

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor Rolly Estabillo
8 March 2015
Key Verse: John 2:1-11

“When Jesus Changes Your Sorrow into Joy”

We’re beginning a new series today. We’re going to look at a few of the several miracles that Jesus performed while he was on earth. A few famous ones. To be sure, there are a lot of them. There are 38 of them all in all recorded in the four gospels. And that includes the greatest miracle he ever performed which is his own resurrection. But you know what; the number could be a lot greater than this because as John says in the closing verse of his gospel, *"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."* (John 21:25 NIV)

What is a miracle? The Merriam-Webster dictionary says that a miracle is “an unusual or wonderful event that is believed to be caused by the power of God”. I think the key words there are “unusual” and “power of God”. So, I would say that anything that causes you to step back and watch in amazement or wonder how such a thing could ever happen is a miracle. It can be as huge as the parting of the Red Sea or as tiny as a bottled water suddenly appearing when you needed it the most.

In 2013, 7 out of 10 in America believe in miracles according to a survey. That’s 70% and kind of acceptable. But when you consider that three years prior to this, in 2010, 8 out of 10 people living in America believe in miracles you would get alarmed by the decline. And when you realize that in 2008, 9 out 10 believe in miracles, you’ll notice a real downward trend. So many people don’t believe in

miracles anymore. I don't know what the reason is but surely this is a sign that the world is getting more and more irreligious. A non-belief in miracles would indicate a non-belief in God.

And we know that this has been the agenda of the secular world. They don't believe in Jesus and in the God of the Bible and so they undermine all the miracles mentioned in the Bible. The movie "Exodus: Gods and Kings", for example, tried to explain away the plagues that God brought on Egypt by implying they were caused by natural forces. Or some go to the extreme by saying that miracles in the Bible were caused by extra-terrestrials. Like a guy named Erich Von Daniken who postulated in his book published in 1968 that when Jesus fed the five thousand, while he was praying and people's eyes were closed, flying saucers sent down hundreds of bags of Panera bread to the ground. Ridiculous, isn't it?

Do you believe in miracles? Do you believe that they still happen today? Do you believe that Jesus performed miracles in the past and can still perform miracles today? The Bible says he did and he can still do because he is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Amen?

Let me begin this series by telling you a story about two religious guys.

A Rabbi and a Priest get into a car accident and it's a bad one. Both cars are totally demolished, but, amazingly, neither of the clerics is hurt. After they crawl out of their cars, the rabbi sees the priest's collar and says, "So you're a priest. I'm a rabbi. Just look at our cars. There's nothing left, but we are unhurt. This must be a sign from God. God must have meant that we should meet and be friends and live together in peace the rest of our days." The Priest replies, "I agree with you completely. This must be a sign from God." The Rabbi continues, "And look at this. Here's another miracle. My car is completely demolished but this bottle of Morgen David wine didn't break. Surely God wants us to drink this wine and celebrate our good fortune." Then he hands the bottle to the priest. The priest

agrees, takes a few big swigs, and hands the bottle back to the rabbi. The rabbi refuses, and says, "No, thank you." The Priest asks, "Aren't you having any?" The Rabbi replies, "No...I think I'll wait for the police."

Well, it would truly be a miracle if the police came and found out the priest was not drunk and saw the bottle contained water and not wine.

Today, we're going to look at the very first miracle that Jesus performed according to the Bible, the miracle of Jesus changing water into wine. Please get your Bibles, smart phones, tablets and please open with me to John 2:1-11. Please follow along as I read these verses.

There are times when life drains us to the point that we are running on...empty. And sadly when we do we let life rob us of our joy. What happens when you run out of joy? As you know, life just is not quite as good when you run out of joy. Instead of joy, you have sorrow. A sense of despair. And distress. And like you don't want to face life anymore. Maybe you are here today, and you have lost some of your joy. It doesn't show on your face, you're walking around with that sweet smile of yours but inside there's a volcano that's ready to explode. Something is troubling you something is bothering you. You have a worry that's affecting you so much. You are running on empty. You have lost your joy!

John tells us how Jesus restored joy to those who attended a marriage celebration in Cana of Galilee. He can do the same for you today. He can do a miracle in your life.

How can Jesus restore your joy? Let me share with you three things to recognize so that joy can come back to your life.

I. Jesus cares about our everyday needs.

In the story we read, Jesus and his five disciples were invited to this wedding in Cana, a small village in Galilee. (Show map) Mary was there, too, apparently in a separate party and that's why some scholars believe that the bridal family may have been relatives of Jesus. In any case, after Jesus and his disciples arrive at the wedding, Jesus' mother approached him and said, "They have no more wine." To us today, we would say, no big deal. There's still soda.

It is important to understand though that wine oftentimes in Jewish literature is a symbol of joy. To run out of wine was to run out of joy which is a very serious thing to happen in a Jewish wedding feast. Now, you think it is expensive today to have a wedding and it is. Back then a Jewish wedding feast lasted for a full week. They would begin with a parade, and the father of the bride would bring his daughter to the groom's house. The whole town would join in on this parade. It was a huge celebration for the family. When they arrived at the groom's home, the marriage ceremony would take place at the front door.

Then, the feast began which lasted for seven days. All this is paid for by the groom's family. There was no honeymoon until the end of the celebration. They had an open house for a week, lots of food and wine, a week-long celebration. The groom's parents were responsible to make sure there was enough wine to last for the whole celebration. But for some unknown reason, they ran out.

We do not think of this as too big a deal, but in that day, it could ruin a family's reputation forever. Well, it was a disaster. It is like McDonald's running out of hamburgers, it is like Giant running out of food. It just does not happen.

"They have no more wine." Mary said to Jesus. Miracles happen when we understand that Jesus cares about our everyday needs. Jesus' mother knows that he cares about people. He cares about all our needs, not just our spiritual needs. He cares about people being unnecessarily embarrassed. He cares about people enjoying themselves. Jesus is the kind of guy you want at your party. He knows

how to have a good time. In fact, in the New Testament, we often see him at parties to which he has been invited, and he is always the life of the party. He enjoyed himself so much that his detractors called him a “glutton and drunkard” (Matthew 11:19).

No one ever accused Jesus of promoting a dour, rigid, emotion-stifling religion — just the opposite. Wherever Jesus went there was life and joy. He said in John 15:11 that one of his goals in life is to give us complete joy.

Let me assure you that Jesus cares about your every need. If it is important to you, it is important to Jesus. If you have lost your sense of joy, if you have a problem that seems too big, a yoke that is too heavy, he cares. He says in Matthew 11:28, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

If you need a miracle in your life, if you want Jesus to change your sorrow into joy, you must also recognize that

2. Jesus transforms our everyday experiences.

Jesus did not come to give us information; he came to give us transformation. He changes things. He has a way of taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary. He did not come to bring new ideas; he came to make new people. The water did not just appear to be wine; it was transformed into wine — the best of wine at that. Some people have trouble believing this kind of miracle, but it is only because they do not understand the kind of God we have.

There’s a book called “Tortured for Christ” written by a Romanian minister, Richard Wurmbrand, who was arrested and tortured by Russian communist soldiers when Romania was still under Russian rule. One time, he says in his book, he was brought to the room of the officer in charge of the prison. This officer

tried to brainwash him telling him that the miracles of Jesus were not true and that Jesus resorted only to deception and trickery. To prove his point, he took a glass and filled it with water. And then, he produced a tiny paper bag, like those little sugar containers you find in Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts, tore it, and poured it on the water. It was a reddish powder which looked like a chemical compound or something. He mixed it and said,

“See, Mr. Wurmbrand, there’s nothing miraculous in what Jesus did. It was just pure trickery.” Wurmbrand then replied, “Sir, would you care to drink that wine of yours and tell me how it tastes.” The officer, of course, couldn’t do that because he knew it would taste awful unlike the sweet taste of wine that Jesus had produced from ordinary water. The master of the banquet, in fact, said to Jesus upon tasting the water that he turned into wine that it was choice wine, the best he ever tasted.

Actually, turning water into wine is something that God does every day. God changes water into wine. It happens in the vineyard. The rain falls on the ground, and as the vine draws the water up to the branches, it is transformed into the juice of the grape. When that juice goes through the natural process of fermentation it will become some of the finest wine you have tasted.

You see, our God is in the transformation business. The world wants us to get a new hairdo or a new wardrobe. Society wants us to get a better job or learn a new skill. People want to lose weight or get a face lift. But Jesus does not want to change your looks, he wants to change your heart. He doesn’t want to give you a new suit; he wants to make you a new person. He does not want to rearrange you; he wants to transform you. You want to look better on the outside, and he wants to make you new on the inside. And when that transformation takes place, it will show on the outside. When Jesus changed the water into wine, he did not just change the color and fool the people’s taste buds — he actually changed the water

into wine. When the water was turned to wine, the sorrow and shame of the bridal family was turned to joy. The mood of the party was transformed. And Jesus' disciples were transformed. The Bible says that "*...he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*"(v. 11)

Here is what Jesus really came to do. He came to transform people. Jewish custom was focused on the importance of being ceremonially clean.

The water jars were mostly empty because each guest had been given water to wash their feet and hands as they arrived, but this was not so much for cleanliness as it was for ritual purity. The jars of water were there in order to fulfill the Old Testament requirements for ceremonial washing. In John's way of mixing events with metaphor, the jars represented the Old Testament law and its inability to make a person truly clean. When Jesus came into contact with these jars used in ritual cleansing, he transformed their contents. He filled the jars with his new wine. The deadness of the Old Testament law was made alive with the wine of the new covenant that Jesus came to bring. Wine is the symbol of God's grace that comes into our lives undeserved, and transforms us from the inside out. Jesus says, "*I am making everything new!*" (Revelation 21:5). The old system of having to live up to an impossible legal code has been replaced by the wine of God's grace which washes our sins away. We are cleansed on the inside. This is not just symbol; it is substance. Our sins are not just taken away, we have a changed heart that desires to love God and live for him. He places within us this holy desire.

There is no limit to his grace. What Jesus gives is never just enough, it is always more than enough, with plenty left over. He did not give just enough trees; he gave more than enough. He did not create just enough mountains; he created more than enough. He did not give just enough ocean; he gave more than enough. He did not give just enough life and joy; he gave more than enough. Remember

when he fed the five thousand, there were 12 baskets full of broken pieces that were left over. Jesus gives more than you can expect.

If you are feeling sorrowful and you want that joy to come back, remember that Jesus is in the transformation business. You just wait because he can give you more than you're asking for. All he wants you to do is to wait.

Which leads us to the third thing to recognize so that your sorrow can turn to joy.

3. Jesus wants you to wait for a miracle.

In our story, the mother of Jesus implicitly asks him to do a miracle. Notice she didn't directly ask Jesus to do something. She just said, "There's no more wine." And Jesus knew what she meant. It's like my wife who would tell me, "There's no more milk." And I knew what she meant but I would reply like Jesus, "Woman, my hour has not yet come." Just kidding. If I replied like that, I'll find my hour has come. So, I better hurry off to the store.

Now, Jesus tells her also implicitly that she needs to wait, "Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come." This statement is not as harsh as it sounds. Jesus does not call her "mom" as we might today, but calls her "woman", which actually is a term of great respect similar to "lady".

Now, this was just at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and somehow it seems he didn't want to expose himself yet. But as we see, Jesus could not ignore his mother's plea because he could not ignore those who were in need. This is an opportunity to turn people's sorrow into joy. They had to wait a little time though because he instructed the servants to fill the six stone jars with water, each jar containing 30 gallons of water. (show picture of jar) Six of those jars were filled to the brim, 180 gallons of water altogether. That took time. I don't know how many

servants were there but, you know, they have to fetch the water from the well which should be quite a distance from the house, then it meant also bringing up and down the pail in the well. That took time. Jesus could have made those jars filled with wine instantly. He didn't. He chose to let them wait. I'm sure they were all anxious. Mary was anxious. The disciples were anxious. The servants were anxious. The guests and the bridal family were waiting outside anxiously. If you were one of the disciples, would you even be able to guess what Jesus was going to do? What's all this water for? Is he expecting some more guests? But we don't have wine anymore. Remember, he hasn't performed yet a miracle at this point. Mary had an inkling but I don't think she knew exactly what Jesus was up to. She just knew that Jesus could do something.

And that's the key – trusting that Jesus can do something. Although Mary and the disciples did not understand what Jesus was going to do, they trusted him to do right. You may be in a situation you cannot understand but you must continue to trust that Jesus will work in the best way because he has your best interests at heart. He cares for you.

It may seem that you've been waiting so long. Don't despair. Just continue to hang on because he hasn't forgotten you. As Jesus says in Matthew 6:25-32, please listen to this carefully,

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his

splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

In October of last year, we had a guest from Canada. Her name is Babes and she is the sister-in-law of Tita Cindy. She came to visit us with her husband, XXX, Tita Cindy's brother when Mommy Sandy was still here. At the time, she looked so thin and frail. She also looked sad.

She had a hat on and I wondered when I looked at her what the problem was. She had cancer it turned out. (show pictures of Babe before Christmas picture) She was, in fact, undergoing chemotherapy. Many of you remember her and some of you came to join me and her family in one of the rooms at Lynbrook Elementary School to pray for her. We did pray for her for a long time. Then, we also fasted for her. She was in sorrow. Her family was in sorrow. They were in distress because they felt it was a losing battle. She had stage X cancer. But they also believed that God can do the impossible. Months passed and then last January we heard the news. Tita Cindy, in one of our home group meetings, showed us the latest picture of Babes. (show Christmas picture of Babe) And then a few more pictures. And two weeks ago, we also watched a video of Babes and her husband getting married again to renew their vows. And what we saw was a total transformation. The picture of someone who was once sorrowful but now is so joyful.

Folks, you too can experience the life-changing power of Jesus. All you need to do is to recognize that Jesus cares about your everyday needs, that he is in the transforming business, and that he wants you to wait for a miracle. Just follow the instructions of Jesus' mother when she says, "Do whatever he tells you." If you

do, something wonderful is about to happen — a miracle. Then, your sorrow will change into joy!