

"How Do You See Your Life?"

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John 2: 1-11

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The Gospel of John is unlike the other three gospels. One writer calls it "...a thoughtful, imaginative, and redemptive Gospel." (*R. Setzer, Jr., "Encounters with the Living Christ," p. ix.*) He suggests the Jesus of this gospel is as real for you and me today as He was for those in His time; or at least He *can* be if we choose to let Him. For me the thing is I am a human being, and as with all humans my nature is to tend to rebuff things outside my preconceptions... in this case *who* and *how* Jesus is. This Gospel always reminds me Jesus is the Christ; entirely holy, entirely divine, entirely transparent, and yet also entirely mysterious.

As humans we are fascinated with the "mysterious." Things such as asteroids and comets, ghosts and apparitions, proposed long-lost civilizations, and "end-of-the-world" scenarios seem to mesmerize us with an indescribable hold. So what is it, then, that keeps so many people un-fascinated with God, Jesus, and miracles? Maybe one reason is the ease of "loosing Jesus" in a mound of unanswered questions, constant qualifiers, and that multitude of "jots and tittles" theologians and biblical commentators so relish. (This is not to in any way belittle the study and efforts of theologians and commentators.)

For me it is just like that frog in high school biology class. Each of us seniors was given a rectangle pan with some sort of hardened or solidified gel in the bottom. We were then given a dead frog out of jars of formaldehyde. We spread out the frog, pinned down the appendages, took a special knife, and dissected it. And dissected it some more, until most of us kids could not tell any longer what it was we were dissecting. In a way we "lost the frog." Similarly, we can "loose Jesus" in the fray of all our analyzing.

One writer put it this way, "...for the believing community—whether in St. John's day or today—the critical question is not, 'Did the historical

Jesus make such and such a statement or do such and such a thing?' Rather, the critical question is, 'Does John's writing give us a clear and compelling witness to who Jesus is?'"

There came a moment in time and space when God desperately wanted to speak the word of love that so few people seemed to want to hear. So God reached into the broad pool of heaven and chose God's Son. Then God molded and shaped this Son into human form and draped it in human flesh, in the personhood of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel of John says it another way, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us." (*Jn 1:14*) God decided that the Word had to be more than just spoken. It had to have a visible form. It had to be embodied. It had to be seen! And God made it so. The "holy" came to earth and remained (and remains) "holy." *This* is what John tenaciously reminds us.

In both the ancient Greek and the ancient Hebrew traditions the word *Logos* related to the Creation and its meaning. In St. John's Gospel, the word *Logos* is even more exalted. The *Logos* was God but somehow separate from God, because it is also *with* God. He presents us with the greatest paradox of our faith. God's Son did not merely witness to the Light; He **was** the Light. He did not merely put on a shell of divinity. He **was** the Divine. Let us remember, John did not write, "We have seen God's glory in Jesus..." He wrote "We have seen *His* glory..." (*1:14*) In other words, the glory in and of Jesus is *His* glory; perhaps another example why we need to carefully read every translation!

Moreover, John records startling statements Jesus said of Himself: (a) He could do anything God did (*5:19*), (b) He can give life, just as God (*5:21*), (c) that if you accept Him, you accept God (*14:23*; see also *Luke 10:16*), (d) that God and He are one (*10:30*), (e) that when you see Jesus, you see God (*14:9*), and that He is eternal. Remember what Jesus said once to a group of religious leaders? "Before Abraham was born, I am." (*Jn 8:58*) Put simply, for *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* Jesus is from Galilee. For *John*, Jesus is from heaven! The entire Gospel of John seeks to remind us of this.

Given all this, there are many things one could preach on in this story. For example: why did this miracle find itself at a wedding, and

what does that mean? Or why was Jesus the only person Mary told about the wine running out? She could have told the kitchen staff. That is probably what most people would have done. Did she not do this because she already knew Jesus had the power of miracles, for she had seen Him do some before? There is the argument that this is the first miracle Jesus did. Some call this the "argument from silence"; that just because no earlier miracles are recorded does not mean earlier miracles did not happen.

Or I could talk about the reality of this miracle. That it could not have been just a "sight of hand." After all, people were there who saw it. The pouring of the water into the tall vessels was done by servants who also saw the new wine where it should not have been evident. I could talk about how this miracle served to make visible Jesus' glory and God's action in the world. Fascinating stuff!

But I want to talk for a moment about something else—about how Jesus saw His life; how He understood Himself. Of course, I do not know for sure, obviously. But I may conjecture. We all have moments in life when we try to see our life. One of mine was my senior year in High School. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I had no insight into my life. I was not a math genius; nor a master linguist in Latin or Spanish; nor one to be admired for his science and chemistry talents. Nor was I the most popular kid getting straight A's in social studies. Another moment for me was my nine-month trek with a career consulting firm and specialist (who happened to be the wife of an Episcopalian priest). At that point in my "career" I had no inkling for my life. All I knew was that I was unsatisfied and unfulfilled with what I was then currently doing. AND... lest I forget, the disciples themselves also had such moments. For example, after the crucifixion they should have rested their faith on Jesus' words to them about His coming resurrection. Yet they could not. They wound up in a room, doors bolted, huddled and frightened... seeking any small portion of comfort from one another which was available. They could not see their life any more.

So, it is important for us to understand that our Lord, Himself, set the example by showing us He did see His life before Him; that He knew He was in human form for a specific purpose. God's purpose. The well-known biblical commentator William Barclay put it this way,

"[Jesus] saw His life not against the shifting background of [earthly] time, but against the steady background of eternity." (*William Barclay, "The Gospel of John" Vol. 1, p. 120.*)

Today's story of the miracle during the wedding at Cana clearly hints at this when Jesus says to His mother, "My hour has not yet come." He saw His life well enough to know there would be "the time" when He would show God's purpose. He showed His disciples... and has shown us...the need to "see our life" as God sees our life.

Maybe one reason 21st Century Christendom is slipping in too many places is lack of excitement! You have heard the saying, "The thrill of the chase!" Perhaps Christendom is missing "The thrill of the faith!"

How is your spiritual life? How is your search for your next step? How are you serving the Lord? How well are you caring for your neighbors? How can you better surrender your heart to God? **How do you see your life?**

The 19th Century German philosopher Fryderyk Nietzsche once wrote, "[Christians] must sing better songs [before] I learn belief in their Savior; His disciples must look like the saved!" (*From "Thus Spake Zarathustra," tr. A. Tille, p. 82*)

Do we "sing better songs"?

Do we "look like we have been saved"?

In the final analysis it is up to each of us. At Cana Jesus said His time had not yet come. It begs the question for you and me, "*Has our time come? Is it now?*"