

THE MASTER AT A MARRIAGE

John 2:1-11

The "third day" may be reckoned from the departure of Christ from that part of the Jordan district where the calling of the five disciples had taken place, as detailed in the preceding chapter. This would give one clear day between the leaving of Jordan by the Lord and His five disciples, John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, and their arrival at Cana of Galilee. Nathaniel was a native of this village, which was about five miles from Nazareth, on the road to Tiberias. It is quite probable that our Lord and the other disciples accompanied Nathaniel to his home there.

Upon reaching their destination, they found that a wedding feast had been in progress for some time before they appeared on the scene. In those days it was not uncommon for such festivities to last for an entire week. The marriage ceremonies were conducted with considerable pomp, and much feasting and rejoicing were connected with them. A marriage feast afforded a time and place for gladness, for among the Jews such occasions were kept with peculiar rejoicings.

It is possible, and even probable, that one or the other of the parties to be married was related to Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. She was present for the delightful occasion. Had she not been a relative or close friend, it is doubtful if Mary would have taken such a personal interest or so prominent part in the proceedings. As to the name of either the groom or the bride we are without information.

People are frequently known by the companions of their mirthful hours. The guests whom they invite often reveal the character of those doing the inviting. Christ was invited to this wedding because this couple felt that they could not be happy without Him. With gladness He accepted their invitation.

Through the centuries Christ has accepted the invitations that were extended to Him and was present. Not only did they want and invite Christ, but they invited His disciples also. This is a splendid illustration of the fact that if you love the Lord you will love His followers also. Along with His mother and His disciples, Christ took His place at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, thereby making the occasion happy and complete. He thus recognized the social order, gave the benediction of His presence to the marriage tie, and put honor upon marriage.

It is always a good thing when Christ is a guest at a wedding. At this wedding the joy was increased by His presence. Christ is never a joy-killer, but a joy-bringer. Where He is there is joy. Dr. Dinsdale Young wisely said, "If you enter on the married state, be sure you call Jesus and His disciples to your marriage. A marriage without Jesus has an unprosperous outlook." A Christless wedding is a failure from the start. People who get married without the Master are asking for trouble. Christ is the best guest at any wedding. His presence will secure real good and ward off every ill. Christ will be in attendance if

He is invited. He always delights to be with His people and to bless them. He has never been known to decline a sincere invitation, regardless of how poor or despised the groom or the bride happened to be. Wedding festivities should always be so arranged as to secure His presence and approbation.

Too often the pleasures of life are bereft of their true value and lasting satisfaction because Christ is not invited to share them. When He is present to share in the joyful occasions of life, nothing will mar the real happiness of the participants. There are other festive occasions beside that of marriage, therefore, let us invite Christ to all of them. Why? Because the occasion will be so much more enjoyable with Him than without Him. I say this with the full knowledge that this idea is not popular. Many think it best when Christ is left out, but they are sadly mistaken. He never kills fun, unless it is the kind that should be killed. Call Christ in not only on life's outstanding days, but on every day.

When a wedding took place in an oriental home, regardless of how humble it happened to be, the members of the household found ways and means of having the choicest wine. Let it be said here that in those days much of the wine was not intoxicating. It was served there just as coffee and tea are served here. Either from the poverty of the family, or because more guests than had been anticipated had arrived, or from some other reason too unimportant to be specified, enough wine had not been provided for the occasion, and the exposure of that fact would have been a terrible embarrassment to all concerned. When Mary's sharp eyes of love detected that there was something amiss, she promptly turned to her Son and said, "They do not have any wine."

Mary's words were certainly meant as an appeal to Him for help in the time of difficulty. Knowing something of the power which He possessed, she fully expected Him to exercise it on this particular occasion by providing a new supply of wine. Her statement, "They do not have any wine," seems to suggest, "You can adjust that, and I am sure you will do so."

Turning to His mother, Christ said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Since His life was regulated by the will of God, He refused to grant her request. His firm but respectful reply indicated that He merely intended to check Mary's eager anxiety. Let us not fall into the common error of supposing that there was any lack of respect for His mother on the part of Christ. It was not that the Saviour resented Mary's soliciting His aid, but it was a plain intimation that she must allow Him to act in His own way. He simply sought to remind her that His orders were to come from His heavenly Father rather than from His earthly mother. He thus made it clear that His season of subjection to Mary and Joseph was over, His public ministry had begun, and she must not attempt to dictate to Him.

Christ worked by God's clock; consequently, He never did anything before the appointed time. He was about to perform His first recorded miracle, but He wanted His mother and the rest to know that He would not use His miraculous powers merely for their advantage, but would gladly do so for the glory of God.

Instead of taking offense at His reply, Mary meekly accepted the Lord's rebuke, recognized His right to act as He pleased, submitted to His will, left the matter entirely in His hands, and manifested her implicit faith in Him by turning to the servants and saying, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." In other words, "Do it, even if you do not see and understand the reason for doing so." There is a very important and woefully neglected lesson here for each of us. Christ is entitled to absolute obedience from all of us. And yet, we are so prone to try to tell Him what to do! Our plain duty is to commit our way unto the Lord and then let Him supply our needs in His own good time and manner.

Human exigencies give room for the display of divine energies. Our supplies sometimes run short, in order that we may realize that our temporal blessings come from a divine hand. Need often links man to God, and supply links God to man. When Christ is near, need is simply the forerunner of gladness. The verge of want is often where and when the choicest flowers of blessing grow. No real need can distress us long in Christ's presence. No difficulties can ever baffle Him. His resources are inexhaustible. His presence guarantees all necessary good.

Note that Mary advised the servants to obey Christ literally and completely. This obedience must be personal in nature always, and never by proxy. Whether anybody else obeys Him or not, you and I must. We must ever be ready to carry out His orders. It is the highest wisdom to yield an unhesitating and unconditional obedience to Christ. Such obedience will be for our best interest, abiding happiness and eternal peace. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Don't talk about it, or argue about it, or speculate on the results. Whatever Christ commands, do it without hesitation or reservation. There can be no justifiable excuse for failure to do what He commands.

Respond to His love in the only way that love so amazing and so divine demands. Commit yourself utterly and unreservedly to Him. Put your life at His disposal. Wonder of wonders, Christ can make use of you and me. It is through us that He is seeking to work out His glorious purposes for the world. Our unconditional obedience to Him will be rewarded greatly.

Christ always looks to men and women to co-operate with Him in doing the things that need to be done. On the occasion of the wedding feast, when the supply of wine was exhausted, Christ commanded the servants to fill the large stone waterpots with water. In obedience to Him "they filled them up to the brim" with water. By His miraculous power, Christ changed the water into wine. Then He told the servants to draw out the wine from the containers and take it to the chairman of the festival. The master of ceremonies was so astonished by the delightful flavor of the wine that he charged the servants with keeping the best until the last, which was the reverse of the ordinary procedure. This is an illustration of what our Lord does often - He gives His people the best last. Whereas the sinner gets the best at the beginning and afterwards that which is worse, for the Christian the best is yet to be. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

If Christ says to you, "Fill the waterpots with water," fill them "up to the brim." Never cut down His commandments, but carry them out to the fullest extent. When you are commanded to believe on Him, believe on Him "up to the brim." When you are told to love Him, love Him "up to the brim." When you are commanded to serve Him, serve Him "up to the brim." If you will surrender your all to Him, He will fill you "up to the brim," and your cup of joy will overflow. How much more Christ could do with us and through us if our hearts were filled "up to the brim" in complete surrender, devoted love, sacrificial service and unfailing enthusiasm!

To those of you who are without eternal life, there are three things that Christ would have you do: realize your lost condition, repent of your sins, and receive Him by faith as your personal Saviour.

Robert Coyle, a member of the Air Force, was shot down in enemy territory, and for twenty-seven hours he dragged his body over rough ground trying to get back to his own lines. Finally, he was seen by some flyers and was rescued. He was brought to a field hospital. He made no request for a doctor, but began asking at once for a chaplain. Some months before the chaplain had tried to lead him to Christ, but could not. The boy was engrossed in the world and cared nothing for his salvation. The chaplain came to his side. Both of them were conscious that the time was short. The soldier begged the chaplain to explain to him the way of salvation. As carefully and simply as he could, the chaplain showed him the way through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and Christ as our substitute for sins. The boy listened carefully.

After a while he said, "I crawled twenty-seven hours to get back here so you could tell me how to be saved." He accepted Christ and peace came into his heart.

Finally, he said to the chaplain, "I want you to sing one of the songs mother used to sing out of the hymn book before time for church on Sunday morning." He mentioned the name of the song, and the chaplain ran back to his own hut to get a book with that song in it. He was back in a few moments and began singing to the boy. As he started, the soldier said, "Yes, that's the one," and the chaplain, excusing the roughness of his voice sang,

"Come ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and power.
He is able, He is able:
He is willing: doubt no more.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him:
This He gives you,--This He gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's glimmering beam.

"Saints and angels join in concert,
Sing the praises of the Lamb,
While the blissful seats of Heaven,
Sweetly echo with His name.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Sinners here may do the same."

The chaplain thought for a moment that the boy had passed away. Everything was quiet. Then he saw the boy's lips move, and coming closer he heard him say, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Sinners here may do the same!"

Repent of your sins and believe on this loving Saviour now. Then, come and confess Him as we sing.