

## SM005 – The Servants’ Secret

You’re listening to Stories of the Master.

The stories of Jesus have reached into the hearts of millions. They have changed people, families, and nations. Not all have loved the stories Jesus told. Not all have honored the life He lived. Some were angry with Him, the things He did and the things He said. Others were deeply moved and found hope. What will your response be?

Today on Stories of the Master – The Servants’ Secret and it is taken from the Gospel of John Chapter 2.

My name is Jonathan, and I will be your Storyteller and Teacher.

I’m so glad you’re here. Gather your friends. Open your Bible to John 2, come close and listen. It’s time for the world to hear again the stories of the Master.

And now – The Servants’ Secret

### Part 1

Jesus and his small band of followers – Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael were invited to a wedding. What a refreshing change from the deserts of Judea.

No one knows who was getting married. Perhaps it was a close family member or friend because Mary, the mother of Jesus was there. This is the first mention of Mary in the Gospel of John as this Gospel says nothing about Jesus’ miraculous birth, but being the last of the four Gospels the truth of his supernatural birth was well established in fact and John had other purposes in writing his story of Jesus.

Weddings in ancient times, as they are today were festive occasions. Joy abounded, food abounded, and wine abounded. It was the bridegroom’s responsibility to see that everyone had everything they needed so they could celebrate, but on this day at this wedding something unthinkable happened – the wine ran out.

Wine in the Bible is a symbol for blessing and prosperity from God. The prophet Moses said that if his people obeyed God’s covenant, God would bless the fruit of their womb and the fruit of the ground, their grain and their new wine and oil (Deuteronomy 7:13).

Wine was a symbol of joy and it was a symbol of the age of salvation that would come. In a familiar prophecy the prophet Amos said:

<sup>13</sup> “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD,  
“When the plowman will overtake the reaper  
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;

When the mountains will drip sweet wine  
And all the hills will be dissolved.

<sup>14</sup> “Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel,  
And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*;  
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,  
And make gardens and eat their fruit. (Amos 9:13-14)

Wine was a symbol for something else, or perhaps I should say, the lack of wine was a symbol.  
It was a symbol of judgment.

If the people did not obey the Lord, Moses warned about this in Deuteronomy 28:30:

<sup>30</sup> You shall betroth a wife, but another man will violate her; you shall build a house, but you  
will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit

And the prophet Micah said: <sup>15</sup> “You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but  
will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine. (6:15)

In ancient Israel, the people were very much aware of their history and their Scripture. Their  
actions carried much symbolism with them. If they were a generous people, it meant that God  
had blessed them. If they did not have much to share with others, it was a sign that God’s  
blessing was not upon them. It was a sign that His curse was upon them.

And at a wedding, it was crucial to show hospitality in abundant ways to show the blessing of  
God upon these families and upon this new union of the man and the woman.

And at this wedding, the wine ran out. The bridegroom and his family would be humiliated. The  
bride’s family would be enraged at this public shaming where there was not enough thoughtful  
planning and provision. If the bridegroom could not provide for the feast, how could he provide  
for a future family? If the bridegroom would not honor his new bride and her family at the  
wedding, how would he honor her in life? How could this wedding be blessed of God if the  
symbol of joy and abundance was not there?

A time of joy was about to become a time of grief, unless ... yes unless... Jesus could do  
something about it.

Mary became aware of the shortage of wine. How did she know? How did she find out first? It  
doesn’t matter how, but when she did, she went immediately to Jesus. It was good to see him  
again. He had been gone for so long – for many weeks. He told her he had to travel south to  
where John the prophet was preaching and baptizing. She knew something was going to  
happen, but why did he have to be gone for so long? Mothers always want their sons near by.  
But that was past, now he was back in Galilee and they were together at a joyful wedding that

is now in danger of becoming a scandal. And when she finds out that the wine is gone, and the party far from over, she goes to Jesus and says,

“Jesus, they have no wine.”

The words sound innocent enough. If you or I were at a party today and someone came up to me and said, “they just ran out of chips and dip,” I might find that to be a hint that I should go to the store and get some more.

But this isn't just any party, and this just isn't any woman, and this just isn't any son the woman is talking to. This is Mary, the mother of Jesus, the one who received the commission from the angel Gabriel to be the bearer of the Messiah. This is the woman who prophesied praises to the Lord when He was still in her womb, the one who rejoiced with Elizabeth who was herself with child with the prophet John. This is the one who gave birth to the Messiah, who nursed him, who watched the shepherds come and worship, who watched the magi file into their home and offer gifts and worship. This is the one who took the child to the temple with Joseph and listened as Simeon uttered prophecies over the child and as Anna rejoiced over him and told everyone that the Savior of the world was in the temple.

Mary had treasured all these things in her heart for thirty long years. She watched Jesus grow up, learn His Torah, and become the model citizen of Nazareth. And she wondered, when would he step out and make his declaration of his true identity?

Perhaps this would be the moment. He was now 30 years of age – mature, strong, spiritual, he was ready. And what better place than a wedding to show his power.

The wedding in Israel was a symbol for God's coming kingdom. When the kingdom of God would come, when the Messiah would come, the prophets pictured it with a feast.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;  
A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow,  
*And* refined, aged wine.

<sup>7</sup> And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples,  
Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.

<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death for all time,  
And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces,  
And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;  
For the LORD has spoken.

Yes, with such prophecies, a wedding feast would be a great place for her son to show himself.

“Jesus,” Mary said, “They have no wine.” And now, rather than it sounding like a complaint, “oh no, what will we do and can you do anything about it?” it sounds like an opportunity. “Jesus, they have no wine. Wouldn’t this be a great time and a great way to step forward and show yourself?”

Would it be? What did Jesus say to his mother and what would Jesus do?

Jesus replies –

“Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.” Jesus reply is filled with meaning and when we come back we’ll find out what he meant, what He did and why this story is called “The Servants’ Secret.

## **Interlude**

You’re listening to Stories of the Master – a retelling of the Story of Jesus and the stories He told. You know, the world is full of stories – some are good, some are bad, some are filled with humor, some are filled with tragedy. Some are trivial, like something that happened in last week’s big game. Some are earth shattering and can change people and nations for the good or for the bad.

In the midst of all these stories it is so important that we hear the Story of Jesus and learn what His story can mean for us. Today’s story is taken from the Gospel of John, 2:1-11. You can read about it yourself. If you don’t have a Bible, write to us, and we will send you a NT free of charge. We want you to read the Stories of the Master for yourself. And let us know which broadcast you have listened to.

Stories of the Master is a ministry of Word of God, Speak where we desire to retell the Story of Jesus and the stories He told to the whole world. We help you connect to the Story of God, to build a biblical worldview, and to advance change in your life. As you listen, it is our hope that you will want to learn more about this man Jesus, His stories, His life, and what He came to do.

Check out our website at [Stories of the Master.com](http://StoriesoftheMaster.com). You can also write to us at Stories - PO Box 90047 in SA TX 78209 in the U.S.

We also invite you to go to our Resources page at [Stories of the Master.com](http://StoriesoftheMaster.com) and take advantage of the several resources we have to help you in your discovery of Jesus, including a CD of today’s Story of the Master to listen to it again and to share it with a friend.

Jesus and his disciples and his mother Mary are at a wedding and the unthinkable has happened. There is a shortage of wine. This was a symbol of judgment and Mary has come to Jesus and told him about the predicament. Let’s find out what Jesus did.

## **Part 2**

“Jesus,” Mary said, “They have no wine.”

“Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.”

What does this mean?

First, He calls her woman, not mother. If he called her mother, he might be expected to do exactly as she is hinting as an obedient son.

But he doesn't call her mother. He calls her woman, a subtle way of saying that he is stepping out, not as a rebellious son, but stepping out as the one in charge, as the Lord who is her Lord as well.

Jesus says, “what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.” In other words, woman, their lack of wine, why is that a concern to us? My mission is far greater than ensuring that our host has enough wine for the wedding. And while I could easily do a miracle in the sight of everyone that would astound everyone, it is not yet the hour for me to prove myself openly. My hour has not yet come.”

To some who may have been standing by and who may have heard this exchange between Mary and Jesus, they may have been confused, or felt like it was a put down, or that Mary had been put in her place in a male-dominated culture. But when we read the story, it is hard to pick up on the tone of voice and we cannot see the faces and looks between the two. Jesus may have said it all with a smile on his face and in his voice – a knowing look at Mary where he said one thing with his words but what was unsaid was even more powerful. What was unsaid between the two?

“Yes, mother, I know that they have no wine and we both know I can do something about it but will this bring glory to my heavenly Father whose Spirit placed me in your womb? It is not yet time for me to be glorified by my Father.”

We know Mary was not at all put down by Jesus' response and that she still has hope that Jesus will do something and probably expects him to do something about it because she says to the servants at the wedding, “Whatever he says to you, do it.” Mary knew that even though Jesus is not going to do something out in the open for everyone, he will probably do something in a quiet way, and she prepares the servants – get ready – and whatever he says to you – do it.

Those were perfect words for the servants of the household of that wedding because Jesus was about to tell them to do something that made no sense whatsoever.

At this wedding, in this home of Cana in Galilee, there were six large stone water pots that were used for washing and for purification. They were large as they could hold 20-30 gallons of water each.

Jesus got up from his conversation with Mary. He took the servants to the water pots, and said “fill them with water.”

Fill them with water? Why would he ask us to do such a thing? They needed wine, not water! This was a wedding, not a bath! This was a party not a purification ceremony. And besides, that’s a lot of work – that 120-180 gallons of water from the well. That’s going to take a lot of time and a lot of work and we are busy.”

But Mary had said, “Whatever he says to you, do it!”

And so the servants filled the water pots with water and reported to Jesus that they were finished. They were ready for the second command of Jesus.

“Draw out some of the water that you have put into the stone pots and take it to the headwaiter.

If the first command of Jesus sounded ridiculous, this one was downright dangerous! They needed wine, not water. And if the servants took water to the headwaiter, their jobs could be in jeopardy. The headwaiter might even think they were mocking him. Perhaps it would appear like they were drunk for taking such a foolish action and they would get blamed for the shortage of wine. This was a risky move Jesus was asking them to take.

But his mother had said, “Whatever he says to you, do it.” And so they went back to the stone water pots, freshly filled with water, probably thinking, “this is nuts.” But as they drew near, the fragrance from the pots overwhelmed them. It was the fragrance of wine, good, tasty, perfect wine. How could that be? Where was it coming from? It was coming from the pots that they had just filled with water, and when they looked in they saw, not clear water, but a beautiful red color, such as they had never seen before.

The servants looked at one another with astonishment, and then they hurriedly scooped some out and rushed it to the headwaiter – faces beaming with joy. The headwaiter tasted and was amazed – “this was the best wine of the night! Why had the bridegroom kept this wine back until now?”

He went to the bridegroom, with joy in his heart and relief in his voice because he could now fulfill his task as headwaiter making sure everyone had everything they needed. He said to the bridegroom, “Every man serves the best wine first and then after people have drunk freely and dulled their sense of taste, then they bring out the poorer wine. But you have kept the best wine until now.” They all laughed, the headwaiter from relief that he would be able to do his job, the bridegroom that everything was going well. And the servants over what Jesus had done.

Perhaps at this moment the servants looked at Jesus who had now retaken his assigned seat beside Mary at the party and perhaps Jesus put his finger to his lips and shook his head “no” with a smile signaling for them to keep it a secret – that he had turned the water into wine. It was enough, at this time, that there would be a successful wedding and it was enough that the servants knew, that Mary knew, and that his disciples knew. No one else needed to know what had happened because His hour had not yet come.

The story ends this way “This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”

In the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the story of the wedding at Cana and the turning of water into wine is thought to be the first of all miracles that he did. And when Jesus did miracles there were always reasons for them. I would like to share five reasons why Jesus performed miracles:

1. He did them to show who He was – this was probably the reasoning behind Mary’s request when she came to him and said, “They have no wine, Jesus, and you can do something about it and show them who you are.”

The stories of the Gospel tell us that Jesus’s miracles did reveal His identity. One day Thomas said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”

And Jesus \*said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how *can* you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. <sup>11</sup> Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

This miracle in Cana of Galilee was the first miracle that His disciples saw. It was for them and for the servants to see and no one else. It was for them to learn first who He was.

2. He sometimes did miracles to show the new age that was dawning – the age of the kingdom of God. On another occasion Jesus said:

“If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

And as we have seen in our story today, a wedding and abundant wine was a sign of the inbreaking of the kingdom.

3. He did miracles to demonstrate his authority.  
over death – by raising the dead  
Over disease by healing  
over demons by freeing people from their grip  
over creation by turning water into wine

But Christ was doing more than demonstrating authority. Christ was taking authority. He was reclaiming authority over the earth. Remember in the wilderness story where Satan offered Him authority over all the earth and Jesus refused? He refused it not only because it would have been wrong but also because he wanted to wrest authority away from Satan. Christ, when He performs miracles, is invading Satan's territory and asserting God's authority over the dominion of Satan.

4. To meet needs

<sup>1</sup> When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. <sup>2</sup> And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." <sup>3</sup> Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

I love this story because Jesus touched a man who had been untouched for a long time because of his disease. Jesus not only healed him but met his deep inner needs for acceptance and peace by his touch of love.

5. But there is a fifth reason why he does miracles – he does them to teach us lessons in obedience and faith.

When Jesus tells us to do something, as he told the servants, we need to do it. We may not understand it at the time. It may seem meaningless. But when you get to the end of what he asks you to do, you will find that a miracle has taken place.

Jesus often tells us to do things step-by-step without telling us the conclusion because he wants us to learn to trust Him. He can see further down the road than we can.

Only a few on that day knew what had happened, Mary, Jesus' disciples and the servants. The bridegroom didn't know. He may not have even known there was a shortage of wine. The headwaiter didn't know where the wine came from. The guests at the party didn't know. But only the servants knew. It was the servants' secret! They were in the right place at the right time and because they did what Jesus told them to do they saw a miracle before their eyes as Jesus turned the water into wine.

## Closing

My friends, as we bring today's story of the Master to a close I have a question for you. Are you a servant of God and are you in the right place at the right time? If you are, you will see Jesus do great things through you and for you because Jesus is still bringing refreshment today to meet the needs of the world.

But in order to bring refreshment, Jesus needs - servants.

Are you His servant? If you are, and if you do what Jesus says, step by step and let Jesus fill you with his living water and turn it into wine to bring refreshment to others you too will experience the servants' secret. And while others will go through life enjoying their party you will see the One who is behind all joy – the Creator of the earth – the Savior of the world – who turned the water into wine.

Write to us at Stories of the Master and let us know about your decision to follow Jesus today. Write to us at PO Box 90047 – SA TX 78209 in the U.S. Or you can email us at [Stories@StoriesOfTheMaster.com](mailto:Stories@StoriesOfTheMaster.com).

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Don't forget that you can also relisten to today's broadcast. Just go to the **Listen Again** tab on the website and you can listen from the site, download the message and find other material to help you learn the story better. And be sure to check out our other resources on the Resources page.

Until next week, may the Master Himself bless you, and we look forward to you joining us then for another edition of Stories of the Master.