

January 14, 2024

**Encounters:
Wedding Party**

Scripture: John 2:1-12

Big Idea: The work of Jesus at the wedding represents a new reality in which an encounter with Him leads to joy and transformation.

The Challenge: Often Jesus can be seen as a kill joy – one who takes away fun through rules and restrictions. The sign in John 2 offers a different take. Instead of being a kill joy, Jesus is the joy bringer as he returns the party through a miraculous intervention.

Pastoral Prayer for this Message:

Having lost His joy on the cross for us, we would be people of joy.

Questions for Discussion:

1. The Interpretative Lens vs. 11

- Have you ever experienced any miraculous events in your life? The type of encounter, circumstances, or experiences that could only be explained by the intervention of God.
- How does verse 11 help shape our interpretation of the rest of the passage?

2. Jesus' Hour vs. 1-5

- What does Jesus' "hour" refer to throughout the rest of John's gospel?
- Jesus knows that people will receive joy because He will eventually lose his on the Cross. What difference does Jesus' sacrificial death for you make in your daily life?

3. Jesus' Inauguration vs. 6-8

- What did the ceremonial jars represent for John? What new era is Jesus' ushering in?
- What is the difference between cold religion and the gospel of Jesus? (See the chart on page 2)
 - Which one resonates with you the most?

4. Jesus' Feast vs. 9-10

- How does Jesus being the bringer of wedding festival joy challenge some of your assumptions, or culture's assumptions, about who He is?

5. Jesus' Invitation vs. 11

- The outcome of the sign was the disciples believed in Him. This also is understood that they trusted in Him. What area of your life are you needing to trust Jesus in this week?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGION & THE GOSPEL

Gospel in Life Study Guide, Tim Keller. P. 16

	RELIGION	THE GOSPEL
ACCEPTANCE	I obey; therefore, I'm accepted.	I'm accepted; therefore, I obey.
MOTIVATION	Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
OBEDIENCE	I obey God in order to get things from God.	I obey God to get God – to delight and resemble him.
CIRCUMSTANCES	When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle, but I know my punishment fell on Jesus and that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his Fatherly love within my trial.
CRITICISM	When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a "good person." Threats to my self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my record or my performance but on God's love for me in Christ.
PRAYER	My prayer life consists largely of petition, and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with God.
CONFIDENCE	My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel humble but not confident – I feel like a failure.	My self-view is not based on my moral achievement. In Christ I am <i>simul justus et peccator</i> – simultaneously sinful and lost, yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad that he had to die for me, and I am so loved that he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deep humility and confidence at the same time.
IDENTITY	My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work, or how moral I am – and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral.	My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for me. I am saved by sheer grace and I can't look down on those who believe or practices something different from me. Only by grace am I what I am.