

+ John 2:1-11 + It's Time for the Big Reveal + 2nd Sunday after Epiphany + 20 January 2013 +

The family desperately needs a new place to live. With their children's health problems, dad's loss of work, and mounting bills, their house has fallen into disrepair. It's in bad shape. It's barely livable and who knows how long the family can keep living there. Friends and neighbors submit their story and their need for a new home to ABC's reality show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition". Host and Master Carpenter Ty Pennington and his crew take on the project joining forces with local building contractors and businesses to provide the needy family with a completely new home in one week. Meanwhile the family enjoys a fun vacation to Disney World receiving occasional updates from Ty and his crew.

What their new house will look like and be like remains a mystery until they arrive home for "the big reveal". The large bus of the "Extreme Makeover" crew stands parked outside the home blocking its view from the street. The family, fresh off their vacation, is brought to the street with their eyes covered while crowds lining the street cheer for them. It's time for "the big reveal". Ty urges the family and the crowds to yell, "Move that bus! Move that bus!" When the bus finally moves and reveals the surprise on the other side of the street, the family breaks down in tears and screams of joy. What's been revealed is so amazing, so glorious! Joy and relief overwhelm them because their new home is more amazing than they've ever dreamed. Some might even say that what happened for that family is a miracle.

This morning we get to see another one of those "big reveals" that changes people's lives. There's a crowd celebrating, but they're not there to celebrate the "big reveal". In fact, only a small handful of people actually witness the "big reveal", but what follows is more amazing, more glorious, more awesome than the best home ever built by the folks at "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition". My friends, **IT'S TIME FOR THE BIG REVEAL.**

First, before we do that, let's find out the situation. A Jewish couple is getting married in their hometown of Cana. It's a small punkin'-junction of a village in the northern region of Galilee—about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. They don't have much money. In fact, they're quite poor, and Jewish weddings back then were pretty expensive. You see, their weddings were a little different from ours. Instead of booking a banquet hall for a wedding reception and dance lasting hours at most, a Jewish wedding celebration started with a long procession of friends and family from the bride's home to the groom's. Then the celebration lasted for about a week at the groom's home. For such a celebration, you needed to make sure you had enough food and enough wine to last up to a week. Wine was part of most meals, usually in a watered-down form, because water wasn't always easy to get or was often undrinkable.

So what's the problem? Their wedding celebration was going great until the worst possible thing happened. They ran out of wine before the celebration was over. The newly married couple could face terrible embarrassment because wine was such a staple. What were they going to do? Would they have to send all their guests home early? Would such an embarrassing episode ruin their reputation in a society that considered hospitality one of the highest virtues, even before their marriage could get off the ground? What were they going to do? Let's find out!

One of the couple's close friends is a woman named Mary. She comes from Nazareth and has a son named Jesus, who might be able to help with their situation. No, he's not a wine distributor. He doesn't vineyards in Galilee. Jesus is actually a rabbi. Just days before, he had gathered a small group of followers from around Galilee. About six in all are with him as he and his mother celebrate the marriage of their close friends.

"When the wine ran out," Mary knows her son can do something about what could be considered a devastating embarrassment. You see, Mary's son is no ordinary rabbi. In fact, he's no ordinary human being because Jesus can perform miracles. After all, he was sent from God himself as the Son of God and was promised to be the Savior of the world. So with that in mind, Mary leans over to her son and tells him, **"They don't have any wine."** Mary saw the need and hoped her Son could perform a miracle.

"What has this concern of yours to do with me, dear woman?" Jesus asks. He's not being disrespectful. "Why do you involve me? You and I are coming at this differently. You want me to take care of this immediate need and prevent the embarrassment of our dear friends, yet I'm here to save people from their sins. I'm here to strengthen the faith of my disciples." Jesus' **"hour"**—the time to reveal his glory for the first time—had not yet come. Nevertheless, Mary tells the servants, **"Do whatever he tells you."** Yes, Jesus is her Son, but he is also her Lord and Savior. She trusts in him as such. The time for the big reveal is coming soon.

So let's review. We have a family in need, not life-threatening need, but reputation-devastating need. We have a request made to a very well-qualified "carpenter" and his crew of followers, who can do something about the

situation. So what about the materials to do the job? There's no wine. It would be impossible to gather grapes, crush them, harvest the juice, and ferment it into wine. So what are they going to do? What is Jesus going to do? As Jesus surveys the room, he notices **“six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained 20 or 30 gallons.”** For ceremonial purposes, the Jews washed their hands before and after eating. Then they washed all the dishes. That's a lot of washing, so lots of water was needed. In this case, there was 120-180 gallons of available space. **“Fill the jars with water,” Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant.’”** So they did.

Now think about that for a moment. It makes you scratch your head, doesn't it? They already had plenty of water for the people, but no wine. Water doesn't typically turn into wine, but that's not what happened here. The servants obediently take their samples to the chief servant, but **“it had become wine”**. Then he tastes it with no idea where it came from. The chief servant can't believe his taste buds. This is the best wine he has ever tasted. He rushes over to the groom, **“Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now.”** You see, normally at these Jewish wedding celebrations, the best wine comes out first, but after a week of celebrating and people's taste buds blunting with all the wine, usually the cheaper, **“inferior”** wine comes out for the end of the celebration. This wine, however, is the best the servant has ever tasted, and now everyone gets to enjoy it.

Because it's not as obvious as a large bus pulling away, John, who witnessed this miracle, tells us, **“Jesus performed this first sign in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.”** Only the servants, the six disciples, and Mary knew that right before their eyes without anyone realizing or noticing it, Jesus pulled off “the big reveal”. Not only did Jesus meet his friends' immediate need, but in doing so, he revealed something greater, something more amazing, more awesome, more life-changing. Jesus revealed his glory as God's one and only Son.

Yes, at his birth angels revealed the glory of the Prince of peace to lowly shepherds. Yes, a star revealed the glory of the King of kings to the wise men. Yes, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit revealed the glory of God's holy Son at his Baptism in the Jordan River, but here in little ol' Cana rather than big city Jerusalem, at the wedding celebration of a poor Jewish couple, in their preparation room with only servants and disciples looking on rather than outside with crowds cheering, “Taste that wine! Taste that wine!”, Jesus himself revealed his glory, and that, my friends, is life-changing. That's what takes your breath away (and maybe even brings you to tears) as you read this account from God's Word.

When Jesus revealed his glory for the first time, he revealed so much more. He revealed his glorious power and divine authority. Jesus transformed created elements in a miraculous way. He proved himself to be the Creator of heaven and earth who is in control of all things. He proved himself to be the One whom his disciples believed and trusted. He confirmed their faith in him. They had new evidence that Jesus was their promised Savior—God's Anointed One. They saw the glory of God through Jesus' miracle, and they believed in him more firmly. They saw his boundless grace—his undeserved love in how he showed compassion for this newly married couple. He proved that he was and is the source of all blessing by providing not just a couple bottles of wine, but up to 180 gallons of the best wine ever.

Above all, he reveals his glory, the glory of the one and only Son of the Father, to you and me through this miracle. When times are tough and life seems out of control, you can see in this account the glorious power and divine authority of a Savior who is greater than all that, who was so great that he carried out his Father's will when his **“hour”** to save finally came, being nailed to a cross on a day that wasn't so joyful, but gives you and me joy today because he laid down his life for your guilt and mine. Then he took that life back up again three days later so you can and I could be with him in glory forever in heaven. On top of all that, he overwhelms you with his boundless grace and endless blessing. He shows you compassion in hardship and trouble and sorrow and grief. He provides for your every need and more. He forgives your sin and restores you with a strengthened faith.

All that glory Jesus reveals in his first miracle at the wedding in Cana with no one, except servants and disciples and his mother looking on. It was a “big reveal”, but really only meant for them. Through it Jesus strengthened their faith in him. Through this miracle, Jesus still strengthens faith—yours and mine today. In your life and mine, he continues to reveal his glory through the impact of his Word on your heart and mind, through the forgiveness of his Holy Supper, and the cleansing of Holy Baptism. Yes, that “big reveal” is for you and me too. So let's shout and cheer. Let's rejoice in that glory and share that glory and ever pray, “Lord, reveal your glory to us and through us to the glory of your eternal name.” Amen.