

Jesus Our Bridegroom

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John, and we're looking at chapter 2, and we're reading from the beginning.

John chapter 2, from the beginning. We're reading verses 1 to 4. It says, You know, when we think back to the 1st of January this year, many of us thought that 2020 was going to be a good year. It was even preaching through a sermon series that was encouraging us to have a 2020 vision. But none of us saw what was going to happen in 2020.

Because at the beginning of 2020, well, we all thought it was going to be a good year, even a good decade. And like many people, we might have had plans for 2020.

Plans to go on holiday, plans to build a house, plans to visit friends, plans to celebrate milestone birthdays or milestone anniversaries. But you know, when COVID came and lockdown landed, it affected all of our plans.

[1 : 39] Even as a congregation and as a community, we had plans for invitation services and a holiday club and congregational outings. And we were just about to start a youth club in the community.

And yet in a moment, all our plans were stopped and they were shelved until further notice. But you know, out of all the plans that we had for 2020, it's engaged couples that I feel for the most.

Because for many engaged couples, 2020 was the year that they had saved the date where they were going to get married. But when COVID came and lockdown landed, all these plans that they had made, they were turned upside down.

Because churches were closed and hotels were closed and shops were closed and mass gatherings were not allowed. And even now, although lockdown restrictions have been lifted to an extent, weddings can only take place with 20 people.

And they all have to exercise social distancing. Which is a very difficult outcome for engaged couples. Because as you know, a wedding takes a lot of planning and you want to invite all your friends and family to come to the wedding.

[2 : 51] But you know, in order for the happy couple to have this perfect wedding, they have to plan almost every little detail. And that takes time. They have to choose their colours and buy their dresses and pick out the centrepieces and book a venue and book a church and book a minister and book a wedding car and book a photographer and book a videographer and then book a band.

And then you have to organise the menu and prepare the guest list and send out invitations and wait for the invitations to be returned and hope and pray that everything comes together on the wedding day.

But you know, when COVID came and lockdown landed, all these wedding plans for 2020 were turned upside down and everything, I assume, had to be rescheduled for 2021.

You know, it takes a lot of work to plan and prepare for a wedding. And in our culture, and well, in my experience, the bride is usually the wedding planner.

But you know, in the first century in Israel, you would have someone help you plan your wedding. You would have a master of the feast who would help the happy couple plan and prepare and even preside over the wedding party.

[4 : 05] And wedding plans and preparations, they weren't just for a big day. They were for a big week. Because in the first, in first century Israel, wedding celebrations, they lasted up to a week.

But you know, the wedding only lasted as long as the wine. Because as soon as the wine was out, the wedding was over. The wedding only lasted as long as the wine.

Because as soon as the wine was out, the wedding was over. And at this wedding in Cana, when the wine ran out, the wedding was ultimately over. But as we read, it was at this wedding in Cana that Jesus revealed his glory by turning water into wine. And I'd like us to think about what happened at the wedding at Cana. And I want us to think about it under three headings. Three simple headings. The wedding, the wine, and the welcome. The wedding, the wine, and the welcome. So first of all, the wedding. We'll look at verse one. We're told 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. You know, when we consider chapter one, we noted that John's gospel is all about making sure that we get the identity of Jesus right. Because if we get the identity of Jesus wrong, we'll misunderstand the gospel and we'll fail to see that Jesus is the only way of salvation. And one way in which John ensures that we get the identity of Jesus right was by drawing attention to seven signs and seven sayings of Jesus. Because John recorded seven signs which Jesus performed and seven sayings which Jesus pronounced. And John uses these seven signs and seven sayings throughout his gospel in order to reveal and represent the identity of Jesus as the eternal Son of God. And the first of these seven signs where Jesus reveals his glory and his identity, it was when Jesus turned water into wine at this wedding.

And it's by using this as the first miraculous sign of Jesus that John wants to reaffirm and reassert who Jesus is and why Jesus came. And you know, it's interesting that John would use this occasion, this invitation that Jesus received to a wedding. It's interesting that he would use this in order to reveal the identity of Jesus. Because we're told here that along with his mother Mary and his disciples, Jesus was invited to a wedding. But you know, for John it didn't matter who was invited to this wedding. What was important for John was that Jesus was invited and Jesus was there and Jesus was present at this marriage. And you know, this is something that the Reformed Book of Common Order highlights. That Jesus was present at the wedding at Cana in order to emphasize that the institution of marriage is honorable in the sight of God. The Reformed Book of Common Order, it's something that I often quote during a marriage service. And it says, it has this little spiel where it says that marriage is a holy estate which was instituted by God at creation. It was hallowed by our Lord's presence at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. And it's commended in Holy Scripture as honorable. Therefore it's not to be entered upon lightly or inadvisably, but thoughtfully, wisely, prayerfully, and in fear of Almighty God, with due consideration of the purpose for which it was ordained. And it says, marriage was ordained for the lifelong companionship, help, and comfort which husband and wife ought to have for one another.

[8 : 11] Marriage was ordained for the continuance of family life in which children who are the heritage of the Lord may be duly nurtured and trained up in godliness. Marriage was ordained for the stability and welfare of human society which can be strong and happy only when the marriage bond is held in honor. My friend, Jesus was present at the marriage in Cana in order to emphasize that marriage is honorable in the sight of God. But you know, thinking about Jesus being present at this marriage, you know, it made me question, is Jesus present in my marriage? Is Jesus present in my marriage?

And you know, for those who are married, it's a question we should all ask ourselves. Is Jesus present in my marriage? Is Jesus praised in my marriage? Is Jesus given a place of prominence in my marriage?

Does Jesus feature in the direction, decisions, and discussions of my marriage? You know, I'm sure that we've all seen the wall plaque, those old wall plaques which read, Christ is the head of the home, he's the unseen guest at every meal, and he's the silent listener to every conversation. And you know, I would often read it when entering one of the care homes in Stornoway, and it would convict and confront and even challenge me about my home, and my family, and my marriage, where I would always ask myself, is that true of me? Can I say that Christ is the head of my home?

And do I live as if he is the unseen guest at every family meal? And do I speak as if he is the silent listener to every conversation that takes place within the four walls of my house? And you know, these are challenging questions, but they're questions which we should ask ourselves. Is Jesus present in my marriage? Is Jesus present in my marriage? Because Jesus was clearly present at this marriage in Cana of Galilee, and his presence emphasized that marriage is honorable in the sight of God.

[10:31] But you know, more than that, Jesus's presence at this wedding, it emphasized that even though he was the sinless saviour and the son of God, you know, the fact that Jesus didn't isolate himself from a wedding party, I think it's worth noting. Because as you know, Jesus, he's our great example. Jesus lived the life we should have lived, and he died the death we deserve to die.

But more so, by his presence at this wedding, Jesus was teaching us something about the character, conduct, and conversation of a Christian. Because what we see here in the life of Jesus is that separation is not isolation, it's contact without contamination. And I'm sure I've said this to you before, separation is not isolation, it's contact without contamination. Jesus was the sinless saviour and the son of God. And yet his separation was not isolation, it was contact without contamination.

You know, as always, my good friend J.C. Ryle has something worth noting, because he says, he says, It's a real misfortune to Christianity, he says, when a Christian doesn't smile.

Therefore, says Ryle, let us take care that we always go to feasts in the spirit of our divine master, and that we never go where he would not have gone. Like him, let us endeavour to be always about our father's business. Like him, let us willingly promote joy and gladness. But let us strive that it may be sinless joy, if not joy in the Lord. Like him, he says, let us endeavour to bring salt, the salt of grace into every company, and to drop the word in season in every ear we address.

Much good may be done in society by giving a healthy tone to conversation. Let us never be ashamed to show our colours, and to make men see whose we are, and whom we serve. If Christ, he says, if Christ went to a marriage in Cana, there is something, surely something, that Christians can do on similar occasions. Let them only remember that if they go where their master went, they must go in their master's spirit. My friend, the life of Jesus, you know, it ought to teach us, it teaches us that the character, conduct, and conversation of a Christian is one where separation is not isolation, it's contact without contamination. But you know, as we said, a wedding only lasted as long as the wine, because as soon as the wine was out, the wedding was over. And with the wine finished at this wedding, this wedding was about to fall flat, until we see Jesus, he uses this wedding as the perfect opportunity to reveal his glory, and to reveal his identity by turning water into wine. And this is what I'd like us to think about, secondly, the wine. So firstly, the wedding, then the wine. The wine. We'll read at verse 3.

[14:04] 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.

As you can imagine, a wedding in first century Israel was a big occasion. It was the highlight in the year. It would have been the talk of the town. But what would have overtaken the wedding in Cana, being the talk of the town, was that before it even really got started, that the wine was out and the wedding was over, which would not only have brought great disappointment to the bride on her wedding day, but it would have also brought great embarrassment and shame to the bridegroom. Because the financial responsibility of organising and providing for this wedding, it all lay with the bridegroom. It would have shown that the bridegroom was irresponsible in the plans and preparations of the wedding. Actually, in fact, it would have called into question his ability to be a husband to his new wife. And so in order to protect this young couple from embarrassment, Mary, the mother of Jesus, she goes to Jesus and she says to Jesus that the wine is out and the wedding is almost over. But notice how Jesus responds. He says, woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. Now, when we hear Jesus speaking to his mother using the word woman, we immediately think that he's being harsh towards her, but he's not. Although it doesn't seem like a very endearing term to call your mother woman, and one that a son probably wouldn't use to address his much-loved mother. And yet Jesus called Mary woman in order to make her aware that this wedding in Cana was pointing to another wedding. Because, you know, my friend, as Jesus sat at the wedding in

Cana of Galilee, he was thinking about his wedding. He was thinking about being a bridegroom for his bride. And, you know, on a human level, we often do that, don't we? While we attend the wedding of a happy couple, we sometimes think about our own wedding. If you're single, maybe you think about what you hope your wedding day will be like, or what you would imagine your wedding day to be like. Or if you're already married, you might think back to your wedding day and what it was like. And in many ways, that's what Jesus is doing here. He was at this wedding in Cana, but he was thinking about his wedding. He was thinking about being a bridegroom for his bride. Because, you know, how often in the Gospels does Jesus refer to himself as the bridegroom?

Jesus said to his disciples, can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them. And then later in Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus spoke about his second coming, he told that well-known parable, the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom to come and take them to the marriage feast. And as we'll see even in a few weeks' time, God willing, in chapter 3, John the Baptist, he said about Jesus, he says, the one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. And so, my friend, as Jesus reveals his glory and his identity at the wedding at Cana, John the Evangelist, he's saying to us, Jesus is our bridegroom. [17:49] Jesus is our bridegroom. Jesus is the one of whom Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 25, where it says, on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And this saviour, Isaiah says, will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces and the reproach of his people he will take away from the earth, for the Lord has spoken. The Lord of hosts, he says, will plan, prepare and provide a marriage feast by defeating death and conquering the grave and bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel. And John is saying to us, John the gospel writer, he's saying to us, that's who Jesus is. Jesus is revealing his glory and his identity at the wedding in Cana because Jesus is our bridegroom.

Jesus is our bridegroom and as our bridegroom, the wonder of wonders is that he was thinking about his own wedding and how he was going to plan and prepare and provide a marriage feast for his bride.

My friend, Jesus was thinking about the cross. And you know, that comes across so clearly here in the way he responded to his mother Mary when he says, he says, woman. Because you know, the next time Jesus would address Mary in that way, he would be hanging upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sin. You go to John chapter 19 and we're told there that as we look upon the cross, Jesus speaks. And he speaks to his mother, Mary, and he says to her, woman, behold your son. Woman, behold your son. And you know, like every other sinner, Mary had to come to Jesus as the Christ. Like every other sinner, Mary had to behold Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But you know, as Jesus sat at this wedding in Cana of Galilee, he was not only thinking about how he would plan and prepare and provide the wedding for his bride. He was also thinking about how he would plan, prepare and provide the wine for his bride. He was thinking about his own wedding day. And Jesus, you know, he knew from the experience of this couple in Cana that if he doesn't provide the wine, there will be no wedding. If he doesn't provide the wine, there will be no wedding. That's why Jesus said to Mary, woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. My hour has not yet come. And of course, the hour which Jesus was referring to was the hour of his death. The hour where he would be poured out unto death. But you know, as you read through John's gospel, this hour is always getting closer and closer. In fact, the first 11 chapters of John's gospel, Jesus repeatedly says, my hour has not yet come. My hour has not yet come.

[21:22] My hour has not yet come. But then you reach chapter 12 and there's this turning point where Jesus says, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And Jesus says, now is my soul troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But he says, for this cause I came unto this hour. Jesus knew that his hour had come. And he prays to the Father in John 17, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. My friend, the hour which Jesus was referring to at this wedding in Cana was the hour of his death. The hour when he, as the Lamb of God, would give his life as a sacrifice for sin. For your sin. For my sin. That he would stand condemned in our place. And the glory of the gospel is that through the cross, Jesus, our bridegroom, he planned and he prepared and he provided the wedding and he provided the wine. And it will be at the marriage feast, at the marriage supper of the

Lamb, that this marriage will be consummated in all its glory. And you know, that's the picture which is used throughout the Bible. That's the picture of what marriage is. It's a foreshadowing of the marriage supper of the Lamb. It's always to describe and to portray and to present to us Jesus' love for lost sinners like you and me. My friend, Jesus is revealed to us and he's identified as our bridegroom because he is the one who has planned and prepared and provided the wedding and the wine through the blood of his cross. It's all through the blood of his cross. And the wonder of wonders is that the Christian, someone who commits their life to Jesus Christ, someone who calls out to Jesus for salvation, someone who acknowledges their sin and that Jesus is their saviour, a

Christian is known as the bride of Jesus.

Where Christ loves her and gave himself for her. And you know, my friend, that's what the Lord's Supper is all about, isn't it?

The Lord's Supper is not only an act of commemoration, where we eat bread and we drink wine to remember the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus.

No, the Lord's Supper, it's not only an act of commemoration, it's an act of anticipation. It's an act of anticipation where we long for and we look forward to the marriage feast.

[24 : 18] We look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Because it's there, as we're told in the book of Revelation, it's there that a great multitude, which no man can number, will be gathered there from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

And we will stand before the throne of God and before the Lamb and we will all sing together.

Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb that sits upon the throne.

And the great multitude in heaven, they will all be clothed in white robes. And they will have washed their robes and made them white. And what? The blood of the Lamb. And they will worship God there day and night singing.

Hallelujah. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

You know, my friend, Jesus is our bridegroom. And he has planned, prepared and provided the wine and the wedding. So that you will be welcome at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[25 : 28] But the question I have to ask you this morning is, when the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and when time will be no more and the morning breaks eternal bright and fair, when the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore, and the roll is called up yonder, my friend, will you be there?

Will you be there? Will you be at the marriage supper of the Lamb? Because Jesus, our bridegroom, he has planned, prepared and provided the wine and the wedding for that great marriage supper.

Jesus has done it all for you. So will you be there? Will you be there on the last day? It's a wonder that we find this here, that Jesus, he attended the wedding in Cana in order to reveal and identify himself as our bridegroom.

A bridegroom who would plan and prepare and provide the wedding and the wine so that you could receive the welcome to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And this is what I want us to see lastly and briefly. The welcome. The wedding, the wine and the welcome. The welcome. Look at verse 5.

[26 : 55] We're told, Jesus' mother said 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 to the brim. 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. You know, as we read, turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana was the first miraculous sign of Jesus through which he reveals his identity as the bridegroom, our bridegroom, who would plan and prepare and provide the wedding and the wine all so that we would receive the welcome to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[28 : 14] But what's fascinating about this miraculous sign is that Jesus not only revealed the preeminence of his present provision, he also revealed the poverty of a past provision.

Jesus not only revealed the preeminence of his present provision, he also revealed the poverty of a past provision. Because we're told that Jesus said to the servants at the wedding to fill six old stone jars.

There were six old stone jars which were used for ceremonial cleansing and they were used to fill with water. And as we read, in each of these old ceremonial jars, they held 20 to 30 gallons of water, which means that Jesus asked the servants to fill these six old ceremonial jars containing nearly 150 gallons of water.

And 150 gallons of water is the amount of water that you would use to fill your bathtub five times. It's a lot of water, which will become a lot of wine.

But Jesus specifically asked for these old ceremonial jars to be filled because Jesus was revealing that something new has come.

[29 : 32] Jesus was revealing that there's a new provision for cleansing. There's a new provision to be right with God. There's a new provision to experience the blessing of God.

There's a new provision to have fellowship with God. Because Jesus is saying, the old order of cleansing, the old order of ceremonial washing, the old order that belongs to these old ceremonial jars, they've been done away with.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. And this is what the master of the feast affirmed to be true. When he took the new wine, when it was drawn out of these old stone jars, the master of the feast said to the bridegroom, everyone serves the good wine first and then the poor wine.

But you have kept the good wine until now. You have kept the good wine until now. And you know, my friend, what John, the gospel writer, what John is saying to us this morning, he's saying, Jesus is the good wine.

Jesus is the new wine. Jesus is the abundant provision of salvation. Jesus is our bridegroom. And as our bridegroom, says John, he has planned and prepared and provided the wedding and the wine all so that you will receive the welcome to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

[31 : 09] My friend, Jesus is the good wine. Jesus is the new wine because it's through his blood that we are able to experience cleansing, washing, renewing.

It's through his blood that we're able to experience forgiveness and peace with God. My friend, Jesus is the new wine. He is our bridegroom.

And he has planned and prepared and provided the wedding and the wine so that you will receive the welcome to the marriage supper, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And you know, Jesus assures you of that welcome this morning because he says to you in the gospel, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And this morning, my friend, you are invited. You have been issued your wedding invitation.

[32 : 11] You have been issued that invitation. You're invited to come. You're welcome to come. You're encouraged to come because Jesus, our bridegroom, he has planned and prepared and provided a great feast.

And he is saying to you this morning, come. Come, everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters. Ye come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

My friend, Jesus, our bridegroom, is inviting you this morning to his wedding. And he's saying to you, come. Just come.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Now, let us pray. O Heavenly Father, we give thanks to thee for the glory of the gospel where Jesus reveals himself to us and how he has revealed himself to us this morning as our bridegroom, that the church is the bride, that she has been redeemed not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ. We thank thee, O Lord, that Jesus is our bridegroom who has planned and prepared and even provided through his own cross. He has provided the wedding and the wine and he gives to us this morning that glorious welcome where we are invited to come, to come and to taste and see that he is good, to trust in him and be blessed.

[33 : 53] And Lord, we pray that no one hearing this invitation will put it off, that no one will ignore the call to come, but that we will all come and know that we have been invited freely, we have been invited lovingly, we have been invited personally.

O Lord, that we would come to this Jesus and experience that cleansing, that forgiveness, that renewing that can only come through Jesus Christ.

Bless us then, we pray, go before us, do us good for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing the words of Psalm 45.

Psalm 45, we're singing from the Scottish Psalter and we're singing the second version of the psalm and we're singing from the beginning. Psalm 45, it's a wedding song.

It's the song of a bride and her bridegroom and in the opening, first half of Psalm 45, it's the bride that is speaking she is describing her bridegroom and then in the second half of Psalm 45, it's the

bridegroom who is describing the bride.

[35 : 08] It's a beautiful song. Psalm 45 is a wedding song and we're singing from the beginning. My heart indicting is good matter in a song. I speak the things that I have made which to the king belong.

My tongue shall be as quick his honour to indict as is the pen of any scribe that useth fast to write. Thou art fairest of all men, grace in thy lips doth flow and therefore blessings evermore on thee doth God bestow.

And we'll sing on through Psalm 45 to God's praise. due to Heil■■■■ hold my heart in its name in his name good matter in the song I speak the things that I have made, which should the King belong.

The fittest, all, for men, is in thy lips the flow, and therefore blessings evermore on me doth God bestow.

Thy sword girded on thy thigh, Thy blood that are crossed, O my, a bear in death, O majesty, and in thy doly bride.

[37 : 43] For me, my truth and pride.

Thy cross was free in state, and thy bride shall teach to me things terrible and grave.

Thy shafts shall pierce their hearts, Thy foes are to the King, whereby in tith subjection the people thou shalt bring.

convey. The earth has threatened you from ourieli-s with ogni Accordingly or the Particularly of Beatle in The Father, talking a new pill sosj, fraple cease and ■fö as ee, means the kingdom has to be buriedbroise him saw that everything we truthfully was destroyed, according to the■■■, a Must■■i, for life, the power in fame, things over the world, have grandchildren, yea let your Lori come through the