

JESUS CHANGES WATER INTO WINE

JOHN 2: 1-12

Encountering God Series

OPENING PRAYER

Great and gracious God,
We pray that you will open your Word for us today, that we might hear your voice speaking through it.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

EXEGESIS

The changing of water to wine is Jesus' first public act in St. John's Gospel, which points to the inaugural sign of God's presence in the world. The structure of John 2:1-11 is typical of a miracle story: the setting is established (verses 1-2), a need arises (verses 3-5), a miracle addresses that need (verses 6-8), and there is a response to that miracle (verses 9-11). John makes the point that Jesus' first miracle (at Cana) is done in response to Mary's request (John 2:1-11). She says to Jesus, "They have no wine"; to which he replies that it is not the time or the place, but then responds to his mother's request.

Jesus requests the servants to fill six stone jars with water and bring a sample to the chief steward. The jars are made of stone because stone was said to store water, which was used for the ritual washing of hands and vessels. By the time the chief steward tastes it (verse 9), the water had become wine. Precisely when the miracle occurs is a mystery. Its occurrence is narrated as an aside ("When the steward tasted the water that had become wine"). The chief steward is said not to know where the wine came from, while the lowlier servants do. Knowing Jesus as the source of abundance makes one an "insider" within the community of believers, even if one's social status prevents one from ever breaking into a higher social circle.

The steward assumes it came from the bridegroom of the wedding being celebrated, but for John the real bridegroom present at the wedding is Jesus (see 3:29). The custom that the steward mentions in verse 10, of serving the good wine first, is known only from this text. The real bridegroom who served the best wine, Jesus, has appeared, ushering into the world God's abundant goodness and grace in a definitive way. The miracle centres on wine because abundant wine is symbolic of God's presence in the world.

REFLECTION

The final verse of this Bible reading tells us the miracle at Cana is the first of Jesus' signs. It revealed his glory, which impacted significantly on his disciples, who saw him in a new light.

This miracle was a sign of the abundance of God's blessings and new life present in the world through Jesus, revealing Jesus' glory as God's Son through whom salvation and liberation transforms our world.

According to John's Gospel, the apt response to such revelation is belief, as the disciples demonstrated. God's presence fills the world "up to the brim." As Jesus' first public act, the changing of water to wine symbolizes the "fullness we have all received" (John 1:16) through Jesus' presence in the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you identify signs of God's abundance in your life and within your community of faith?
- Jesus' mother Mary is the facilitator/catalyst for the beginning of Jesus's ministry. How is the church such a facilitator/catalyst in ushering in the kingdom of God and participating in God's transformative mission?

CLOSING PRAYER

Great and gracious God

We thank you for the message of your servant John: for the wisdom and insight it brings; for the ministry of your son Jesus who fills our lives to the brim with his love and compassion. We thank you for the community of faith, for the opportunity to come together and celebrate by breaking bread in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we begin this day a deeper and closer relationship with him. We ask these things in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

This resource was written by Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, the first woman to be ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament of the Guyana Presbyterian Church in 1984. From 2000 to 2011 she served as the Senior Program Executive for Justice and Partnership with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and World Communion of Reformed Churches.