

“This Is Jesus: Relationship Unifier”

I find it interesting that the first miracle of Jesus that Scripture shares with us is him changing water into wine at a wedding in Cana. The man who cast demons out of people, healed debilitating health issues, and calmed storms would make sure that the party would go on in Cana. This miracle has all sorts of implications for us, but they all underscore this important truth - This is Jesus: Relationship Unifier.

The first miracle of Jesus is changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana. It seems so out of place in comparison to the rest of his miracles. Yet when you think about it, what is the picture that God wants us to hold on to when we think about Heaven? A wedding banquet! Repeatedly Scripture says that Jesus is the bridegroom and the Christian Church is his bride (Revelation 19, John 3, Ephesians 5, Matthew 25). **“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son”** (Matthew 22:2). So it’s fitting that Jesus first miracle, at least that is recorded for us, is him saving the day at a wedding banquet. Just imagine the embarrassment of that couple and their families. Just imagine the finger pointing as to who is at fault and the ensuing hard feelings and relationship stress that would come next. Not exactly the way you want a new marriage to start. So Jesus steps in and nips that problem in the bud. This is Jesus: Relationship Unifier.

Heaven is described as a wedding banquet. Jesus first miracle is changing water into wine at a wedding in Cana. This connection makes us first and foremost think about how Jesus unified the relationship between a sinner like you/me and a perfect God. Listen to the prophet Isaiah describe Jesus working as the Relationship Unifier between us and God. **“No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married...as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you”** (Isaiah 62:4-5). Roughly 100 years after Isaiah spoke and wrote these words the Babylonians would enter Israel and leave it desolate and deserted as many in Israel were taken into exile in Babylon. This was God’s judgment against Israel and his stern call to repentance for their spiritual idolatry. For their worship of other gods like being too focused on earthly wealth and pleasure. For their worship of other gods as they easily set aside God’s will for their lives in order to embrace their own sinful desires. For their worship of other gods as they were worried about many things instead of trusting God’s promises. For their worship of other gods as they complained and grumbled about their lives instead of being happy and content with the Lord’s care. But God, in his mercy, would allow Israel to return from exile and reestablish themselves as a nation so that the Savior of the world could be born in Israel. No longer would Israel’s name be Deserted or Desolate. Instead God would call them by new names: **“Hephzibah,”** meaning “my delight is in her” and **“Beulah,”** meaning “I marry her.” Because of Jesus, God’s relationship with Israel was unified again. The old testament history of the nation of Israel is really the story of every Christian. There was a time for each of us that the best way to describe us spiritually would have been “deserted,” empty because of our sinfulness and “desolate” when you consider the eternal future in Hell that we had rightfully earned. There was a time for each of us that the best way to describe our relationship with God would have been “deserted” and “desolate” – unfixable. But Jesus did what seemed impossible. He lived a perfect life under God’s Law.

Jesus suffered the desertion and desolation of God's wrath of Hell for everyone's sin when he suffered and died on the cross. Jesus victoriously rose from the dead to broadcast that it is possible for sinners like us to enjoy a fixed relationship with God that ends in Heaven instead of Hell. Through faith in Jesus this is possible. And when God the Holy Spirit used the powerful Word of God to work faith in your heart and mine that trusts in Jesus as Savior God the Father started calling us by different names. Gone were the stern righteous anger names of "deserted" and "desolate." Those names were replaced by the beautiful names of "**Hephzibah**," meaning "my delight is in her" and "**Beulah**," meaning "I marry her." Because of Jesus God delights in you and me. Because of Jesus God finds us so beautiful that he wants to marry us, commit to us and love us, for eternity. This is Jesus: the relationship unifier as he fixed our broken relationship with God making that gift possible.

There are two specific applications to this that I would like to talk about here today. The first application is this. Does your relationship with someone else seem deserted or desolate? Perhaps it's your marriage, or your relationship with a parent, a child, a sibling, or another family member. Perhaps it's your relationship with a friend, neighbor, boss, co-worker, classmate, or fellow church member. Does it feel broken and unfixable? Never underestimate the ability of Jesus to heal that relationship. If Jesus can fix the relationship between sinners like us and God, then he can certainly fix the relationship between two human beings. Remember, the Lord delights in you and the Lord chose you to be his spiritual spouse that he wants to spend eternity with. Let that good news fill your heart as you strive to do your part to heal what is broken. Let Jesus help you and encourage you because this is what Jesus does: he heals relationships.

The second application I would like you to consider is this. Our Scripture lesson from 1 Corinthians 12 today reminds us that not only has Jesus unified sinners like you and me with God, but he's unified forgiven sinners like you and me with each other. Paul describes it this way. "**The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ ...Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.**" (1 Cor 12:12, 27). We belong to God and we belong to each other. And God wants us to take care of each other. Here's how we do it. "**There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good**" (1 Cor. 12:4-7). Did you notice what Paul says? Each one of us has been given gifts - talents, abilities, and blessings - not to use selfishly, but to use for the common good. To use to help others. So let's serve each other with our gifts in our homes so that our family bonds become more united. Let's serve each other with those gifts in our church so that we become more united as a congregation of believers striving to share the Gospel with the world. Let's serve our neighbors at work, and school, and in our community with our gifts so that we can earn the right to share the Gospel with them. God the Holy Spirit might just bless our efforts in such a way that those people will be enjoying Jesus wine in Heaven with us at the great wedding banquet that awaits us there. Amen.