

## **John 2:1-11**

### **Read John 2:1-11**

In the sermon Tim invited us to consider Jesus' interaction with his Mom as a clear invitation to see him and relate to him in a new way – not as a mother to a son, but as a disciple. In order for us to pick up a new way of seeing and relating we must first make a clean break with incomplete, inadequate ways of seeing and relating.

1. Has there been a time in your life where an inadequate and incomplete view of God has been exposed? If so, when? Was it easy to let go of? Why or why not? Did you have a new vision of God to take its place?

*This is simply a self reflection question. You will want to be attentive to the time that this may take as it could easily fill up the space. If you can tease out of the stories a little the benefit that this being brought to let go of old ways of seeing and relating it will help to give a lens to Jesus' rude response to his Mom. That is, as a loving act for her benefit.*

The jars that Jesus has filled with water were set aside for regular washing of feet when one entered, of hands before eating, utensils between courses. This washing also had a symbolic meaning with each washing they were reminding themselves of this truth: I / we / our world is marred by sin and so sin must be cleansed, sin must be washed away. Filling them to the brim is Jesus' way of saying I am coming to fulfill, to bring to completion what these washings point to.

2. How does it impact how we see ourselves, see others, relate to others to know that in Jesus our sins are completely forgiven?

*See ourselves: Has the power to address the realities of guilt and shame that often impact us. Can provide the foundation for a true forgiving of self for the wrongs we have committed.*

*See others: There can be no sense of superiority when we see that all of us are sinners in need of grace.*

*Relate to others: God's forgiveness of us becomes the pattern and the motivation for forgiving others.*

*This quote from Miroslav Volf may help:*

*"Forgiveness flounders because I exclude the enemy from the community of humans even as I exclude myself from the community of sinners. But no one can be in the presence of the God of the crucified Messiah for long without overcoming this double exclusion — without transposing the enemy from the sphere of the monstrous... into the sphere of shared humanity and herself from the sphere of proud innocence into the sphere of common sinfulness. When one knows [as the cross demonstrates] that the torturer will not eternally triumph over the victim, one is free to rediscover that person's humanity and imitate God's love for him. And when one knows [as the cross demonstrates] that God's love is greater than all sin, one is free to see oneself in the light of God's justice and so rediscover one's own sinfulness."*

### **Read Isaiah 25:1, 6-9 and Revelation 21: 1-4, 9-10**

In scripture the future that God is bringing about is nothing less than the utter renewal of all of physical creation, not of us going to heaven but of heaven come down to unite heaven and earth. The imagery that is used is of a feast, a wedding feast. In this miracle Jesus is telling us that he is bringing that future about.

3. What does this imagery of a feast, a wedding feast, tell us about the future that Jesus is bringing?

*It is a material future of taste, touch, and smell. Where all of physical reality is shot through with the glory, beauty, and purpose of the creator.*

*It is a future where joy and celebration are the primary realities – for there is no more sin and injustice, death does not cast a shadow, God will wipe tears from all our eyes.*

*Where we will be enveloped in God's love as a bridegroom to a bride – which will be explored in the next question.*

### **Read John 3:22-30, Zephaniah 3:14-18**

The bridegroom gets the credit for what Jesus has done. In this way John is telling us that Jesus is the true bridegroom. John the Baptist affirms this in the conversation you just read. Zephaniah adds further imagery to the reality of this coming feast of God's love for us is as a bridegroom to a bride.

4. How does it impact you to know that in Christ God will quiet you with his love, rejoice in you with gladness, delight over you with singing?

*This is a personal reflection question but I would encourage you to prepare yourself for a spectrum of responses.*

*There will be some who will find the imagery difficult to enter into, whether by their gender (men in particular often struggle with the idea they are a bride), or experience (those single or in difficult marriages also struggle with this).*

*There will be others for who they idea that God even loves them would be difficult even before we get to the kind of love the scriptures point to.*

*It may be helpful – for all of these reasons – to reflect on the reality that the love we speak of around marriage in our western contemporary culture is often focused on romantic love or erotic love. It may help to understand that in marriage the love of friendship, the love of action in desiring and working toward the best of the other, the love of duty to a role that would have also been considered a central part of marriage and allow that to shape the imagery and thus the resulting impact of the imagery.*

In light of this new vision of who Jesus is: the true cleanser of sin, the true Lord of the feast, the true bridegroom the disciples believe *into* him. This means they take a step of the will that is dependant upon what they believe about him. In the sermon Tim looked at a few implications of what it would look like to believe *into* Jesus. First obedience: Do what he tells you to do.

5. As we see with Mary believing into Jesus is to step forward in obedience for that is the way that Jesus brings about this new glorious reality. What are some of the barriers to obedience and what truths of who Jesus is from this story could address those barriers?

*I think many of the objections you will hear will boil down to – can I trust him? Is he good? Does he love me? Is the future he is bringing about somewhere I would want to be?*

*I think that reality can be addressed with many of the things you have seen in the story in your previous reflections.*

In the midst of the joy of the feast Jesus is oriented toward his hour. In John his hour always refers to the time of his death. Ed Clowney in reflection on this text says: “In the midst of the joy of the feast Jesus is sipping the coming sorrow, so that we in the midst of this world’s sorrow can sip the coming joy. (The joy of a utterly renewed creation that is likened to a wedding feast).

6. How can being oriented toward the coming joy buoy us up in the midst of this world's sorrow?

*We know how the story ends.*

*We can work toward the realities that will continue into the consummated kingdom when Jesus returns to make everything new.*

*We aren't missing out on a thing – the future is related to this physical reality.*

*Where things are joyless – the future is of a joy that never ends.*

7. N.T. Wright in *Surprised by Hope* says that this belief in resurrection as the utter renewal of creation stirred up in followers of Jesus a robust opposition to the injustices of the world. But also noted that ...“English evangelicals gave up believing in the urgent imperative to improve society (such as we find with Wilberforce in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) about the same time that they gave up believing robustly in resurrection and settled for a disembodied heaven instead.” Discuss.

*I think this may generate quite a bit of discussion particularly if members of your group were formed in a Christianity that said – at the point of death our souls will be freed from the prison of our material bodies to enter either a spiritual ethereal existence in a disembodied heaven or to the horrors of hell all dependant upon accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

*This is a difficult belief to let go of because for many it has given them hope and security – the comfort that a loved one is now home in heaven with Jesus. Not that this more biblical vision can't offer the hope of an eternal life - it simply makes the reality of it not spiritual but material.*

*The real thrust of this section however should be rooted in how each view of our future shapes how we live. The one view often leads us to focus on evangelism to the exclusion of social justice – because we have to get as many people as possible to heaven by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

*This biblically rooted conviction in a resurrection that is the utter renewal of physical creation doesn't negate evangelism – though our language around it may change – as we become citizens of a kingdom that has not only heavenly but earthly consequences.*