

Jesus Gets to Work, Part 2

Luke 4:14-15

Look at John 2, verse 1, "On the third day," now again, they're there in Bethsaida, "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus," was also, "was invited to the wedding with his disciples." So here's an early time in the life of the disciples with Jesus. Verse 3, "When the wine ran out." which is a terrible, terrible faux pas in those days, "when the wine ran out," that is, that sends shivers down the spine of anybody hosting a wedding in those days.

"When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus," said to them, "said to him, 'they have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rights of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to his servants, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they

filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.'

"So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from," though the servants who had drawn the water knew, "the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely," that is, when they're a little tipsy and don't know the difference, "then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.' This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him."

Look, we need to put the scope of this miracle into some perspective because you need to understand the significance of what this did in providing exposure to him early in his ministry. Six stone water jars used for purification, each holding twenty to thirty gallons of water. That means when Jesus created, wa, wine from water, he just created a total volume of 120 to 150 gallons of wine. That is a lot, folks. It's incredible.

John records the reaction of the master of the banquet. His exclamation grabbed everybody's attention. It confirmed that

this was very good wine. So at fine wine prices, to put this in perspective, Jesus' miracle provided somewhere around \$180,000 to \$225,000 in wine at the low end. If we go to the high end, which we probably should, around a million dollars. At today's prices in today's market, Jesus had just provided this village wedding with a gift of wine estimated at more than a million dollars.

Folks, that's unheard of; not just in Cana, but anywhere. This does not happen. Who knew about it? The servants knew, master of the feast didn't even know, not initially. Jesus' mother didn't know, not initially. It was the servants, the ones who served the water-made-wine, they knew. The lowliest among them, they knew. And then we learn in verse 11 that his disciples knew about it. This sign pointed to his glory. It pointed to his Creator-like glory and power; pointed to the identity of his true nature. Let me tell you, word got around. Things like that don't happen without notice. People started talking.

They, they left Cana, it says in verse 12, and they went down to Capernaum, but the word of what had happened there that day, that spread throughout Galilee, throughout the whole region. The exposure of his Messianic ministry just got a

massive boost, and word spread around the region. What he did next, though, that's what really put him onto the map. He headed back to Jerusalem, it says for the Passover, in verse 13. He took his disciples with him.

Look at it there in verse 13, "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the Temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers all sitting there." It's pretty typical fare in Jesus' day during the, at the Temple exercised at the Passover. Foreigners were coming from all over the world, and all the profiteers, all the chief priests and the Sadducees, they saw this as a great opportunity to make a little money.

Well, there's exchange rates, there's um, Oh, your lamb that you brought from Babylon, that's actually not a good lamb. Here's a flaw, here's a defect. By the way, we have some lambs for sale over here. Exorbitant prices! And we're making money, and Jesus comes in and he sees this. Verse 15, "And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the Temple, with the sheep and oxen." Oxen, "He poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, 'Take these things away; do not make my Fathers' house a house of trade.'" His disciples remembered that it was

written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' So the Jews said to him, 'What sign do you show us for doing these things?'"

It's unbelievable, they had the audacity to question him at that moment. "But Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'It's taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you will raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken."

This is a powerful confrontation here, right? As Jesus drives the commerce out of the Temple, house of worship, he's indignant. He takes immediate action. When the Jewish authorities question him, he recognizes them for the unbelieving hypocrites that they are. They want a sign, so he points them to the sign of his resurrection from the dead, which they themselves will set up by crucifying him just a few short years later. And even though he refused to perform a song-and-dance routine for these hypocritical leaders, Jesus did perform signs while he was there in Jerusalem.

Look at what it says there in verse 23. "When he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when

they saw the signs that he was doing. Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about a man because he himself knew what was in man.”

He knew the leaf was fickle, it was easily distracted, but nonetheless, there he is, he's doing signs in Jerusalem. He's doing that all during the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I said, massive crowds were present during, this one, of the three major Jewish feasts. It says in verse 23, “Many believed in his name.” They were impressed by the signs, by the miracles, the power, and they believed, at least initially, at least to some degree. One of the many who saw the signs, who believed, was a very significant individual named Nicodemus. He's a teacher of the Jews. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the council of Israel.

Notice John 3:1 and 2, “Now there was a man,” named, “of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.’” Sounds flattering. This rabbi, Nicodemus, probably, sixties, seventies, studied all of his life, respected, and he says, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher

come from God.” Who is the, we? Nicodemus is relaying to Jesus the judgment of the Sanhedrin; this is the ruling council of the Jews in Jerusalem.

So in a very short time, notice the, the upper echelon of all Jewish society, the very top of the top had taken notice of Jesus. His fame, his reputation had spread, and one of their leaders, the one at the very top, the one with great respect, he didn't summon Jesus to come see him. He himself went and visited Jesus; paid him a personal visit, and rather than be flattered by that visit, Jesus loved Nicodemus and he told him the truth. He loved him enough to confront him with the truth of his spiritual condition. He confronted his spiritual blindness there in verse 3. He confronted his spiritual deadness and his inability in verses 5-8. He confronted his lack of basic biblical understanding in verse 10, “You are a teacher of Israel and you do not understand these things?”

Then he under, confronted his fundamental problem of unbelief in verses 11-15. You do not receive what we say. The conversation, as you know, provides us with some of the richest teaching in the Bible on the necessity of the new birth, on justification by faith. John 3:16 is embedded right in the middle of this chapter. It's, it's a chapter that tells us about

the blinding darkness that comes from a commitment to sin. It talks about the proof of faith and the deeds of those who repent and come to the light bringing their deeds into the open that they might be clearly seen.

We're so grateful for this fourth Gospel. And we'd like to stick around, I know, and spend some time in this text, but we do need to keep moving. This is just to expose to you what Jesus' reputation was, what provided the reputation. But we have seen enough at this early stage to see Jesus' ministry is in full swing. It gained massive exposure in Judea, exposure through John's testimony through the sign of the wine, through the clearing of the Temple, this conversation with Nicodemus, all of his teaching. And now all of that meant a meteoric rise to fame very quickly. That's evidenced in what we read in Luke 4:14, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, report went out, throughout all the surrounding country.

After this conversation with Nicodemus and perhaps informed by the fact that he had the attention of the Sanhedrin, it says in verse 22 that Jesus in chapter 3 there, Jesus withdrew into the Judean countryside. His popularity was swelling. His reputation was spreading far and wide. And all those pilgrims who visited Jerusalem at Passover returned home, they brought



with them all these stories of signs and wonders. They told of Jesus' zeal for holiness, talked about his teaching, its depth, its clarity, its power, its authority.

Jesus knew that the growing popularity risked an impetuous action. Whether it was from the admiring crowds, who'd want to crown him prematurely, or from the jealous leadership who wanted to make him disappear. You can see the motivation for Jesus' withdrawal from Jerusalem due to a rapid rise in his popularity. It's right there in the text, the first in the fact that his ministry was beginning to eclipse that of John the Baptist. Look in verse 26 of John 3. Some of John's disciples, "came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, he who as with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.'" You can appreciate their loyalty. But it's profoundly misguided. John corrects them.

At the end of the chapter, he says, He must increase, I must decrease. Look, John gets it. He rejoices like the friend of the bridegroom to see Jesus glorified, but not everybody's rejoicing. Look at Chapter 4, verse 1, "Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John [...], he left Judea," verse 3, "and departed again for Galilee." The other Gospels, Matthew and

Mark, they tell us that John had actually been arrested, and that was the reason that Jesus decided to go to Galilee. Matthew 4:12 says, "Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee." Mark 1:14, same thing. That happened in the white spaces between John 3:37 and John 4:1.

And it's not only, his arrest was not only motivated by the irritation of Herod, Luke described that, remember, in Luke 3:19 and 20, that Herod, being convicted by John, he put him into prison. But Herod's motivation, that's his personal motivation for imprisoning John, but that's not what led to it. As we see in Matthew 4:12 and Mark 1:14, the verb that's used there is the verb *paradidomi* and it means he was handed over. So, John was handed over to Herod by whom? There's some intrigue going on here. The Jewish leaders, out of jealousy, were involved in handing John over to Herod, and they incited Herod to their cause, pointing out how John had meddled in his private affairs, and they wanted to deliver him over.

Listen, Jesus knew these people. He knew these Pharisees and Sadducees, what were like. He knew what the Herodians were like. He knew their character. He understood their motivations. He saw through their intrigue, through their hypocrisy, their

collaboration. He wasn't fooled. When he heard that John had been delivered over, when he'd been handed over, put in prison, he heard the Pharisees had taken note of his own popularity, which was eclipsing and greater than John's, he put two and two together and knew it was only a matter of time.

And his death was going to be on his time table, the Fathers' time table, not theirs. He still had work to do. By the direction of the Holy Spirit, according to the will of the Father, John 4:3, Jesus left Judea, departed again for Galilee." It says there in verse 4 that "he had to pass through Samaria." I love that. Had to, required to, he must. He's not in a hurry. He's not anxious, he's not worried, fearful; he's following a schedule. He's following the dictates of the father by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

This is where we come to stage two of Jesus' return. He returned to Galilee, like we said, in three stages. Stage one was exposure in Judea, that's what we saw there. Stage two, we'll do this briefly, evangelism in Samaria, evangelism in Samaria. You all know the story. Jesus stopped at a well in Samaria. He had a conversation with a Samaritan woman. She turned out to be an immoral woman who had five husbands. She's on her sixth man. And for a rabbi of growing popularity,

gathering a loyal following, this conversation was going to be perceived as a career-killer by several accounts, at least in the eyes of the general population.

What's he doing consorting with a woman like that? The Jews would give him low marks for going through Samaria in the first place. The Samaritans were the unfaithful Israelites who remained in the land during the Babylonian captivity. And the Babylonians shipped some of their own pagans over there into the land, and they interbred with those people, creating the Samaritans. That's the Samaritan people. Their religion was basically a cultish offshoot of Judaism. They were absolutely despised by the Jews on several counts.

But Jesus had to pass through Samaria. He had to meet this woman. Her ethnicity, her false religion, even her serious immorality didn't dissuade him at all. This conversation to evangelize this woman is a demonstration of the kindness of redeeming love that the father intended to show through Messiah's ministry. I'm relieved, aren't you? I'm no different than that woman. It may have offended the sensitivities of the religious, the cultured among Jerusalem's elite, and it clearly did, as indicated by slanders throughout his ministry, but Jesus didn't pay that any mind.

He'd come to seek and save the lost. His evangelism of this woman provided an occasion for him to teach his astonished disciples to lead to the evangelism of the entire village of Siccar. "God so loved the world," right? Not just the Jews, but Gentiles, too. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," and so all are the targets of his redeeming mercy and love.

Well, few days he spent in Samaria meant his fame preceded him into Galilee. Stage One: Exposure in Judea, stage two: Evangelism in Samaria, stage three: Establishment in Galilee. And Jesus stayed briefly with the Samaritans, which had to be quite the cross-cultural experience for his bewildered disciples. But he had to keep moving. Look at John 4:43, end of the chapter, John 4. "After," the, "two days, he departed for Galilee." For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. "So when he came to Galilee, all the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they had gone to the feast."

So we're back in Galilee again. He's well-received by the Galileans. There they were. They, they sa, they saw what he did at the Temple. They heard his teaching. They saw him perform miracles. They were thrilled that he had come back to Galilee.

This is where Jesus established his ministry. All three of the synoptic writers, all three focus on this Galilean ministry. Galilee is, you remember, is the northern part of Israel, Judea in the southern part. Galilee is one of the tetrarchies ruled by Herod Antipas.

Jesus goes into that region. It's more of a country feel; it's not an urban feel. The Sea of Galilee is one of the major sources of life and industry. The fishing trade was there. It's a land of agriculture. It's a bit simplistic to put it this way, but generally speaking, Galileans are like salt-of-the-earth kind of people, like farmers, ag-workers, all that. They're practically-minded, they're hard-working farmers, fishermen. And to the south in Judea with Jerusalem at the center of Judean life and culture, that's more of the white-collar folks. That's the academics, the priesthood, the political rulers.

And you can see it by the names of the places. The prominent feature in the north is a large lake, Galilee; prominence in the southern part is the city, Jerusalem. It's the same thing in their day as it is in our day. There's a bit of despising going on between county and city. Right? Galilean folks, geedan folk, Judean folks, they were definitely two different kinds of cultures, not entirely alien from one

another. They shared the same Scriptures, the same Abrahamic heritage, but they were very different and they had two different levels of sophistication, different ways of thinking and living.

The Judeans looked down on the Galileans as a bunch of uncultured, uneducated, hayseeds and the Galileans, they looked at the Judeans, especially those residing in Jerusalem, with a large bit of disdain. Some of that was warranted because of this political, religious collusion and corruption, scandalous issues. Hardworking farmers, fishermen, they could see right through all that nonsense. They despised the corruption, the pandering to Rome, the politics. It's kind of like we, in Colorado, look at people on the left coast and over in D.C. and New York, kinda look down at them.

Good times begin when Jesus there gets to Galilee, as Jesus visits Cana, where he turned water into wine. There at the end of Chapter 4, after the Samaritan evangelism, he visits Cana, where he had turned the water into wine. Everybody there is happy to see him. Nobody wants to let him buy his own food at a restaurant or anything like that. They're not going to let him pay for anything, right? They say, hey, your name Jesus. You did the water with the wine thing? Ah, that is awesome. And it got

better because he healed an official's son. And verse 54 summarizes that "This is now the second sign Jesus did when he came from Judea to Galilee."

All that to say, you now know what's behind Luke 4:14. And you can turn back there, by the way, just briefly. When Luke tells us that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee," you know what kind of power we're talking about. It had been manifest, it had been talked about in such, to such a degree that "a report about him went out throughout all the surrounding country." You need to realize the level of excitement, of anticipation, of expectation that surrounded his showing up in Galilee.

Galilee is the perfect place for him to establish his ministry. It's got the right cultural disposition. It's got the right distance from Jerusalem. It's got the right kind of people who live there, their natural sympathies. Jesus would have time there to teach and connect with people who could understand. He could do it all apart from opposition, immediate, pressing opposition from political and religious establishment. He could do some positive teaching, lay down positively the principles of his ministry, teach the people about the God they thought they



knew, but didn't know. So he went back to Galilee because it was the perfect place.

He also went back to Galilee because of the prophecy in Isaiah 9:1 and 2. It said, You, "Zebulun, land of Naphtali [...]the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; and those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them the light shone." So here he is. He has returned to Galilee, he's fulfilling prophecy, he's establishing his ministry. He's been on the move for a year and a half or so since his baptism. And now that he's got everybody's attention, he is ready to settle into ministry. We're going to start to see that next time.

Father, thank you for what we've learned. It seems like we don't ever have enough time to really get it all in. But, Father, you're sovereign over that as well. We all trust that. We all see that. We just pray that you would use things we've talked about today to give us an appreciation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Help us to see how great and glorious and marvelous that he is.

Thank you for not leaving us without a witness, but giving us the Gospel of John to fill in those early years so we can understand the expectations that Jesus faced when he walked into

that synagogue in Nazareth, his hometown, so we can understand such a violent opposition to his words of mercy. We pray, Father, that we would not be a synagogue like that. We pray that we would be a church with hearts wide open, ready to receive the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.