

If you had witnessed the miracle at Cana, would you have believed the claims of Christ? If you had only witnessed the scene at the temple, would you have believed the claims of Christ? In both situations the authority of Jesus was revealed. If you answered the second question differently than the first, what is the difference in belief? What is the basis of your faith?

In v. 2:25 we learn that Jesus did not entrust himself to those around him, even though they believed in him. Why? What is “in a man”? Does this mean that we are not to trust those around us?

As you think about the challenges in this passage, how has God’s grace sustained you in the past?

What can you count on God to do in the future?

John 2:1-25

Lesson 3
For October 5, 2008

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LEADER’S GUIDE

For discussion following the sermon on October 5, 2008

Wedding and Temple

In this passage we will consider the parallels of two stories. There are two venues: one private, one public. Jesus uses two ordinary things for extraordinary purpose: water, and a whip. His authority is revealed in two different ways. At the wedding his authority is revealed through a gift. In the temple his authority is revealed through indictment. What can we learn from these scenarios? How will we be challenged to live out our faith?

Key Points

- The old has gone, the new has come
- Jesus’ authority revealed
- Relationship in lieu of religion

There is a recurring theme in John 2:1-4:54; the old has gone, the new has come! Throughout this gospel, John uses stories and relationships to help us understand two dimensions: the obvious and the obscure, the story itself and the meaning behind it. For instance, in the miracle at Cana, we find a compelling story of the kindness of God and the miraculous power that was given to Jesus. Experiencing the supernatural, the disciples believed. But there may be deeper symbolism in that the old order of Jewish law is giving way to the new order of redemption through Christ, insufficiency giving way to sufficiency. Likewise, in the cleansing of the temple, Jesus’ authority and power are displayed. It is revealed by the Jews who demanded a miraculous sign. If he were simply a rogue or deranged man, they wouldn’t have demanded such a sign. The old order of the temple sacrifice would soon give way to a new order of the supreme sacrifice through Jesus Christ.

Throughout this gospel John is carefully providing stories and explanations that give us greater insight into the heart of God. Keep in mind that, at this point, the synoptic gospels have already been written, and therefore John is providing more than an historic perspective. His viewpoint is that of an eyewitness and a close friend. His insights are full of relational dynamics and hidden meanings (that he takes time to explain). They give us insight into the importance of not just knowing the facts, but knowing God! From the miracles themselves to the symbolism behind them, may we continue to be drawn into belief in Jesus Christ as expressed by the disciples in v. 2:11b: “He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

Leader’s Guide

Personal Preparation

As you consider the wedding at Cana, what lavish provision has God granted to you personally that reveals his kindness and the benevolence of his character? Take time to reflect on and thank him for these gifts.

As you consider the cleansing of the temple, consider how God would reorder our worship—both individual worship and especially our corporate worship.

In what ways has your own “religion” become dead orthodoxy rather than a living faith?

Group Preparation

According to the Encarta Dictionary, the definition of conjecture is “the formation of judgments or opinions on the basis of incomplete or inconclusive information.” Throughout this passage, and as we will find in the weeks ahead, there is great temptation to use conjecture in presenting the passages. Even many commentaries make statements that are not supported in the text.

As you lead discussion, be mindful of impressions that can lead you to conclusions that are not stated in the passage. For instance, this passage is not about the consumption or prohibition of alcohol and is not one of the applications of the story, but some in your group may want to make that application.

Discussion Questions

As you think of the wedding at Cana, what attributes of God can you identify? How did Jesus display the glory of the Father through this miracle?

In v. 4, Jesus answers Mary’s request rather abruptly. There is an apparent distancing between Jesus and his mother, a distancing that continues throughout his ministry. Why is this necessary? *(There is equal footing at the cross. Everyone must come to Jesus. During Jesus’ ministry Mary is not given the privileges of motherhood. Jesus belongs to the Father, and seeks only to do the Father’s will.)*

Bulletin Question: Jesus redeemed the honor of the wedding host in Cana, and revealed his authority and right to rule and reign in the temple. The host was grateful, the Jewish leaders, indignant. When Jesus works in our lives toward redemption and restoration, it is often a painful process. Are you more likely to respond like the host, or the Jewish leaders?

The temple cleansing was not about corruption of business practices. Jesus responded to what he heard; “instead of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petition, there is noisy commerce”¹. If we are the new temple, what does God “hear” inside of us? Are our thoughts occupied with the cares of this world? Are we able to set them aside for a period of time, both privately and corporately, so that God can hear our hearts of repentance, worship, and prayer? How frequently are you able to do so?

Jesus cleared the temple. He is clearing our temple as well? Think of one thing that Jesus is “clearing” i.e. calling for repentance. He desires to do a redeeming work in you. What do you think that redeeming work is? What makes that change difficult?

Jesus is more concerned about relationship than ritual. In what ways might you be relying more on ritual and practices than God? Why is it easier to depend on those rituals or practices? What is the risk of engaging God personally?