlyweds

We are starting a new series this morning and we've entitled it: "The King and I". Just for clarity sake, I'll let you know that it has nothing to do with the 1944 Margaret Landon book called, Anna and The King; and it has nothing to do with the Rogers and Hammerstein musical based on the book that came out in 1950; and it has nothing to do with the movie that was based on the musical that was based on the book, which came out in 1956 and starred Yule Brenner; and it has nothing to do with the 1999 remake of the movie that came out in 1956 of the musical of the book. It has nothing to do with any of those things, so just wipe all of that from your mind. What we're going to talk about over the next few weeks is going to be the Gospel of John. We want to explore the Gospel of John and the stories that the Apostle John records for us there about the life of Jesus and the things he did.

John's Gospel, as you read through it, it tries to do two principle things. One thing that John tries to do as he writes his Gospel is he's trying to reveal Jesus and show Jesus as Christ The King. And the second thing he does in his Gospel is shows a lot of people interacting with Jesus. A broad cross-section of people who interact and deal with Jesus throughout his Gospel. Which makes John's Gospel really jam packed full of stories about the King and the defeated and the desperate. The King and the renewed and the risk taker. The King and the searcher and the servant. The King and the trapped or the traveller. The King and the willing or the worshiper. And so, we see Jesus interacting with all these people. Through seeing Him interact with them, we can learn how Jesus dealt with them, but more importantly, is try and see ourselves in each of these stories that we read about. Which makes this story no longer about a lurking in the middle of the night, Pharisee; or a slinking out to the well in the middle of the day, Samaritan; it's no longer about a layman who doesn't get thrown into a pool; or a blind man who DOES get thrown out of the Synagogue; it's no longer about a distraught Mary, who anoints Jesus' feet; or a defiant Peter, who says "You'll never wash my feet." Instead, we want to see ourselves in each of these stories and walk away with a clearer sense of how Jesus views and treats us in the various moments and stages and events of our lives.

So that's why we chose, if you look over here, we chose to put up silhouettes and we're going to put up a different silhouette each week. We chose silhouettes, instead of photos, for one reason. We chose silhouettes because a silhouette can be just about anyone. A silhouette just kind of gives you the outline shape. There's no face and there's no details. So the silhouette could be just about anyone. And so, as we examine these stories each week, we want you to put yourself in the place of that person in the story. We want you to see yourself in that silhouette. Or maybe see someone else that you know, interacting with Jesus, in that way. So that's what we're going to try and do as we work our way through the Gospel of John over the next several weeks.

I don't know if you can all see it, but by each silhouette I have a little sign that kind of tells a little bit who the story is going to be about this week. I had to redo the sign for this week

because the first phrase I got for this one, which was based on the story, and it fit's the story, but the first words I put up there was "The misfortunate" and when I got that put up there with the silhouette of the couple getting married, I thought "Yeah! That's not sending the right message." And so, I redid that and so this morning we're going to talk about "The Assisted" which is probably a much better term to use in that case.

I figured since this mornings story was about a wedding and specifically a problem at a wedding, it got me thinking this week, about a few other weddings that had gone wrong. Sometimes in weddings gone wrong, sometimes things just happen that are out of everyone's control, however it seemed like in a lot of these 'ceremony calamities' could have been avoided if people had just planned things out a little bit better.

To give you an example, I was in a wedding many years ago, I was a groomsman, and the groomsmen came prepared to the wedding. You know at the reception, someone will start jingling a spoon on a glass and the wedding couple is supposed to stand up and kiss? Well, the groomsmen came prepared and we had score cards. And so every time someone jingled a glass and the couple got up and kissed, we'd each pick out our score card and hold it over our head and kind of evaluate how things went. We were prepared!

Some other things were not quite so well prepared. For example, the wedding cake. Now, the wedding cake, I don't remember exactly what it looked like but I do remember that it was one of those multi-tiered things. Now, from watching shows from Ace of Cakes now, I understand when you make one of these things, those little columns are supposed to go all the way down to the plate at the bottom so it's on something solid. Now whoever designed this cake, at this wedding, didn't do that. They just put the little columns on top of the cake. Now that worked really well when the cake was in the fridge and was all nice and solid and everything. But when we got to the reception and it was sitting out in this room for awhile and the room was getting warm because it was packed full of people, gradually and slowly every time we looked over, we started to notice that something was not quite right about this cake. So once we realized something was going on, someone rushed over and held the cake and we told the M.C. "Okay we're changing the order of things. Cutting the cake is now or it's going to be done for us." And so, they rushed over and cut the cake. That's one example of poor planning causing things to go wrong.

Another example, this couple was on the Today Show awhile back and you may wonder why is this couple so special that they get on the Today Show? Are they famous? Are they rich? Or are they something like that, but there's a story behind them which is what got them on the Today Show. You see, on the Show, the man explains that he had got the ring a few days before this event occurred and he was planning this, you know, we're going to take the day off work and spend time together and have this big fancy supper together. In the middle of the restaurant I'll get down on my knee and all of this. But, unfortunately, before that special all planned out day came, he couldn't wait any longer to pop the question. So when they

were at Wendy's, of all places, he gets this idea that here's what I'm going to do, I'm going to take this beautiful engagement ring that I've got and I'm going to stick it in to my soon to be fiancée's Frosty. So he did that, again, we're talking about poor planning here. He took it to the table and when he gave it to his girlfriend and there were some other people with them and as she explains it "some of her friends challenged her to a race to see who could finish their frosty first." She said "I wasn't going to lose that challenge." You can see where this is going. And so, she started downing her Frosty and if you've had a Frosty you know you can't use a straw they're too thick, you have to use a spoon. So she's shovelling this stuff back and she gets to the bottom of the cup and the man looks in the cup and there is nothing there!!! And so, he has to try and explain to her what has happened. She doesn't believe him, until they go to the hospital and see the X-ray and sure enough, there it is. The proof is in the X-ray and so was the proposal because they had to wait a little while to get the ring back, so they took the X-ray of the ring and he proposed with that, later on. No very good planning on his part.

I'm going to show you another quick video here of another wedding situation that was probably a little poorly planned out. (Ocean side wedding and big wave hits them.) Now, here is my advice for you. If you ever feel the need to plan your wedding on the shores of the ocean, make sure you schedule it when the tide is going out, not coming in.

Take a look at this one too. The picture is really bad, I think it must have been a cell phone, so I'll kind of narrate it for you and you can see what happens here on this one. So, he's talking to the bride and he's saying "Do you take this man, blah, blah, blah, as long as you both shall live. And of course she says "Yes, I will." And then when she finishes saying I do, he turns to the best man who is just coming into the frame here, and he's going to say "Can we have the rings?" Here we go??? (The best man trips, knocks everyone over into a fish pond, or lake or something.) Now, here's what I've learned from all that. Don't plan your wedding anywhere near water, cause things are just destined to go wrong. I feel bad saying that, because I know, John and Chelsea are getting married in about two weeks here, and they are getting married at Jackfish Lake. I haven't heard the final plans but, I've heard different versions of how close and how inter-active with the Lake the wedding is going to be. So, I'm just waiting to hear the final plans to know if I should pack my wedding suit, or my wet suit???? For this event.

I ended with that last video, despite the poor picture quality, because if you can try and place yourself in the bride's water soaked shoes, you will be in the right place to read our text for this morning. That mixture of shock and horror and embarrassment and humiliation. That moment of dreams being shattered as you are overcome with that sinking feeling. If you can fathom all of that, then you are ready to read John, Chapter 2. Here's what John writes in verses 1-11:

"The next day there was a wedding celebration in the Village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus'

mother was there and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. The wine supply ran out during the festivities so Jesus' mother told him "They do not have any more wine." "Dear woman, this is not my problem" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." But his mother told the servants "Do whatever he tells you." Standing nearby were six stone jars used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold 20 to 30 gallons. Jesus told the servants "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled he said "Now, dip some out and take it to the Master of Ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions. When the Master of Ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from, though of course the servants knew, he called the bridegroom over. "The host always serves the best wine first" he said. "Then when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now." This miraculous sign at Cana, was the first time Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him."

Now, there are two things about this story that are impressive and important but often get overlooked in the shadow of the magnificent, molecular, miracle, of turning water into wine.

Now the first thing is, just the sheer scale of this event that happens. Now, usually when we talk about this story or we read about this story, we'll see a picture something like this, with Jesus and Mary and a servant pouring water into those six jars. But, if you read the text, it says that each of those jars actually could hold 20 to 30 gallons. So, I tried to find something for comparison sake to kind of visualise this for us and according to my research, most of the standard water coolers, the Culligan water coolers that you have at home or at the office, hold about 5 gallons. So each of these stone jars was actually worth about 4 of those water jugs that you get from the water cooler. Now there were 6 jugs that meant, if I did my math right, a total equivalent of about 24 of those water cooler jugs. This is the volume of which Jesus is dealing with. You might say "Well what's the big deal about that, if you can change a bottle of wine you could change a bathtub full, right?" Well, perhaps, but the significance is, that we're not just talking about a single glass of wine that occurs here. You see, the servants didn't just dip out one glass of water and give it to the host, who by his own admission, had already done his fair share to exhaust the previous supply of wine. This isn't a case of a guy who was a little too tipsy to know the difference between tap water and champagne. No, Jesus created 120 gallons of this stuff, and served it to all of the guests, over a period that possibly lasted days. This is no fluke, it is no parlour trick, it is no mistake.

But even more significant, though often overlooked, was the fact that Jesus was at the wedding in the first place. You see, Jesus had just begun his ministry. He had just selected his twelve apostles. He has just, kind of, got the ball rolling. And so, we would expect him to be out doing things like: in the Synagogue preaching; or being in the Temple Courts confronting the Pharisees; or speaking to large crowds of people; or healing masses of people; but that's not where we find him in this story. Where is he? He's at a week long celebration. And that tells us something important about Jesus and the heart of God. Jesus was invited to a wedding which means that it was important to somebody that he be there. Maybe it was the groom. Maybe it was the bride, maybe it was the bride's mother. But

somebody, in the planning of this celebration, felt that it was important that Jesus and his disciples get an invitation. And when it was important to someone that Jesus be there, he showed up. Which tells me, that in your important moments, on your special days, during your significant events, Jesus will show up. He's not too busy. His calendar is not too full. He doesn't have too many other things going on. Jesus will be there. So the next time you celebrate a birthday or an anniversary, or landing a new job or retiring, when you celebrate a year free from an addiction or you celebrate paying off your mortgage, or the birth of a child or grandchild, or recovery from an illness, whenever it is, or whatever it is you are celebrating, Jesus is attending the party. Whenever you rejoice Jesus is right there to cheer.

But Jesus is not only there for the good times, he is there for all the important moments of life. This week was back to school week. Back to school week is an exciting, and sometimes, nervous time for kids and sometimes even more so for their parents, and Jesus is there at back to school week. When health fails and sickness is diagnosed, Jesus is there. When there is more month than there is money, Jesus is there. When things go wrong and life isn't fair, Jesus is there. When dreams fade and strength fails, Jesus is there. And don't be deceived into believing that what happens in your life is not important enough to get on God's radar. Don't be misled to think that God has better things to do than to celebrate with you, or console you.

But Jesus does more in this story than just show up. He helps. To understand that help we have to understand the problem. To us, a shortage of Chardenay doesn't seem like a cataclysmic catastrophe. We are not particularly bothered by the burgundy barrel being bare. But perhaps Lynn Anderson's explanation can help us understand the situation. In his book *Heaven Came Down*, Lynn writes this:

“Weddings back then and over there differed quite a bit from the here and now nuptials. For one thing, those weddings usually lasted several days. There was gift giving and speech making, food making and you guessed it, lots of wine drinking. Gifts, foods, and wines were matters of high protocol. The food was to be well prepared. The wine flowed in abundance and if you showed up with an inappropriate gift, the bride and groom could bar you permanently from polite circles. Worse yet, if you wanted to be a humiliated host, just run short of food or wine. Jesus knew that it was not merely an embarrassing little bobble in the kitchen. Oh no! It was an absolutely unthinkable. A total disgrace to the family. After all folks had come great distances to answer your invitation. There social customs were taken so seriously, that a guest could actually bring a lawsuit if they were not properly cared for. So when Mary took Jesus off to the side and whispered “They have no more wine.” She sounded more than a mild note of alarm. In other words, this was a big deal. It was important. It had implications and consequences and none of them were good.”

So, think back to our soggy bride and the anxiety she must have felt. Now magnify that by the fact that this was no accident. There was no clumsy best man who tripped over and

knocked over all the jugs of wine causing the sudden shortage. The host was responsible for making sure there was enough food and wine for everyone. But there wasn't. It was his job to make sure that they didn't run out. But they did. And the repercussions would be extended beyond ruining the day for the bride and groom.

But you see, Jesus didn't see empty wine jugs. He saw someone who needed help. At that point he could have done a lot of different things. He could have instructed the host on the importance of planning ahead. He could have shared a story, like he would do later in Luke, Chapter 14, 28-37, and talk about how when you build, don't begin until you count the cost, because you might run out of money and then people will look at you and say "There's a person who started and couldn't finish." But that's not what he did. He could have admonished the crowds on the danger of over consumption of alcohol. He could have quoted what Paul would eventually write in the future in Galatians 5: 19-21 and say something towards the effect of 'the acts of the sinful nature are obvious and include things like drunkenness, and wild parties. But he doesn't say that either. He could have said "this really isn't my problem' and done nothing. Instead he said "You look like you could use some help."

And then he helped. Jesus turned the water into wine not because the guests needed the wine jugs to be full, but because the newlyweds needed the wine jugs to not be empty. And this miracle has nothing to do with providing beverages to everyone and it has everything to do with taking away the hurt and humiliation. In other words, Jesus was there to help and in the end, only the servants and the disciples knew what had happened. Now, you may say, aren't there more important things in life than wedding wine? Absolutely! Were there lessons to be learned from this poorly planned party? Without a doubt! But Jesus knew that what was needed at that moment was not a lecture or a rebuke. What was needed was a helping hand and that's what he offered. And that's what he calls each of us as his followers to do as well. To reach out to people in need. To help those who are in a bind. To assist people with the things that they are unable to do on their own. To come alongside the people who are all alone. To comfort the people who are hurting.

Paul instructs the Church in Rome and says: Rom. 12: 13-15

"Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and don't curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him something to drink."

In other words, take care of people, help people, share with people. When someone is celebrating, celebrate right along with them. When someone is grieving, get in there and grieve right along side of them. Yes, people need to hear the message of the Bible. They need to know that salvation comes through Christ alone. They need to understand what sin has done to their life and their relationship with God. But Jesus knew that, before people could hear the message of God, they needed to see the hand of God. Before they could grasp

the truth, they needed a helping hand to hold.

Theodore Roosevelt once said and you've probably heard this quote: "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

Ghandi is quoted as saying "There are people in this world who are so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread."

And that's what Jesus knew. He knew that we have to help people, we have to care for people, we have to walk along side people, before we can share with them.

And that's our task this week. To go out into our world and our city and our neighbourhoods, to help others. To live in such a way that a friend who needs help, knows they can count on you. That a neighbour needs help knows whose door they should knock on first. That when a co-worker needs help, she knows whose extension to dial. That when a stranger needs help they will be thankful that you were the one who came along.