

Weddings are big business. Thanks to destination and theme weddings and all of the ideas and photos on Pinterest, the cost of weddings has exploded to an average of around \$35,000. You can buy a car, put a down payment on a house or maybe even pay off student loans with that amount of money. But despite all the time, planning and money that people throw at weddings, something almost always goes wrong on the wedding weekend. Rehearsals always start late because someone doesn't get there on time. Whether it is the flower girl who decides to still the show, the ring bearer who sends the rings rolling down the aisle, the wedding attendant who passes out during the ceremony or the groom who forgets his dress shoes or socks, something unexpected happens at almost every wedding.

Who knows what can go wrong at the reception? There was a young couple who got married in the village of Cana in Galilee. We don't know the exact location of this village, although it was probably close to Nazareth where Jesus grew up. We don't know the connection between Jesus and the couple, but Jesus' mother Mary must have known them well and played a part in making sure everything went as planned at the reception. Jesus was at the reception with some of His disciples when Mary found out that they ran out of wine. That would have been a major tragedy for the couple resulting in an early end to the reception and life time of ridicule.

So Mary told Jesus what had happened, expecting Him to solve the problem. Jesus told her, *"Dear woman, that's not our problem. My time has not yet come."* (vs. 4) Mary told the servants to do anything Jesus asked them to do. And they did. Jesus told them to fill the water jars with water and take some out to the wedding M.C. They did and the Master of Ceremonies wondered why the wedding couple had saved the best wine for last. Jesus save the couple from embarrassment that allowed the reception to continue.

But that is not all that happened that day. John, one of Jesus' disciples who would have been at the wedding with Jesus reported, *"This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him."* (vs. 11) Not only did Jesus change water into wine, He also changed how His Disciples saw Him. They witnessed Jesus' very first miracle. This was a sign to reveal Jesus' glory, a physical way to point to the eternal truth that Jesus is the Son of God. The Disciples saw the sign and believed. Their faith in Jesus was confirmed and continued to grow.

The good news today is that God's blessings are available to us through Jesus. That doesn't mean that everyone will see God's blessings or believe that they come to us through Jesus. But that's ok. It may have only been Mary, the servants and the Disciples who knew what Jesus did at the wedding in Cana. But the Disciples saw and believed.

If we look with the eyes of faith, we can see God's hand at work in our lives as well. The good things that happen in our lives may not just be coincidences or good luck. They may be God

working things out for our good because He loves us. (Romans 8:28). They may be ways for the Lord to give us His good and perfect gifts. (James 1:17) They may be ways for God to answer our prayers because He cares about us. (1 Peter 5:7)

I think it is highly significant that Jesus' first miracle took place at a wedding. Marriage and the family are under attack in our secular society. But we can never forget that God created marriage. Jesus upheld the sanctity of marriage when he said, *"Haven't you read the Scriptures? They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."* (Matthew 19:4-5 NLT) Marriage and the family are the building block of society. We cannot abandon them. We have to do all we can with God's help to support and build them up.

Since Jesus upholds the sanctity of marriage, he also upholds the sanctity of life. This is "Life Sunday" in churches all across America. The Roe v Wade decision of the Supreme Court of January 22, 1973 legalized abortions in the United States. Just because the Supreme Court made abortions legal doesn't make it right. One of the reasons for marriage is to bring children into the world that can be raised in a loving and caring family environment.

We need to do all that we can to help and support those who chose to give birth to a child rather than abort the child. We also need to love and support women who had an abortion, reminding them that God loves them, forgives them and wants them to move forward in life. As the Pastor of this church, I want to say thank you to parents who have adopted children, provided a home for Foster Children, and given financial and emotional support to single parents and their children.

The newly married couple in Cana was facing a near hopeless situation. But they had invited Jesus to their wedding and Jesus helped them. Jesus can help us and give us hope, too. He can help us face the personal challenges we have in life. He can help us find direction and purpose in life. He can help us through the dark days when so many things seem to be going wrong. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment."* (Romans 5:3-5 NLT)

Jesus can give us hope because He has the power and the desire to help us. He invites us to bring all of our cares and concerns to Him. He invites us to find our rest in Him during the storms of life. He promises to always be with us and that nothing will ever be able to separate us from His love.

So today we celebrate God's love for us and for all people. We join with Jesus' Disciples that were at the wedding and see the signs that Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior. Like the Disciples, we believe in Him.