

John 2 sermon
1st January 2017

Introduction: Magic trick – 3 ropes

What is the purpose of a magic trick? To amaze. To trick. To entertain. When I do a magic trick like this, I don't expect that you will say: "Oh my goodness, he is very powerful!" No. A magic trick is entertainment.

Sometimes we look at Jesus' miracles and think: "Wow, he must be really powerful!" And to some extent, that's true. Jesus shows his power through his miracles. Turning water into wine shows power. There is no "magic" here. This is the **power** of God.

But John's gospel only records 7 miracles of Jesus.

1. Water into wine – John 2
2. Healing the official's son – John 4
3. Healing at the pool of Bethesda – John 5
4. Feeding of the 5000 – John 6
5. Walking on the water – John 6
6. Healing of the man born blind – John 9
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead – John 11

That's it! And John doesn't even call them "miracles". He calls them miraculous **signs**.

And what is a sign?

A sign points towards something.

A sign is a signal of something happening.

A sign is significant.

When we're driving along and see a sign, like a STOP sign, or a "left turn only" sign, we need to pay attention to it. We need to see it and understand it in its context. We need to think: "What is this sign saying to me?"

John calls Jesus' miracles "signs" because they point towards something about Jesus. In chapter 2, we get three hints of this "something".

Verse 11:

- *11What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples **believed** in him.*

Verse 22:

- *22After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they **believed** the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*

And verse 23:

- *23Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and **believed** in his name.*

The signs are all about **belief!**

This is why the gospel of John is written. People see the signs and believe. Or people see the signs and still did not believe. It's all about belief. Faith. Trust in Jesus.

So what is it about the signs in chapter 2? Where are **they** pointing us? They point us to the future. They signal the start of something new.

So let's look at the first sign: the water into wine. What's this sign about? What does it signal? What is significant about it?

- **It's about wine.**

Here we are at a wedding. And the wine runs out. Jesus' mother tries to bring him into the situation. And Jesus says:

- *"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."*

There's something about the timing of this. Something about Jesus' "hour".

But Jesus gets involved anyway. He has the servants fill up the six stone water jars, used for ceremonial washing. Altogether they would hold up to around 750 litres of water. And Jesus turns them into wine. Good wine. REALLY good wine. And the master of the house is amazed because it is SO good.

It's a nice magic trick. But it's significant. It's a sign. First, Jesus uses the ceremonial washing jars. So immediately we are thinking about Jewish cleaning customs and rituals. The old laws of Judaism. Washing. Cleansing. So that's in the back of our mind. Significant.

Then he turns them into really good wine. And wine in the Bible is a sign of the coming of the kingdom of God. Many of the Old Testament prophets spoke about wine in this way, like...

- **Amos 9:13-14 (and Hosea 14:7)**

*13 "The days are coming," declares the Lord,
"when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman
and the planter by the one treading grapes.
New wine will drip from the mountains
and flow from all the hills,
14 and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.*

*"They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
they will make gardens and eat their fruit.*

Jesus takes the old Jewish ceremonial washing jars and turns them into new wine for the banquet. So for the Jew, this is significant. This is Jesus showing a glimpse of the heavenly banquet. This was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory –

as the one who was bringing the new kingdom. But, as he said to his mother, his time had not yet come. But it **is** coming.

Now, you could say, well that's a bit of a stretch isn't it? Are we reading too much into this? But that's why we need to look at the context.

What happens next?

- **The temple.**

Jesus went to Jerusalem. It was time for the Jewish Passover. So again, we're reminded of Jewish customs and ceremonies. And he walks into the temple where they're selling cattle, sheep and doves. That was fairly normal at that time of year. Jews from all over would travel to Jerusalem to go to the temple to make a sacrifice. But rather than bring cattle and sheep and doves with them, they would buy them when they got there. So, obviously, someone had to sell those animals. And there was nothing wrong with that. This was not the issue for Jesus. The issue for Jesus was that they were selling them **IN** the temple itself. Instead of being a place of prayer, it was a place filled with the sound of cattle and sheep!

And he drives out the animals with a whip made out of cords. And his disciples remember the words of Psalm 69:9:

- *"Zeal for your house will consume me."*

So straight away, the temple is brought into focus. And the Old Testament words of Psalm 69 are ringing in the disciples' ears.

Then the Jews turn to Jesus and ask for a sign. They want to know his authority to be able to do this in the house of God. If you walk into the temple and start turning over tables, you'd better have credentials right?

So they ask for a sign. Verse 19:

- *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*

The Jews are confused because the temple took 46 years to build. But then John notes something interesting for us: The **disciples** didn't actually understand it at the time, but **after** he was raised from the dead, they understood it. They understood that the temple he was talking about was his **body**.

And so now we have another sign that takes the Jewish rituals of the old covenant – the temple – and gives it a future. Jesus is the temple. First, the old ritual washing jugs are turned into new wine – a sign of a heavenly banquet. Now, the temple is a sign of the body of Jesus.

The signs all point to the **old** passing away and the **new** arriving. It's not yet time for this to happen. But it is happening.

And then as we go on to the end of chapter 2, we hear that Jesus performed many other miraculous signs, and many believed in his name.

And that's the point of these signs, and all the signs in John's gospel. Jesus doesn't want people just to be "here and now" disciples. He wants to point them BEYOND the here and now.

The **future** banquet of God.

The **future** temple of God.

Jesus' miraculous signs are there to point us to something significant

Jesus doesn't want "here and now" followers who believe just because they saw a good magic trick.

He wants us to see beyond the signs to the future they point to.

Are **we** "here and now" followers of Jesus? Or do we see what Jesus is pointing us towards?

It's easy to trust Jesus in the here and now. When our wine pots are filled up. When everything is going well. When life is joyful.

The wedding guests were happy with their new wine. But Jesus was offering something better.

The Jews were happy with their temple that took 46 years to build. But Jesus was offering something better.

When you feel life is good, and full of joy, remember that Jesus is still offering you something **better**. The good things in our lives should remind us of the **better** things ahead.

Imagine if someone said the best thing about their marriage was the wedding **ceremony**. That's crazy! The wedding is the beginning! The wedding is the sign – the wedding signified a **future** relationship. If the best thing about a marriage relationship was the wedding service itself, then we've missed the point. Imagine hearing: "Oh, their marriage is a disaster, but the ceremony was beautiful!" That would be tragic!

Our life, here and now, in this year ahead, will have some joy and some sadness. It will be a mixture of successes and struggles. But the point of this life is to allow God to point us towards the future. When we make a commitment to Jesus, it's not just for the here and now. It's for an eternal future. That's where our joy, our hope, our faith, our belief, our trust in him, needs to come from. From the certainty of the **future** we have with him because of his life, death and resurrection.

Let me encourage you to commit your life to Jesus. And know that in everything he does in your life, on this earth, he wants to point you beyond the here and now. He wants to point you to your future with him. Every joy. Every sorrow. Every struggle. Every victory. Let all of those signs point us towards the eternal joy of our future with him. (Prayer...)

1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,
2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."
4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."
5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."
6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.
7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.
8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."
9 They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."
11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.
12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

Jesus Clears the Temple Courts

13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."
18 The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"
19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."
20 They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.
23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. 25 He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.