



Day One: Water into Wine?

Last week, we looked at the parallels between a Jewish wedding and our betrothal with Jesus, who is our Bridegroom. It's amazing how many places and ways the identity of Jesus as Bridegroom is found throughout the Bible. Perhaps the most significant and exciting way is found in a story that up until now, you might never have considered had anything to do with our betrothal with Jesus.

And that is, Jesus' first miracle.

In fact, I'd often wondered about the wedding at Cana and what that was all about. Why on earth Jesus would choose as His first miracle, to turn water into wine! Especially considering the debate in spiritual circles about whether or not Christians are supposed to drink wine. I must confess I wondered what on earth Jesus was thinking!

However, it turns out He was thinking about us! Consider this. Between the record of Jesus' birth until the moment of His first miracle, we don't hear much about what He is doing except for the time at age twelve where He is found in the temple and we can see that His growing up years were spent in preparation. There is no record of Jesus ministering in signs and wonders or travelling to preach until after the wedding at Cana. In actual fact, in John 2:11 it says, *"This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him."* Therefore, this is a very significant act. Let's have a closer look at it.

John 2:1 - 10 (NLT) *The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine."*

"Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. My time has not yet come." But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions.



When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. "A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!"

So what is so significant about turning water into wine other than the fact that it was miraculous? One simple thing. The fact that providing the wine for a Jewish wedding was the responsibility of the bridegroom. By turning the water into wine, Jesus was signifying that He would step into the role of the bridegroom. He was saying:

'I will be the bridegroom. I will come. I will save my bride. I will take responsibilities and make it right. I'll pay the bridal price.'

In fact, He had even pointed out prior to doing this, that it was not His problem. Why would it be? We were the ones who were lost and Jesus was the son of God! He didn't need to come down to save us. He didn't need to be the bridegroom for us. But yet He immediately got up and told the servants what to do, the water was turned into wine, and Jesus showed the world that He was willing to step in and take responsibility, and He would do so as the Bridegroom.

Jesus launched His ministry on this earth by establishing Himself as the Bridegroom! YOUR Bridegroom. Aren't you glad He came!

Soak Time

Jesus' first act was to establish Himself as your bridegroom. What does this tell you about His priority to love, cherish and protect you?



Day Two: The Pearl of Great Price

So Jesus established Himself as the Bridegroom at the wedding in Cana... and then He went right into the pursuit of His bride. He became the ravished, love-sick Bridegroom we see throughout the Song of Songs.

Song of Songs 4:9 (TPT) *For you reach into My heart. With one flash of your eyes I am undone by your love, My beloved one, My equal, My bride.*

He saw you, He wanted you, and sold all that He had to get you. He stretched His arms wide on a cross and poured out every drop of blood for you. You are the pearl of great price to Him.

Matthew 13:45 – 46 (NKJV) *...the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

We often hear this parable taught from the perspective that this is how we are to pursue the Kingdom of God. And while this is no doubt a true and valid application, I believe when Jesus shared this parable, He was talking about Himself and His bride. Remember, again He never tells us to do anything that He has not already done. He never tells us to be anything that He is not already Himself.

Jesus saw you – just like the pearl of great price – and wanted you so much that He sold everything He had just to get you. There was not one thing which He held back. There was no point at which He said, “The price is now too high.” He stopped at nothing and He sold EVERYTHING... and He purchased back your life.

1 Corinthians 7:23 (NLT) *...You were bought at a price.*

Galatians 3:13 (GW) *Christ paid the price to free us...*

Consider what Bible teacher Derek Prince, said about this:

"I want you to realize that you, individually, are that pearl. You, yourself. You are there in the palm of the Lord's hand. He is looking down at you and saying, 'You're so beautiful. You cost Me all I had, but I love you. I'm glad I died for you.'" Derek Prince



Soak Time

Imagine what Derek has described. See it in your mind – you a beautiful pearl in the palm of the Lord’s hand and Jesus looking down at you, saying *“You cost Me all I had, but I love you. I’m glad I died for you.”* What does that mean to you and how does that make you feel?

Now think back even before that point. When Jesus saw you amongst everything else He could see... when His attention and heart was arrested and He chose you as the ONE PEARL. What He said, and how His face looked when He resolved that He was willing to sell all He had to buy you in the first place. Describe what you see and hear and how this makes you feel:



Day Three: Treasure in a Field

Another reason that we can be sure Jesus was referring to Himself as the merchant, is also because He shared the parable of the pearl directly after the parable of the treasure hidden in a field. Both parables were extremely parallel and Jesus was making a point. Let's look at the parable of the hidden treasure.

Matthew 14:44 (NLT) *The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.*

Imagine wanting something so badly that you look around and sell every single thing you've ever possessed... only to find that the amount is still not enough. You come to the realisation that it's actually going to take your own life! Would you still want it?

The Bible likens the treasure to the hearts of man. Consider these scriptures:

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NLT) *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.*

Song of Songs 4:12 (NLT) *You are my private garden, my treasure, my bride, a secluded spring, a hidden foundation.*

Bible teacher, Jeremy Pearsons, says it the best:

"There is a treasure within you – the very image of God looking out from your eyes, walking around in your skin. The treasure within you was worth it to Him. There's a priceless beauty within you that He saw and recognized long before you were even born, before you took your first step or ever did anything, good or bad. Able to look into your heart, your hidden depths, He saw your buried treasure. You are the most beautiful thing He has ever seen and ever will see."
Jeremy Pearsons

Whether it is the farmer who discovers treasure hidden in a field and sells everything He owns to buy the field, or the merchant who sells everything he owns to buy one pearl, these parables are speaking of Jesus – your lovesick, ravished Bridegroom – and His desperate pursuit of you and willingness to pay the ultimate price for you.



Who in the entire universe does that? Who does that?!?! Only Jesus.

And for whom did He do that? Only you.



Once again, imagine the face and words of your Bridegroom as He finds you buried in a field– His hidden treasure. He knows you are going to cost Him everything – down to the last drop of blood! Yet He resolves that you are worth it to Him. Describe what you see and hear, and how it makes you feel:



Day Four: Incomprehensible Love

I once encountered a story which touched me with a sense of Jesus' love in a way that I've never forgotten it. This story was found in the book *He Loves Me*, by Wayne Jacobsen. It gives us another perspective on Jesus' selling all that He had to purchase us:

When I first heard the story, I was told it was from an issue of National Geographic. I've learned since that it never appeared there and is probably an urban legend. Whether or not this has actually happened among birds in the wild, something very much like it happened one afternoon just outside ancient Jerusalem.

Allegedly a group of firefighters were checking up on hot spots after a forest fire had been contained. As they marched across the blackened landscape between the wisps of smoke still rising from the smouldering vegetation, a large lump on the trail caught one firefighter's eye.

As he got closer, he noticed it was the charred remains of a large bird. Since birds can so easily fly away from the approaching flames, the firefighter wondered what was wrong with this bird that it could not escape. Had it been sick or injured?

Arriving at the carcass, he decided to kick it off the trail with his boot. As he did, however, he was startled by a flurry of activity around his feet. Four little birds flailed in the dust and ash, then scurried down the hillside.

The bulk of the mother's body had covered them from the searing flames. Though the heat was enough to consume her, it allowed her babies to find safety underneath. In the face of the rising flames, she had stayed with her young. She was their only hope for safety, and, willing to risk her own life, she had gathered them together and covered them with her own body. Even when the encroaching flames began to scorch her feathers, she could easily have flown away to start another family on another day. How did she make herself stay in the raging flames?

Her dead carcass and her fleeing chicks told the story well enough – she gave the ultimate sacrifice to save her young. Whether or not this has ever truly been duplicated in creation, it illustrates an even greater reality. For the



Creator of heaven and earth did exactly the same thing to rescue his wayward children from their own destruction.

How did Jesus make Himself stay on the cross? It's incomprehensible! What is it inside of Jesus and inside of you that kept Jesus nailed to the cross when He could have at any moment called up the Armies of Heaven and ended His suffering?

Matthew 26:53 - 54 (NLT) *Don't you realize that I could ask My Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and He would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what is happening now?*

Yet He stayed there, fastened to the cross. For me and for you. Why?

The first reason is obviously that He IS love, and true love cannot act any other way.

Ephesians 2:4 - 5 (AMP) *But God - so rich is He in His mercy! Because of and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us, even when we were dead (slain) by [our own] shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ.*

The depth of Christ's love for us could not do anything else but give up all for us – the pearl and the treasure. The depth of Christ's love for us kept Him there. Yet within the perspective of the pearl and the treasure lies the second reason. Can you dare to fathom what it is?

Soak Time

Ask the Lord why else He would have stayed on the cross for you?



Day Five: The Prize

We know that the depth of Jesus' love for us at the cross is beyond our comprehension. He did not have to go through it. He chose to. And He could have ended it at any time – but He didn't.

Having given all that He has given for us, and having gone through all that He has gone through for us, is it possible to conceive that there might be something inside of us that He desires so passionately that He was willing to go to those lengths?

During the lead up to the first women's retreat, there was one afternoon that I was feeling a little overwhelmed (OK, a lot) as Holy Spirit continued to download special and specific things He wanted to do for the women who were coming. It felt as though we were running out of time to organise these things and I thought about what I was giving in terms of time, energy and resources. Though I don't like to admit it, the truth is that I said to the Lord, *"Jesus, you're asking us to do a lot, for 40 women."*

Immediately, Jesus reminded me of a vision He had given me earlier in the process when He was downloading to me about what the retreat would be like. I had seen a vision of women sitting in seats, and I knew it was an image of women at the upcoming retreat. However, immediately the picture changed and the women sitting in their seats became jewels sitting there. They were huge, life-size, and absolutely beautiful! They were all different colours, and light was radiating out from each and every one of them. At the time, He had told me, *'This is how I see the women who will be there this weekend.'*

Of course, I knew that I had asked out of line with His heart. And He said to my spirit, *'You spent your time, money and energy for 40 of these precious women. I gave my life and poured out every drop of blood for each one.'*

It was the last time I ever felt an ounce of hardship in the preparation for the retreat, and I have not since that time forgotten, that within each person God sees special treasure! He sees what He paid the price for. He sees what He sold all He owned for! And it is absolutely breathtaking to Him!

So what does He see in you? In you, He finds joy:

Hebrews 12:2 *He Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.*



Song of Songs 7:6 (TPT) As I count the delights you bring to Me – Love has become the greatest!

You were the joy that was set before Him. Just like an athlete who pushes past the pain barrier by staying focused on the finish line. You were the prize and He was thinking of your face as He was nailed there. Your love is His delight.

In you, He finds beauty:

Song of Songs 7:5 (TPT) Redeeming love crowns you as royalty... Even a King is held captive by your beauty! How delicious your fair beauty. It cannot be described!

Song of Songs 1:15 (TPT) Look at you, My dearest darling, You are so lovely! You are beauty itself to Me!

In you, He finds His inheritance & His treasure:

Ephesians 1:18 (AMP) ...how rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints (His set-apart ones).

James 1:18 (NLT) He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.

Luke 12:34 (NIV) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Zechariah 9:16 (NIV) They will sparkle in His land like jewels in a crown.

➤ **See:** Malachi 3:17; Isaiah 62:2 – 5.

You are His special inheritance, and you are His treasure. When an inheritance is laid up, it's the best that a parent can offer, and the sum of their life and who they are. And an inheritance is also prized by the recipient and gratefully and honourably received. Of everything at God's disposal, He chose you as the inheritance for His Son. And Jesus was thrilled to receive you as His inheritance. Out of everything in all of creation, He fixed His eyes on you as the most prized possession He could imagine. You sparkle in His very crown, and you live continually in His heart.



And this is just a tiny glimpse of what He sees in you! It's everywhere! If you are reading the Bible with your eyes wide open to this love, you cannot escape the fact that Jesus sees something in you that has so enamoured Him that He has willingly died for it. It's in everything, it's everywhere.

In His eyes, it's all about you, and it's all for you. Isn't it time you walk as though you believe it?

Soak Time

Do you see yourself as Jesus' joy, beauty, inheritance, treasure and jewel? Why or why not?
