*For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn and her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her and your land Married, for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.* Isaiah 62:1-5

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and His disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him: “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her: “Woman,* *what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants: “Do whatever He tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them: “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them: “Now draw some out and take it to the person in charge of the banquet.” So they took it. When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), that person called the bridegroom and said to him: “Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of His signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.* John 2:1-11

*At a tea for officers and their wives, the commanding general of a base delivered a seemingly endless oration. A young lieutenant grumbled to the woman sitting beside him: “What a pompous and unbearable old windbag that slob is!”*

*The woman turned to him, her face red with rage. “Excuse me, Lieutenant. Do you have any idea who I am?”*

*“No ma’am,” the man fumbled.*

*“I am the wife of the man you just called an unbearable old windbag.”*

*“Oh,” said the lieutenant. “And do you have any idea who I am?”*

*“No,” said the general’s wife.*

“The Wedding”

1. I heard of a Sunday school teacher asking her students what was their favorite Bible story. One girl answered: "The wedding at Cana." Curious about her answer, but worried that the girl might have focused on turning the water into wine, and since she did not want to comment on this, the teacher decided not to pursue the matter. Eventually, however, she decided to take a chance and ask the girl why she liked the wedding of Cana. The girl’s answer, theologically very profound, totally surprised the teacher, as the girl answered: "I like it because I want to have Jesus at my wedding too."

2. Weddings always were and still are big events in our society, however, in comparison to the Jewish weddings of Jesus day, our ceremonies pale. In Jesus’ days the wedding ceremony would take place late in the evening following the time of feasting. Sometimes it would be around midnight before the actual wedding ceremony would take place. The wedding would usually take place at the grooms house, with his family footing the bill. When ready, the groom would send his friends to the house of the bride, and they would let everyone along the route to know that the wedding procession was about to begin. After arriving at the location of the bride the father would walk with his daughter, and with the wedding party in tow, parading through the streets so that everyone could come out and congratulate her. These would always be the longest route so that everyone could congratulate them and join in the festivities. For the most part, everyone along the route of the procession would join the parade. The procession was quite a beautiful and a moving sight as they marched through the streets carrying torches, shouting, and singing joyfully. After the wedding ceremony the bride and the groom would walk through the streets accompanied by the people carrying a canopy over their heads, the same canopy under which they were wed, and holding the flaming torches. There was no such thing as a honeymoon though and the couple would keep the open house for a week during which time they were treated like royalty. They dressed in the fancy clothes and many times they would actually wore crowns on their heads. Whatever desire they expressed would be fulfilled, for their word was a law.

3. Such is the description of a Jewish wedding I came across in my research, and we can be fairly certain that the wedding ceremony Jesus attended with His disciples and His mother in Cana was alongside this account. Inviting Jesus to the wedding must be also seen here as a symbolic one for Jesus is truly needed to be present at every wedding and in every marriage of the believers, and the events of that night indicate that the couple who invited Jesus were indeed blessed by His presence. Wine played an important role in a Jewish life and was also an integral part of the ceremony, but most of all, water and wine were a part of any meal of that times, and in the Jewish tradition the wine equated with the joy of the ceremony. To have a party, and not to have wine indicated an absence of joy. Wine in the time and culture of this wedding was a natural part of a diet. Over the years, I heard commentaries attempting to prove that Jesus turned water into a grape juice or a sort of a very low alcoholic level of wine, however such commentaries were offered mostly by the preachers and the theologians of ours, North American cultural settings, and derived not from the historical accuracy but from the temperance movement ideology. The message of Cana is not to be seen as a message focused on drinking versus abstinence, and I can say with absolute certainty that this story does not introduces any sort of a *“moral or ethical issue.”* To understand the true message of this passage we must realize that John does not even refer to this story as a *“miracle,”* but instead he calls it a *“sign,”* one of the seven signs in his Gospel.

4. Jesus’ purpose for being born was to offer us the abundant life. At almost every funeral I use Jesus’ words: *“I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* Turning the water into wine was a sign through which Jesus indicated His ability to transform us. The water in those giant jars was to be used for the purpose of a *“sacral purification”* according to the rules of the Law, and Jesus transformation of this water into the best quality wine, serves as a symbol of an abundant and happy life of one being transformed by Jesus. After all, the wine in the Scriptures symbolizes the joy, the warmth, the celebration, and abundance. This is not the story of temperance or evilness of drinking; it is the story of the transformation Jesus offered and still offers to the world. Water is not a luxury; water is the necessity for life. As a species we are made of around 75% of water. The same principle applies to *“abundant life.”* To truly have a full life we need joy, we need the presence of the transforming powers of Jesus. The joy of life is not a *“luxury,”* it is a necessity, and this is what the story of turning a water into wine is about. I came across a statement that Jesus was not a friend, or a relative of the bridegroom, but rather he was just another name on a guest list, to attend the ceremony with the rest of the community. He was not there to preach or to teach, He was there to enjoy the party.

5. I heard some preachers flabbergasted by Jesus’ response to His mother when she told Him the hosts are short on wine. Some commented that Jesus’ words seemed to be almost rude and scolding: *“what concern is that to me and to you?”* We may interpret His words as: *“What business does this have with me?”* His response however does not turns Mary *“off,”* and she tells the servants to do whatever Jesus would tell them. We may speculate that as a mother she knew her son so well that she was certain He would respond to her request, but I believe there is something else here. Her words indicate that we have to trust God implicitly. Whatever He requires of us, we must do. Mary trusted Jesus, even though she did not know what He would do, and she instructs the servants to faithfully follow Jesus’ instructions. I believe she teaches us that we need to learn to trust the Lord because even if we were following Him for years, the moments might come when we may have our faith tested, for whatsoever reason. We may not see the reason for why we are being tested, but nonetheless, we often are tested even to the limits. He will not fail us though, because He knows about every situation and every trial that we might face, and He promised to be with us forever, therefore, what truly matters is: *“Trusting Jesus, that is all.”*

6. The *“master of Ceremony,”* a man responsible for everything that was happening at the wedding might not have known Jesus and he might have not known what happened, nevertheless, when he tasted the new wine he could not but to be dumbfounded. He told the bridegroom: *“Everyone else serves the best wine first, and after the guests have had plenty to drink, he serves the ordinary wine. But you have kept the best wine until now!”* He recognized that something extraordinary has happened. We do not know if he was told what happened, or if he inquired more, but this is not really important. What is important is what John tells us through his recollection of the *“wedding in Cana”* story. There is something special about Jesus and we must find that out through our relationship with Him, through trusting Him and following Him. This first *“miracle,”* the first *“sign”* as John calls it, only begins to reveal of who Jesus really is. The disciples may have only recently followed Jesus, as it was only two days before the wedding at Cana, that Jesus called Philip and Nathaniel, but they must have somehow understood who Jesus was, to tell Him: *“You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”* The sign at Cana shows that Jesus is the Son of God and encourages us to put our trust in Him.

7. Through the events of the wedding at Cana, John tells us that, Jesus *“revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”* They already believed in Jesus when He called them to follow Him, but their faith in Him had grown and strengthened even more. John encourages us to embrace Jesus and He will fully reveal Himself to us, maybe not all at once, maybe gradually, but reveal He will. This might happen through different, even ordinary life events, or through the people we meet. This might happen through the reading of the Scriptures or through the prayer, but it will happen if we only allow ourselves to open to Him. He reveals Himself to me every day through my interactions with others and even through observation of the events around me and in the world. What I learned from this story is that Jesus can’t help being who He is, the transformer of the human souls. From Mary I learned that being a mother she would always be a mother, and by being called to the ministry I will always be called to the ministry, because this is what Jesus called me to. So, this is not the story about turning the water into wine, but this is the story of responding to Jesus. Everyone here responded to Him in a different way, whether Mary, the servants, the master of ceremony, the bridegroom or even the disciples. The disciples understood something more about Jesus that they did not understand before as He began to reveal His glory among them. As for us, we all come from different backgrounds and stages in our journey of faith and are urged to be open to better understanding of who Jesus is and that we must always put our trust in Him.

8. The proverbial *“cherry on the top”* of this story might be that the bride and the groom probably were not even aware of what had happened. Mary realized that the disaster over the party was inevitable (not having wine would indeed be culturally, traditionally, and even spiritually disastrous to the bride and groom) and she asked Jesus to intervene, without knowing what He might do, because she believed Him to be capable of rescuing the wedding ceremony. Jesus did so by quietly revealing His glory to the disciples and those who were aware of what has happened. We too are often blessed by God without even realizing this. We are often rescued through those who quietly worked behind the scenes of our lives, or through the works of the people who love us and care for us and do it not for their own acclaim or for any sort of payback, but simply because God has gifted them with the caring heart. So, like one of the preachers said, when we read the Gospel of John, let us study it rather than *“read it,”* because John’s message is often more sublime than it appears on the surface. Just like the “wedding at Cana” story clearly indicates.