

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
February 19, 2017

The First Sign

John 2:1-11

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

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

2:3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”

2:4 And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”

2:5 His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

2:6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

2:7 Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.

2:8 And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it.

2:9 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

2:10 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.”

2:11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

1. Miracle by the Lordship

Miracles are often confusing for the people who read the Bible for the

first time. Some of them say, “I cannot believe that the Bible is true because of the miracles, otherwise I would be able to accept such great teachings.” I understand why they say so, but I’d like to ask them to think a little deeper. I cannot imagine any greater teachings other than this; “God loves us, and saves us even using miracles which ignore the natural laws.”

God created this world, and gave it natural law. He is “the God of Creation,” so He has the power beyond the natural law.. He also sustains the world, and leads our lives, because He is “the God of Providence.” So, God can perform miracles we need, both for this world and for us. If our God is the Creator and the God of providence, we could say miracles are very reasonable phenomenon. I even maintain that this world was not occurred by nature law, but created by miracles. In our nature, for example, the sun converts the water in the sea into steam to go up in the sky, and becomes rain, then the rain runs off in to the river which flows into the sea. Animals and plants multiply. However, nature cannot create brand new nature. Consequently, this world, and us, are created by God’s miracles. The world is a product of the creation, and we are the master piece of God.

I guess some people still accept the miracles, and they might say, “I would believe if I see His miracles here right now.” As well as them, people of Jew in Jesus’ time said in John 6:30, “So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” Lord made uncountable miracles before people, but this group of people tested Jesus’ power as saying “Do some miracles before us, and we’re going to believe you.” However, Jesus never performed miracles for people didn’t have even one bit of

faith.

According to Luke 23:6-11, when Pilate met Jesus, he heard of our Lord was from Galilee. Because Herod was the feudal lord of Galilee, he decided to send Jesus to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at the moment. Herod wanted to see miracles, and forced Jesus to do them, but Jesus answered nothing. Then Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.

Moreover, the Bible describes the people's blaming on Jesus in Mark 15:32, "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe. Those who were crucified with him also reviled him." In fact, it was the greatest miracle that the Son of God was still on the cross. There were no such thing could force Jesus to be crucified, neither plans of Jewish religious leaders, nor authority of Roman governor. It was the Love of Jesus Christ, who accepts to die instead of sinners. The miracles were meaningless for those who ignored this miracle of love.

We cannot ask God for miracles just for our curiosity; it should be made for His purpose. God's initiative can only control His miracles. Today's verse shows us this rule. His mother Mary said to Jesus, "They have no wine." (2:3) Back then, it was very embarrassing to run out of wine at a wedding, so Mary asked Jesus since Mary was there to help people. Then in 2:4, Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." "Woman" was the official way to call their mother between mother and adult son at that generation, so that it doesn't mean Jesus answered His mother coldly.

Even so, it does sound cold "what does this have to do with me?" although He didn't refuse the relationship with His mother. This

phrase was limited only for the miracle that Jesus was actually about to do. Miracles happen because of His sovereign, not of the human relationship between mother and son. People often understand Jesus transformed water into wine because of Mary's asking, but in fact, it was happen by the plan of Jesus; everything was by His will and lordship.

In Isaiah 43:13 God says, "Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?" Miracles are done by His lordship, and it testifies that He is the sovereign God.

2. Miracle for Joy

God shows miracles as He wishes. So does Lord Jesus. However, God or Lord Jesus never does miracles without thinking of humans. The Bible describes 37 miracles out of numerous miracles that Jesus showed, but if you read each miracle carefully, you will see that each of them was done with compassion and mercy toward humans. Lord Jesus performed miracles by his sovereignty and to show salvation and joy to humans. Each miracle was done for those who needed it and out of His love for humans. The miracle of changing water into wine was done to give joy to the wedding, which was the highest moment of life. This miracle tells us that Jesus is the one who can fill our life with joy.

The place where this miracle was done, "there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons". Each water jar can hold 20 to 30 gallons of water just as the size of a big trashcan. May be Jesus used them because they

were the biggest jars at the wedding place. But please pay attention to “for the Jewish rites of purification” because there was a special meaning in it. Purification in Jewish religion means to clean themselves from dirt of gentiles. Purification is not for cleaning of their inner part, but just ceremonial and perfunctory. People observed the Jewish law. But it was not to change them from inside or fill them with joy. The reason why Jesus used the water for purification to change into wine was to teach them that Jesus was the one who could provide the true purification, satisfaction and joy to them, which Jewish religion could not.

Japan was a country of Shintoism. When Buddhism came to Japan, the Japanese took it as if they put on the Buddhism cloth over the inner cloth of Shintoism. When Christianity came to Japan, they say they put the coat of Christianity over the Buddhism cloth. It is called multi-faith, but unless you are born again through the Holy Spirit, there will be no change inside of yourself other than just becoming a member of a religious group, and you will end up keeping the same world view and philosophy that never satisfies your soul or life. In America, there is a Christian basis but if you don't interact with the living God and just follow Christianity as a culture, then that is the same thing. In modern society, there are an increasing number of people who just follow what is visible to them without thinking of spiritual things. Atheism or materialism is also a religion in a different format, which seems to be new to our eyes, but it never satisfies us.

Those things are just “the empty jars”. What belongs to nature always belongs to nature, what belongs to the world always belongs to the world. In order for our soul to be satisfied and our life to be

changed, we need something beyond the nature. We need something from the Heaven, not from this world. The wine that Lord Jesus generated through his miracle indicates the salvation of Lord Jesus, which can fill us with true joy. Lord Jesus who changed water to wine can also change “the futile ways inherited from our forefathers” (1 Peter 1:18) into the one with joy.

3. Miracle As a Sign

Today’s reading ends at verse 11; “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him”. A miracle is called “sign” here.

“Sign” indicates something. The traffic sign has its meaning. If you see the traffic sign of crossing, you will see the crossing soon. Same as this, a miracle is the sign of substance. The miracle itself is big event. However, no matter how big it is, we shall not forget to look at greater substance. The wine Jesus made was very tasty and the master chef was surprised. How joyous were the healing miracles by Jesus to the healed patients. The miracles itself has power to catch and keep our heart. But the Bible says that the miracle is just a sign to indicate “the greater one.”

What is “the greater one”? As verse 11 says, “Jesus showed us this first sign in Cana of Galilee,” it is the glory of Lord Jesus. The miracle tells us that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior, and the Lord. Therefore, when we learn the miracle of Jesus, we shall not only pay attention to the miracle itself but also to Jesus Himself, which the miracle really indicates.

Jesus did not show off the miracle of transforming water into wine

to catch people's attention. At the corner of kitchen, he did this quietly in front of His mother Mary, servants who poured water, and His disciples. The bridegroom, the master chef, and guests did not notice the miracle. He did not do this in order to surprise the people but to make them happy without interrupting the banquet. Even when he healed the people, he said "Go in peace, and be healed of your disease." (Mark 5:34) and let them go back to their ordinary life.

Like this way, we may be experiencing the miracles of Jesus without notice in our daily life. We can not wake up in the morning, can not work during daytime, and can not sleep, without being supported by the Lord. This should be another miracle. We are now worshiping the Lord at church. Church was born from the miracle, which the Holy Spirit came from the heaven. We have been insisted that we were just and righteous, but now we have admitted and repented our sins, accepted Lord Jesus as our Savior from our sins, and became worshipers of the Lord. This is truly the miracle! The resurrection of Lord Jesus is one of the greatest miracles; however, believing the resurrection is also the great miracle.

I am sure that you have experienced "Oh if I didn't have the help..." or "if I don't have faith..." Even we do not notice, God gives us the best help at the perfect timing in our life. We are able to live by such "small miracles." If you understand that they comes from the love of God, and they are the blessing of God. How happy you are.

From the miracle of wine, the servants and disciples of Jesus had experienced Jesus' miracle directly and believed in Jesus. We shall have eyes to find out and look at the works of Jesus for us. We shall look at the glory of Jesus, which is indicated by His miracle. The

miracle is not obstacle, it is necessary for us to believe in Jesus. We should notice and change our thought “I can’t believe because of miracles” to “I can believe in Jesus because He showed us miracles”.

(Prayer)

Dear Father, we need miracles, greater than the natural power, for the world and our life. You have already answered our needs by the greatest and highest miracles; the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also, you help our life by countless “small miracles.” Please help us looking at your “signs” and let us look at Jesus Christ Himself, which the “signs” show us. In the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.