

"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. 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.' His 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 twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up 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."

Dear friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed;

Timing is everything. It doesn't take long for aspiring comics to realize that the timing in a joke or story can be the difference between success and failure, between laughter and silence. The timing of the pauses, the timing of the punch line can all make a difference. A pastry chef will tell you that a pie crust that isn't cooked just enough will be soggy, while one that is cooked too long will be dry. A flaky, crispy crust comes when the timing is just right. Think of all the disappointed engineers at Blackberry, who came out with new models, only to find that the time had come for the iPhone to make its mark. No matter how good the product may be, it will not succeed if the timing isn't right.

Timing is everything. Every time NASA launches a space craft, the timing of everything is critical. The time of lift-off has to be calculated, as does the re-entry, based on what is called the window of opportunity. In that window, the conditions are just right for orbit, for landing or whatever. Even a few seconds of delay can be disastrous, and make the difference between life and death.

In many ways, Jesus teaches us that same lesson in our text today. As He prepares to perform His first miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana, He teaches us that timing is everything, that God has planned windows of opportunity in which He works His great and eternal purposes. When Mary shares with Him the concern that they have run out of wine at the wedding, Jesus tells her that His time had not yet come. But when the time is right, He acts in a wonderful way to help and bring blessing, even in something as simple as this wedding feast.

The same Lord who changed water into wine when the time was right also knows when the time is right to act in our lives. In His time, and in accordance with His all perfect will, we can be sure that He will work wonderful miracles in our lives, using His almighty power to bring us the blessings we need at just the right time.

The changing of water into wine at the wedding of Cana is one of the best known miracles of Jesus and it is filled with some wonderful lessons for us. The account itself is simple: Jesus and His disciples are invited to a wedding. It would seem that this was a rather large wedding, and that Mary and Jesus were either relatives or very close friends of the family. But something unthinkable happened at the wedding: the wine ran out, keeping the family from being gracious hosts. We may think of this as a relatively minor problem, but it was more than that to the people of that day and age. Mary takes it upon herself to provide some help to the family. She has not forgotten the prophecies concerning her Son. She believed that he would be able to help. And so she goes to him with a simple statement of fact: *"They have no wine."* She turned to Jesus for practical help. We can learn from her prayer, too, that all we need to do is to make our needs known to God and to leave everything else in His gracious hands.

We may expect that Jesus, as a good, obedient son, would respond immediately. After all, his mother has asked for his help. But there is to be a greater purpose in this event, and so Jesus tells her: *"My hour has not yet come."* When the time is right, He will act, but that time has not yet come. Mary accepted this. She seemed to know that His answer was not a refusal to help. Why else would she go to the servants and say to them: *"Do whatever he tells you"*? She trusted that He would do what was necessary when the time was right.

Now we see Jesus responding to this need. Again, it might seem that the lack of wine at a wedding would be too trivial a concern for God, but Jesus does respond—and in a most marvellous way. Six water jars, each holding from 20-30 gallons are filled with water. Jesus asks the servants to fill them and then says, ***“Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.”*** When the servants take the water to the caterer, he tastes it and it has become wine—and not just any wine; rather, it is the best of wines! When the time was right, Jesus does respond to Mary's request, and He gives abundantly and richly in answer to the need. In performing this miracle in His time another wonderful result comes out, for we are told: ***“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”***

Oh, Lord, grant us to be as faithful as Mary, trusting you to work Your great miracles in our lives when the time is right! In our sermon hymn we were reminded of the words that the Spirit inspired Solomon to write in the book of Ecclesiastes: ***“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”*** (Ecclesiastes 3:1, ESV) He concludes with this wonderful assurance: ***“He has made everything beautiful in its time.”*** (Ecclesiastes 3:11, ESV) Yet we struggle to wait for God's timing to be right.

In many ways, we are people who are obsessed with time. Go into any office supply store, and there are literally hundreds of different time management aids, from date books to electronic calendars. Today's smart phones all have some sort of time management tool, and there are a host of software options available. Companies offer seminars on time-management and planning; even our watches have multiple alarm settings to remind us of appointments. We have all of these things to keep track of our time, to manage our time, to make use of our time. But it so often seems that the only time that matters to us is right now. That is especially true when we have any kind of need and we expect God to do something about it. I remember well a poster that offers the prayer of an impatient person: Lord, give me patience, and give it to me now! And that is so often the way we come to God. Something happens that we don't like, or which is a real problem for us, and we go to the Lord and say, Lord we need a miracle. But, Lord, we need it right now! Yet there are those times when the Lord seems strangely silent. He doesn't immediately work the miracle of healing that we want. He doesn't jump to get us that promotion at work, or the job we need just to survive. He doesn't snap His fingers and solve all of our family problems, or take away all the things that bring fear and uncertainty into our lives. He does walk with us; He does comfort and defend us. Yet we want more. We want action. We want it now, but the Lord says, “Trust me. The time isn't right—yet.” This is not to say that He has forgotten about us and our needs. It doesn't mean He doesn't care. It just means that the time isn't right. Perhaps we haven't had enough time in the present situation to learn all that the Lord needs to teach us. Perhaps we haven't yet seen our sinfulness and our need for repentance and forgiveness. Perhaps we are still hoping for the wrong things, and the Lord is giving us the time to see the better gifts He wants to give us. Whatever the reason, the Lord has a time for everything and a purpose for everything under heaven.

But Scripture shows us again and again what God can and does do when the time is right. St Paul reminds us: ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*** (Galatians 4:4–5, ESV) We can say it this way: ***“But when the right time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to free those under the Law and make us His sons.”*** (Galatians 4:4–5, AAT) In His time, God had a plan for our salvation, and when the time was right, He gave His own Son to come into this world for us, to save us and give us the blessings of life forever in heaven. When the time was right, Jesus took upon Himself the sin and shame of the whole world, including the guilt and sin of our lives, and He died for us on the cross. When the time was right, on the third day, He rose again to destroy the power that death has over us. In His life, death and resurrection, the Lord has redeemed time for us, and given us a new sense of time, as He opens to us the timelessness of eternity with Him. And we know that someday, when the time is right, he will come again to bring this world of time to an end and opening heaven's glories to us forever.

We need to remember all of this as we seek His help each day. The Lord who changed water into wine at the wedding in Cana has the power to help us in our needs. Yes, He does care about the things that are happening to us, and yes He does hear and respond to the needs of His people—when the time is right. When the time is right, Jesus gives and gives lavishly—both in quantity and quality. In this sense, the first miracle recorded by John is like the last one in this gospel, which is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In His mastery over death, Jesus shows that there is no limit to His power to give, and to give life to all who believe in Him. And the life that lies ahead is the best of all possible existences, both in its quantity—it lasts for all eternity; and in its quality—it is a life of blessing, joy and peace that surpasses anything and everything we know and understand in this world.

Some people wonder if the Lord still does work miracles today. I know He does—when the time is right. Changing water into wine was just the first of His miracles, and far from the last that He will continue to work until the end of time. The greatest miracle is that He forgives us all our sins each day, and gives us His Spirit that we may live as His people. But, when the time

is right, He also works the other miracles that we need, the miracles that deal with the things of this life, both the large and the small. It can be hard for us to wait with patient trust in the Lord when we see the things happening in our lives. It is hard for us to leave things in His care and know that He will do what is best when the time is right. But, when the time is right, the Lord will act and reveal His glory, so that we, too, may believe in the grace and mercy of the Lord, and be blessed by His goodness at work in our lives. Amen.