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[All Scripture quotations are from the NIV, unless otherwise noted.]

John 2:1-11
Water and Wine

The Bible calls Satan the “father of lies.” The enemy has very little real power. All that the enemy intends for evil is ultimately subject to God’s larger, longer, wider, higher, and more certain purposes for good. Nevertheless, the enemy is a skilled liar, and by his lies he can have a lot of destructive influence. By his lies, he tries to tear down individuals, families, communities, nations, and congregations.

We human beings are prone to believe the enemy’s lies. Too easily and too often, we behave according to the lies instead of according to the truth, and we get caught up in the destruction.

There are at least two broad types of lies that the enemy unleashes upon the world. One has its roots in the Garden. One emerged almost as soon as Adam and Eve left the Garden behind.

In the Garden, the serpent’s very first words to Eve were these: “Did God really say...?” The enemy’s very first attack was to bring into question the character of God, the trustworthiness of God. “Did God really say...?”

Ever since, we human beings have been vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks on the character of God. We are easily convinced that God is not trustworthy. We might believe in God, but often we don’t believe God, that he is who he says he is and will do what he says he will do.

We believe God exists, that he’s out there somewhere...but in the day to day realities of life we behave as if God isn’t paying attention or isn’t involved. We behave as though God is not loving or not powerful or not gentle or not real. We behave as though God is arbitrary, as though God is more about anger than love, as though God is a fool. We want to trust God. We say we trust God. But very often we act as if we do not, in fact, trust God, as if we can’t really count on what God has said.

After Adam and Eve left the Garden, it was not long before Cain murdered his brother Abel. Cain killed Abel because God was pleased with Abel--as if God’s affirmation is a zero-sum game, as if God had only so much love to offer, as if Cain could grab God’s love for himself by eliminating the competition.

Ever since, we human beings have been convinced that this is a world of “not enough”: not enough of God’s love to go around, not enough food, not enough oil, not enough land, not enough respect, not enough time, not enough of anything. Too easily and too often, we act as though our lives are a zero-sum game--as if the only way for us to get all that we need is for other people to get less than they need; as if every pie is only so big, and anybody else’s gain is our loss.

These are the lies that are at the root of sibling rivalries, as if mom and dad cannot possibly have enough love and delight and time and attention for all their children, as if siblings must compete for limited supplies. These are the lies that cause individuals to take offense easily and react with anger to any hint of disrespect, as if

their own inherent dignity is a desperately limited resource that must be shielded and protected and defended. This happens between members of rival gangs. Sometimes this happens to Christians in shared ministry. These are the lies that cause husbands and wives to be eager to cast blame, because everything that goes wrong must be somebody's fault. These are the lies that cause churches to hold tight to what they have and scrape for survival rather than pour themselves out until they are empty of everything but joy.

The enemy doesn't really care what we say we believe. He's happy if we behave as though we don't believe, as though we don't believe that God is trustworthy, as though we don't believe there is enough.

The enemy is happy when anybody--especially anybody who belongs to Christ--is over-driven to prove that they are good enough, strong enough, self-sufficient enough, popular enough, or worthy enough. And the enemy is happy when anybody--especially anybody who belongs to Christ--is convinced that they are not good and not worthy.

These are the lies that artificially limit us. They limit our imaginations. They limit our hopes. They limit our dreams. They limit our courage. They limit our expectations. They limit our creativity. They limit our lives.

More importantly, they limit our ability to trust in the God who created us in freedom and love. They limit our ability to reflect the glory of God into the world. They limit our ability to be the people God created us to be, calls us to be, and sends us to be.

God is the author of truth. The prince of this world (the father of lies) already stands condemned. In the end, truth overcomes untruth. God has been active in this world since the beginning, speaking truth, demonstrating his character, and providing more than enough.

The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus—through whom all who trust in him are delivered from slavery to sin and death and given citizenship in the kingdom of God—is the greatest event in the history of the world of God speaking the truth, demonstrating his character, and providing more than enough. Sin enslaves us to deceit and death. In Christ we are set free, re-made according to the truth, and given life.

Can you imagine what it will be like at the return of Jesus, when the kingdom of God will be brought to fulfillment and all that opposes the kingdom of God will be defeated once and for all, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father? No more lies. Only truth. God is trustworthy. There is enough.

So...what does all this have to do with the wedding in Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine?

This is, of course, a miracle story. Water does not, in the normal course of events, spontaneously turn into wine. Combine water with sunlight and nutrients and grape vines, throw in the right weather and a good gardener, bring along someone to crush the grapes and ferment the juice, then maybe a halfway decent wine will result. Definitely not a spontaneous event.

Jesus, with a word, turns water into wine...abundant wine...the finest of wine. This is a miracle.

John, however, calls this event more than a miracle. He calls it a sign. A sign is something that points beyond itself. A sign points to something else, something more. Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana is the first of seven signs that John includes in his presentation of the gospel. John says Jesus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

What did his disciples believe? When the disciples saw Jesus turn water into wine at a wedding, what lies were exposed? What truth did they come to realize?

Did they believe that Jesus would always refill our wine glasses? Did they believe that Jesus would always keep our parties going? I don't think so.

Sooner or later the wedding celebration had to come to an end. Wedding celebrations are great, but they are—by nature—temporary. The time comes when the guests have to go home, and the bride and groom have to get on with the marriage. At weddings we get a chance to leave the struggles of day-to-day life aside for a while and dance. Marriages, on the other hand, are all about facing day-to-day life, hand in hand, even when the music fades and no one feels like dancing.

The wedding at Cana is not a sign that life is a never-ending party. The wedding at Cana is a sign that even when we come to the end of our resources, when we have nothing left, when the music has faded and nobody feels like dancing, Jesus can speak into the emptiness and the ordinariness and do something extraordinary.

Here, early on in Jesus' ministry, the disciples were invited into the truth that if they stayed with Jesus, and trusted Jesus, and followed Jesus, then they would experience the extraordinary...even if they came to the end of their own resources...especially if they came to the end of their own resources.

The wedding at Cana is not a sign that Jesus revives dead parties. The wedding at Cana is a sign that Jesus revives dead lives, dead hopes, dead dreams, even dead marriages.

Wedding celebrations come to an end, and honeymoons are temporary. Marriage is a lot more complicated. Marriage involves negotiation and compromise and anger and forgiveness and disappointment and worry and hardship and loss. There are times when the music fades and nobody feels like dancing, when resentment starts to build. Even in a good marriage, money runs out, patience runs out, health runs out. We come to the end of our own resources.

It sure seems that there is not enough: not enough love, not enough money, not enough respect, not enough of anything good, and way too much of everything bad. At least that is what the enemy wants us to believe. And, when we start believing that there is not enough, it doesn't take much for self-giving to turn into self-serving.

What if the truth is that marriage between a man and a woman is meant to be a reflection of the relationship between Christ and his bride? What if the truth is that there is more than enough...even when we come to the end of our own resources...especially when we come to the end of our own resources.

Could it be that the reason that moments of celebration are rare in many marriages is because of the power of all the lies? The lie that it is his responsibility to complete her. The lie that she is responsible for his happiness. The lie that there is only one right way to put a shirt on a hanger or load a dishwasher or open gifts at Christmas. The lie that money is the source of security. The lie that children must be

perfect. The lie that authority is about being powerful. The lie that submission is about being powerless. The lie that vows are re-negotiable.

It turns out that the more the lies are exposed, the less power they have. The more that the truth of God's trustworthiness and sufficiency shapes the marriage, the more room there is for celebration in the midst of all sorts of different circumstances, even if the money is running out or health is running out or the children are not perfect...even when we come to the end of our own resources...especially when we come to the end of our own resources.

The wedding at Cana is a sign that Jesus is the one who can expose the lies and strengthen us in truth and invite us to celebrate. Jesus can turn water into wine.

This is not just about marriages. It's about life.

God's trustworthiness and sufficiency are unlimited. Immersed in God's trustworthiness and sufficiency, our imaginations are set free, our hopes are buoyed up, our dreams are energized, our courage is re-fueled, our expectations are unbound, and our creativity is unleashed.

We can trust in the God who created us in freedom and love. We can reflect the glory of God into the world. We can become, more and more, the people God created us to be, calls us to be, and sends us to be.

Jesus can turn water into wine.

Could it be that the life God gives is meant to be full of celebration? Could it be that joy is utterly independent of any external resource? Could it be that real joy has very little to do with the circumstances outside of us? Could it be that, for believers, joy rises up from the inside, where the Holy Spirit dwells within us?

When we have nothing left, when the music has faded and nobody feels like dancing, Jesus can speak into the emptiness and the ordinariness and do something extraordinary.

God is trustworthy. God is more than enough. Jesus can turn water into wine.