Gospel of Glory: Signs of Water and Wine

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, September 8, 2024
PASSAGES	John 2; John 19; Amos 9; Isaiah 25; Zechariah 12; Exodus 12; Luke 22; 1 John 5
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

John did not simply record miracles; he selected seven and arranged them so that the first and the last speak to each other. At Cana, Jesus produces a preposterous quantity of good wine. At Golgotha, he receives sour wine and dies. Both are signs, and both exist for one reason — to manifest his glory so that you will believe.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A faith can go boring, and it happens when anything other than Christ moves to the center — including ourselves. Studying him endlessly is one of the more respectable ways to keep him at a distance.
- John's seven signs are laid out like a sandwich, and the middle layer — the bread of heaven — tells you how to read the whole thing.
- The wine at Cana was not a favor to an embarrassed host. Between 120 and 180 gallons is a signal, and the prophets had already told Israel what it signals.
- Amos and Isaiah both attach the Messiah to overwhelming quantities of good wine, to the rebuilding of David's house, to a feast, and to the end of death itself.
- The one who poured out an absurd abundance of sweet wine took sour wine into his own mouth. That reversal is the point of pairing the two signs.
- The hyssop branch and the unbroken bones are Passover details, dropped into the crucifixion account on purpose: here is the Lamb.

- Jesus himself tied his blood to the cup, and told us to keep drinking it in remembrance — so the wine theme is his, not a clever reader's.
- Literary parallels are interesting. They are not food. The signs were written down so that you would trust the person they point at.

▶ 1:00:48

Matt opened not with the text but with something he said he had been praying about: "I have a burden for those who are bored in their faith." He was careful about it — "let the Lord reinterpret as I speak, if he must" — and equally careful to say he was not pointing at anyone. He has done all of it himself.

The ways we keep him at a distance

▶ 1:01:33

There is nothing boring about Jesus. But there are, Matt said, "little creative games we play" that keep him at bay without looking like avoidance. You can study endlessly about him without ever embracing him. You can work for him like an employee — conservative and liberal versions both exist — without ever sitting at his feet, though he thought that road ends more often in cynicism and burnout than in boredom. And you can quietly convert godliness into comfort, reasoning that since the yoke is easy and the burden light, the most relaxed life must be the most holy one.

He pressed on that last one. Paul and Peter wrote about the God of peace while being harassed, imprisoned, shipwrecked, stoned and left for dead. They meant something by it that luxury cannot counterfeit.

▶ 1:03:02

Underneath all of it he named a fear: that if we let him speak, he will say something that costs us a part of ourselves. Maybe it is gangrene and rot, but it is still ours. Matt's answer was that his words cut chains — "we can end up dropping weight we didn't know was there, but it might hurt all the same."

> *"Let him in as he knocks. Let's not shut him out for the sake of safety or comfort."*

How John built this gospel

▶ 1:06:30

John says outright that the world could not contain the books if everything Jesus did were written down (John 21:25). So the selection is deliberate, and so is the order. Seven events are called signs: water into wine; the healing of a dying boy — John insists he is dying, not merely sick; a disabled man healed at a pool; bread multiplied for thousands; a blind man given sight; Lazarus raised; and the temple of his body, which Jesus himself named as the sign when they demanded one after he cleared the temple.

Laid out that way, the layers pair off: two disabled men healed, a dying boy and a dead man. And a sandwich structure is read from the middle. In the center Jesus says his flesh is real food and his blood real drink — your ancestors ate manna and still died, and he is giving food that ends dying. "That burger helps us see what all of it means."

The wedding at Cana

▶ 1:10:35

The narrative runs fast — five verses, boom, boom, boom. Matt cheerfully set aside the funny sermons this passage attracts: that the wine ran out because Jesus and his disciples showed up, or that Mary went over his head to his Father. Enjoyable, but not in the text. He did clear up one thing that trips English readers: calling Mary "woman" was not rude. They were not speaking English and they were not Americans. It lands closer to "ma'am."

Then the pace changes, and that change is the emphasis:

> "Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim."
>
> JOHN 2:6–7 ↗

▶ 1:13:32

Do the arithmetic. At the low end that is 120 gallons; filled to the brim at thirty, it is 180. Matt — a self-described box-wine purchaser — asked the room to picture a five-gallon office water jug, then a whole room of them, all wine, for one party where the guests had already been drinking. And the master of the feast has no idea where it came from, though the servants do, and so do we. "Everyone serves the good wine first… but you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10) — a broken protocol and a bewildered bridegroom who never saw the barrels arrive.

> "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him."
>
> JOHN 2:11 ↗

The prophets were expecting this much wine

▶ 1:16:26

This is where the sermon turned, because the quantity is the message. Amos ties the rebuilding of David's fallen booth — his household, his line, his kingdom — to a harvest so extravagant it overruns itself:

> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it."
>
> AMOS 9:13 ↗

Matt made the picture concrete: pour a single gallon of water on dry Texas soil and you do not get a river, you get a damp patch and then nothing. For hills to *flow*, the volume has to be beyond reckoning — and it is sweet wine, the good stuff. Isaiah stacks the same images on the same mountain:

> "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine… And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples… He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces."
>
> ISAIAH 25:6–8 ↗

A feast, not a meal. Aged wine, not cheap. A veil lifted from all nations — an awareness of who he is, the knowledge of his glory filling the earth. Death destroyed. Every tear wiped away, which is exactly where Revelation 21:4 lands. So when a descendant of David fills a wedding with more good wine than anyone could drink, the signal is not subtle. "He's not just being sweet — oh, poor things, they ran out of wine."

Destroy this temple

▶ 1:20:24

A few verses later Jesus makes a whip, drives out the sheep and oxen, and pours out the money changers' coins — "that should be somebody's life verse." When they demand a sign for it, he answers with the sign that will close the book:

> "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." … But he was speaking about the temple of his body.
>
> JOHN 2:19–21 ↗

Placed this close to Cana, the pairing is deliberate. His body is the true temple, and we are living stones being built into it — a project still growing in scope thousands of years later.

Sour wine, blood and water

▶ 1:23:20

> "After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), 'I thirst.' A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."
>
> JOHN 19:28–30 ↗

The contrast is the sermon in one image. The Messiah who multiplied sweet wine to absurdity now drinks sour wine as he tastes our death. The soldiers came to break the legs of the crucified — a man can push up on his feet and delay suffocation, so breaking the legs ends it — but Jesus was already dead, so instead a spear went into his side and out came blood and water (John 19:33–35). Water became wine at the first sign; at the last, wine, then blood and water. And John stops to tell you why he is telling you: so that you also may believe.

Passover in the details

▶ 1:24:54

John cites two scriptures over the body. The first is Zechariah, where the grammar itself is startling: the LORD says *they will look on me, on him whom they have pierced* (Zechariah 12:10). Matt let the oddity stand and then dissolved it — our God is Trinity. Jesus is not the Father, and he and the Father are one. The one pouring out grace and the one pierced are not two stories.

▶ 1:26:33

The second is Passover, and it is hiding in the props. The sponge went up on a hyssop branch — the same branch Israel was told to dip in the basin of lamb's blood and strike across the lintel and doorposts, so that the household would be passed over.

> "Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood… It shall be eaten in one house… and you shall not break any of its bones."
>
> EXODUS 12:22 ↗; EXODUS 12:46 ↗

Unbroken bones and hyssop. Here is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

The cup he told us to keep drinking

▶ 1:27:35

The link between wine and blood is not a reader's flourish. Jesus made it himself and then built a ceremony out of it:

> "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." … "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."
>
> LUKE 22:19–20 ↗

Which is why John writes elsewhere that Jesus "came by water and blood — not by the water only but by the water and the blood," with the Spirit bearing witness besides (1 John 5:6–11). This is not the testimony of people about God. It is God's testimony about his Son, and the testimony is that he has given us life in him.

Back to being bored

▶ 1:28:57

Matt ended where he started, and undercut his own hour to do it. "Who cares that there are neat literary parallels? It's kind of cool. But does that fill your soul? Jesus, the real Christ, does." The signs were not written to be admired as craftsmanship. They were written so that you would trust the person they are pointing at.

> *"Don't just be satisfied with knowing about him. Know him. Walk with him. Let him speak to you. Trust him and follow him."*

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- John 21:25
- John 2:6–7
- John 2:10
- John 2:11
- Amos 9:13
- Isaiah 25:6–8
- Revelation 21:4
- John 2:19–21
- John 19:28–30
- John 19:33–35
- Zechariah 12:10
- Exodus 12:22
- Exodus 12:46
- Luke 22:19–20
- 1 John 5:6–11

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt named several ways we keep Jesus at a safe distance while looking devout. Which one is yours, and what does it protect you from?
2. What would it cost you to let him speak to something you are currently coping with rather than surrendering?
3. Why does the sheer quantity of wine at Cana matter? What would be lost if Jesus had quietly produced just enough?
4. Isaiah promises a feast, a veil lifted, and death swallowed up. Which of those three do you find hardest to actually expect?
5. Knowing about him and knowing him — where is the gap in your own week, and what is one thing you will change to close it?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fzc4gRV4EAc&t=3600s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.