

“The Joy of Christ”
John 2:1-11
(Preached at Trinity, March 29, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we began the account of the Wedding Feast at Cana. **Verse 11** tells us it was the first of His miracles. It's interesting He did this miracle at Cana of Galilee. Cana was an insignificant city about 120 miles from Jerusalem. In other words, Jesus did His first miracle in a town that was remote from Jerusalem. It was not a public event. His purpose was not to attract a crowd. But it was by design.
2. The occasion was a wedding.
I pointed out last time that weddings in the first-century were major events and could last as long as a week. It was a joyous celebration and **Verse 2** tells us that both Jesus and His disciples attended. In other words, Jesus was not opposed to entering into the joy of this young couple and participating in the feast.
3. Wine was served to celebrate the wedding. Our account implies that the wine was an integral part of the festivities. As we saw last time, there is no reason to presume that this wine was non-alcoholic and there is no indication that Jesus or His disciples objected or refused to partake. Somehow, there must have been a miscalculation on the amount of wine needed and they had run out. This presented a terrible predicament. It would have been a terribly embarrassing situation for the newlywed couple. Some commentators have suggested that they could actually be held liable for damages. First century weddings practiced a strict reciprocity between the host and guests bearing gifts. Mary comes to Jesus in an attempt to provide a solution to the crisis.
4. What I want us to consider tonight is Jesus partaking in this celebration of joy. Although Jesus is referred to as “The Man of Sorrows” He also knew the importance of experiencing the joys of life. We need to understand this as we consider our own experience of joy in this life.
 - I. First of all, Jesus always maintained a proper priority. His greatest joy was found in His relationship with His Father.
 - A. Jesus found no greater joy than doing the will of His Father
John 4:34 NAU - "Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
 1. Paul described obedience as the sum of Christ's ministry
Philippians 2:8 NAU - "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
 2. Jesus found joy in both His active and His passive obedience; both His obedience to the Law of God and His submission to the Father's curse upon sin.

- B. The suffering of Christ was dreadful, yet Jesus found His role as our Savior a joyous task
Hebrews 12:2 NAU - "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
1. We too can find great joy in our union with Christ in His suffering
Philippians 3:10 NAU - "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;"
 2. Our joy is not to be linked only to our external circumstances. Our joy is linked to Christ. His joy is our joy
- C. Our joy is inseparable from our relationship with Christ
1. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit
Galatians 5:22 - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy . . ."
 2. It is one of the great gifts of our Christian conversion
John 15:11 NAU - "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full."
1 Peter 1:8 NAU - "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,"
 3. The Spirit of God fills us with joy – our heart has been changed. The focus of our heart's desire has changed
Matthew 6:21 NAU - "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
- II. Is it wrong to find joy in our earthly life, in earthly things, in earthly experiences?
- A. This was a wedding ceremony – a wonderfully joyous occasion
1. Jesus was invited and He attended
 2. When the wine ran out Mary came to Him. His mother knew Him. She had watched Him grow up. He was extraordinary.
 Jesus rebuffed her approach knowing His earthly ministry had just begun.
 3. He wasn't interested in a public display of His power, but He did have an interest in the situation with this newlywed couple. It is significant that this was the occasion of His first miracle.
John 2:11 NAU - "This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."
 3. Wine was served as a customary part of the celebration.
 - a. Notice the abundance of our Lord's act of changing the water into wine.
John 2:6 NAU - "Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each."
 That's between 120 and 180 gallons. That's a lot of wine! – Somewhere between 600-900 of our average bottles of wine.
 - b. And notice the quality of the wine. It was the best of wine.
John 2:10 NAU - "Every man serves the good wine first, and when *the people* have drunk freely, *then he serves* the poorer *wine*; *but* you have kept the good wine until now."

4. Jesus was not merely a detached observer. He was concerned about the embarrassment of this newlywed couple. He truly entered into their joy. Jesus is gracious and merciful. And He would have enjoyed the occasion.
5. The ultimate joy of Christ was connected to His mission. He found joy in obedience to the Father. He also found joy in the transformed lives of His people. **John 17:13** - "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves." "My joy" in the sense of the joy that belongs to Christ – His joy. "My joy" in the sense of that which he gives to others. **John 15:10 NAU** - "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full."
6. But Jesus also found joy in life. He enjoyed friends and feasts. I read a tract once that condemned our laughter. It claimed we need to be more like Jesus, the Man of Sorrows. It commented that there isn't a single reference to Jesus laughing.
 - a. It is true that Jesus was the Man of Sorrows. He came to bear the sins of His people and suffer in their stead. There was agony in the cross. **Isaiah 53:3 NAU** - "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."
 - b. We have no reason to suspect that Jesus went about moping with a long face. We have every reason to suppose that Jesus experienced wonderful times of joy and laughter with His friends.
7. **William Barclay** – "Jesus was perfectly at home at a wedding feast. He was no severe, austere killjoy. He loved to share in the happy rejoicing of a wedding feast. There are certain religious people who shed a gloom wherever they go. There are certain people who are suspicious of all joy and happiness. To them religion is the thing of black clothes, the lowered voice, the expulsion of social fellowship. They descend like a gloom wherever they go."¹ **Charles Spurgeon** wrote in *Lectures to My Students* – "I don't believe in going about like certain monks whom I saw in Rome, who salute each other in sepulchral tones, and convey the pleasant information, 'Brother we must die;' to which salutation each lively brother of the order replies, 'Yes, brother, we must die.' I was glad to be assured upon such good authority that all these lazy fellows are about to die; upon the whole, it is about the best thing they can do; but till that event occurs, they might use some more comfortable form of salutation. A man who has no geniality about him had better be an undertaker, and bury the dead, for he will never succeed in influencing the living."²

¹ Barclay, William, *The Gospel of John, Volume 1*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), Page 85.

² Spurgeon, Charles, *Lectures to My Students*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), Page 197.

- B. This world is full of joyous things
1. Of all people, Christians should be joyous. There is joy to be found in earthly pleasures. God has given us richly all things to enjoy.
 2. Is it permissible for us to find joy in our career? Can we go to work with joy?
 3. Is it permissible to find joy in earthly possessions?
 4. Can we find joy in our family? Is it joyful to find a mate?
Not only can we. God tells us we must
Prov. 5:18 NAU - "Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth."
Prov. 5:19 NAU - "Be exhilarated always with her love."
 5. The Christian experiences many of the pleasures of this life that the unbeliever has. He too has possessions. He too has friends and loved ones. But they are not the ultimate source of his joy. We find earthly joy in terms of how it relates to Christ.
Matthew Henry – "It is the character and temper of sincere Christians to rejoice in Christ Jesus. The more we take of the comfort of our religion the more closely we shall cleave to it: the more we rejoice in Christ the more willing we shall be to do and suffer for him, and the less danger we shall be in of being drawn away from him."³
- C. God is concerned about the joy of His people. The question is what is the ultimate source of joy?
1. Does God want you to find your ultimate joy in material things?
 2. Does God want your joy to be confined solely upon the comforts this earthly life?
 3. The worldly man sees Christianity as a hard and joyless life.
 - a. They see God as hard and strict and without a regard for our joy
 - b. They can't see value in the Christian life. Paul was poor, homeless, often without friends, persecuted. They would see Paul's life as a life full of sorrow. Paul said,
"I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."
 4. The Christian has found the source of true joy.

³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2325.

Conclusion:

1. We are inhabitants of this earth. We have possessions. We desire creature comforts. We take vacations. We attend joyous celebrations. But we know very well that this is not our home.
2. We never plant our roots too deep. We see everything here as temporary. This takes great discipline, particularly in our hedonistic pleasure seeking culture. We need to learn to estimate things in this life according to their true value.
3. Nothing upon this earth must be your true source of joy. Our joy must be fixed upon Christ. Are you ever filled with unhappiness or discontent? Why? What is your source of joy?
4. We must never forget that our ultimate joy is reserved for eternity. We must fix our sights upon the hope of glory.
It is by faith that you lay hold to this blessed promise. It is by this faith that you can live your life with exceeding great joy even in the midst of great sorrow and adversity. Nothing or no one can take that joy from you.
5. Next time we'll look at the theological significance of this first miracle of our Lord.