

(John) 03 - the Witness of Works

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon explores how Jesus' presence transforms ordinary life and emphasizes the importance of obedience to His commands.

Duration: 53:51

Scripture: Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:12-17, Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-46, John 1:1-5, John 2:1-22

Topics: "John"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding. He emphasizes the significance of Jesus attending a wedding and bringing joy to everyday life. The preacher highlights that Christ's presence sanctifies the commonplace and secures life satisfaction. He also points out the contrast between the temporary satisfaction offered by the world and the lasting fulfillment found in Jesus. The preacher encourages listeners to obey Jesus' commands and trust in his power.

Transcript

John chapter 2, and after this, just quietly in reverent vain, thank you God for sending Jesus. John chapter 2, verse 1. And the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the marriage with his disciples.

When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine. And Jesus said to her, O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to his servants, Do whatever he tells you.

Now six stone jars were standing there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, Fill the jars with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

He said to them, Now draw some out and take it to the steward of the feast. So they took it out. So they took it, pardon me.

When the steward of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the steward of the feast called the bridegroom, and said to him, Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now. This the first of his signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

After this, he went down to Capernaum with his mother, and his brothers, and his disciples. And there they stayed for a few days. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen, and sheep, and pigeons, and the money changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple. And he poured out the coins of the money changers, and overturned their tables.

And he told those who sold the pigeons, Take these things away. You shall not make my father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, A zeal for thy house will consume me.

The Jews then said to him, What sign have you to show us for doing this? Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days? But he spoke of the temple as his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name. When they saw the signs which he did, but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men, and needed no one to bear witness of man, for he himself knew what was in man. Now let's bow our heads in our hearts before God.

Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you Jesus that you came.

Holy Spirit won't you teach me more about his love. Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you Jesus that you came.

Holy Spirit won't you teach me more about his lovely name. Right. Have you got your outline beside you, and open and available? We come to the second chapter of John's gospel tonight.

And you notice where we are in our outline. The first part A, the revelation of God as life to the world. And the second part we studied last evening.

And now the third part, the witness of the works of Christ. In chapter 2, verses 1 through 22. Now there are two very significant events in this chapter.

Verse 1 through 12, the first miracle of our Lord. When he turned water into wine. Recorded only in John's gospel.

Chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. And verses 13 to 22, the first cleansing of the temple. These are the two events we are going to look at this evening.

It's impressive isn't it, to say the least of it. And he who created the universe attended a wedding. The Son of God was the guest at a feast.

And he isn't therefore a killer of joy, but he brings joy. He's not only for somebody's death bed, but he's for a dinner. We call to help Jesus to help when we're in pain, that we need him to sanctify our pleasure.

He was at a wedding. Must have been a great wedding. You'll know about it one day, I hope.

I would just say thank God for our wives. They halve our sorrows, double our joys, treble our expenses. That's why they're so dear to us.

Excuse me. It's a great life, believe me. But you see, a wedding without Jesus is a failure from the start.

I'm not starting a marriage counseling course, don't worry. But I am just saying that people who get married without Jesus soon get into trouble. And Jesus is against permissiveness.

He's against polygamy. Against homosexuality. God's law is either remain single or get married to one person and stay with them as a life sentence.

Got that? And I'm going to repeat it in case you're shivering at the thought of it. God's law is either remain single or get married to one person and remain true to him for the rest of your life. Marriage.

Trouble is that when people get married today, they go inside a door, and before they've tied the thing up, they're trying to get out again. Whereas marriage is getting inside the door, unlocking it behind you. This would have been a terribly dry wedding if Jesus hadn't been there.

Now, of course, this chapter you could do all sorts of things with, legitimately. You can look on it as a lovely picture of the Christian life. You can do that with it.

You can take it from the text as it stands and describe it. I want to do a touch of both, if I may, because it was the first miracle that Jesus did. And I want to say one or two things about this marriage, first of all, from the point of view of being a picture of our lives every day.

And the first thing I would like you to get down in your notes and think into it sometime when you're on your own. Christ's presence sanctifies the commonplace. Can I say that again? Christ's presence sanctifies the commonplace.

Okay? Only a few days before this, Jesus had come from a tremendous battle with the devil and the wilderness. Nothing said about that in John's Gospel. And what a contrast.

Wilderness, battle, then a home. And what a contrast between the teaching in chapter one and this simple example of everyday life. How differently his disciples would have expected him to show his power.

The last thing they thought of would be he'd show it in a home. But that's where Jesus worked his first miracle. In a home.

Here he is, entering human love and sanctifying it. Coming into a home and bringing joy to it. Here's the evidence that the one in whom God holds every blessing for us is deeply concerned about our everyday life.

May I just repeat it? I want to mull it over as I think about it. Here's the evidence that the one in whom God holds every blessing for us is deeply interested in our everyday life. He's not only the saviour for the crisis, but for the commonplace.

He's not only, I'm repeating, the saviour for the crisis, but for the commonplace. And he comes into the commonplace to transform water, the ordinary, into wine, the sign of heaven, the life of the spirit. Repeating, he's not only for a crisis, but he's for the commonplace.

And he comes with joy to change water, the ordinary, into wine, the life of the spirit. Jesus, I'll just speak this slowly, dictation speed. Jesus took the cold, thin, unexciting water, connected with the religion of the day, it was there for purification, connected with the religion of his day, and changed it into something new, something joyful.

So you see, Jesus made this possible in experience, changing religion from a drag into a delight. And I've just jotted down here, Lord, let there be less water and more wine about my life. I don't mean you to take that literally.

Just less of the ordinary and more of the exciting, more of the real. I'm just going to say all of it over again, because I quite enjoy it. Jesus took the thin, cold, unexciting water, connected with the religion of his day, and transformed it into something new and joyful.

And Jesus makes this possible, or made this possible in experience, changing our religion from a drag into a delight. Lord, let there be less water and more wine about my life. You see, if I admit Jesus into the commonplace, he equips me for the conflict.

I just can't have Jesus in a crisis and then brush him aside. If I take him into the commonplace, he's ready for the crisis to meet it. Holiness is not being peculiar.

To mature as a Christian, you're not expected to withdraw from people. It's his presence which makes human love so precious. It's the presence of Jesus which makes human love so precious.

I could say a lot more about that, but I mustn't get diverted. Excuse me. Stupid.

See, what I'm trying to say to you is just this. You remember I said last night, there's one place for everyone, only one place for you in all the world that God has for you. And the thing is, he wants to introduce you to a life partner who has one place in the world for him or for her.

And introducing you to a life partner like that means maybe sometimes waiting a long time. It certainly doesn't mean you're putting that as a priority. You're trusting the Lord Jesus.

He'll bring that about when you are always seeking the one thing he wants you to do. And the thrilling thing about marriage is to find that your life partner has been seeking that he or she should find the one thing she wanted to do or he wanted to do. And those two meet together.

And that makes a happy home. I should know after 48 years. Fancy.

I mustn't go. Stop. Look, it's the presence of the Lord Jesus in everyday chores, in home, business, study, kitchen, everything.

It's Christ's presence which sanctifies the commonplace. Second thing about this is this. It's Christ's presence which secures life's satisfaction.

Christ's presence which secures life's satisfaction. They had no wine. Banquet turned dry.

Crisis. How true are the words of the host in verse 10. Every man serves the good wine first.

And when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now. How true that is in life, isn't it? Glamour, glitter, thrill, and then people waking up to the emptiness of it all.

How many stage people. How many of them. Folks who seem to have everything.

Glamour, money, fame. And their lives in suicide or alcoholism. All because life offers no satisfaction.

Because they don't know the giver of peace. They don't know Jesus. He's the one who gives it.

Jesus kept the best wine until last. When someone has drained dry everything that the world has to offer. How empty it is.

And just then he finds Jesus indispensable. Christ's presence secures life's satisfaction. He satisfies the longing soul.

And fills the hungry with goodness. That's a verse I've just thought of. Can't remember the text again.

Terrible. You tell me afterwards. He satisfies the longing soul.

And fills the hungry, not with madness, but with goodness. Third thing I want to say to you is this, this. Christ's power sets his seal upon our obedience.

Christ's power sets his seal on our obedience. Now that's just, you might say, a homily. You can think of lots of other things that this story might mean to you.

But they mean that to me. But let me come down to the nitty gritty of it all. Verse 5. There he says, Whatsoever he says to you, do it.

And that's the third, and incidentally the last, of her recorded comments in the Bible. Remember the first one? In Luke 1, verse 38. When she consented to be his mother.

Be it unto me according to thy word. Luke 1, verse 38. And again, in Luke 2, verse 48.

When she and Joseph were searching everywhere for Jesus. And found him in the temple. Why have you treated us like this? Woman, didn't you know I had to be about my father's business? You don't hear much of what Mary said.

Just till three times she spoke. We have a record of it anyway. Whatever he says to us, to you do it.

Why did she say that? I'll suggest to you why. For thirty years, this woman had lived under suspicion. Nobody believed her story.

And here's an opportunity for Jesus to vindicate her in the eyes of other people. An opportunity. Whatever he says to you, do it.

What did Jesus say? Woman. Sounds a bit tough. A bit hard.

No. It's a word of kindness. When it came from Jesus' lips.

He used it on the cross, you remember. Woman, behold your son. It's a word of tender love.

What did he say? Verse 4. Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come. You don't understand me. My hour has not yet come.

As if to say, merely changing water into wine, meeting an urgent need right now, that won't satisfy you. Nor will it produce the effect you want on other people. Don't you know, Mary, he didn't say this, but this is behind it.

I always work to God's clock. My hour. Jesus is never late.

Never early. Always on schedule. Working to God's timetable.

You'll notice as we go through this gospel how often reference is made to my hour. You could just jot down, but don't trouble to look up. Just jot down in your notes.

Verse 4, alongside that verse. My hour has not yet come. With chapter 7, verse 30, where they tried to arrest him, but nobody could touch him because his hour was not yet come.

Chapter 7, verse 30. And chapter 8, verse 20. Again, Pharisees trying to catch him, couldn't.

His hour was not yet come. But chapter 12, verse 23 and verse 27. My hour has come.

Chapter 12, verse 23 and 27. And chapter 17, verse 1. Father, as he prayed, the hour has come. The one hour that mattered in eternity.

Can I just give you those references, if you've got them? Okay, want them again? All clear? All clear? Good. Last one? I'll give them all. You're comparing, putting alongside verse 4. Chapter 7, verse 30.

Chapter 8, verse 20. Chapter 12, verse 23 and 27. Chapter 17, verse 1. So you see, this miracle is not merely a sort of little homily about married life.

This miracle introduces him as the Messiah. It introduces him as a new age, which he's opening up. My hour has not yet come.

Verse 11. This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him. Chapter 17, verse 1. The hour of the cross.

Only that would show Mary and anybody else why he'd come. Therefore, she said, whatsoever he says to you, do it. Here's someone speaking with authority.

Whatsoever he says to you, do it. God's commands are always God's enablings. I'll just repeat that.

God's commands are always his enablings. I don't know that I would claim any special authority for saying this, but in my heart there's a conviction there comes a time in your life and mine when I know that the hour has come. I've found that.

More than once. And I've known this is it. Either now, at this moment, I obey him, or else.

Father, your hour, my hour. Maybe you can point to a day, to a time, to a moment when in your heart right now you know that that was a moment when he came. And you had to do something about it.

And it seemed to be the impossible. But with God's commands always come his enablings. And it's a great, great comfort to me.

I know as I look back on life that he said that to me more than once. His hour came to me first. And as circumstances, somebody put into my hands a copy of what is now called East Asia Millions.

Magazine of OMF. And a voice said to me, that's where I want you. And you know what he did? Tore that magazine up and put it in the garbage can.

You perhaps will think, say that I have no right to say this. But I'm going to say it anyway. Because of my conviction.

Since then, I've always been doing God's second best. He wanted me in East Asia. Mind you, by his grace, it's been wonderful even to do a second best.

But a missed opportunity. How easy it is. It happens to you and it has happened to me in a time of desperate backsliding.

But he's able to restore the years that the locust has eaten. You forget that if you don't like it. But I can't forget it.

I don't spend my lifetime regretting the past. Forget that. God forgets it.

Listen to Jesus again in verse, chapter 17. Father, the hour has come, glorify me. The glory I had with you before the world was.

Mary says, whatsoever he says to you, do it. And in answer to the obedience of the servants, Jesus showed them his glory. Verse 11.

I can tell you this from experience on the other side of life, the positive side. He always sets the seal upon my obedience by showing his glory. Have you noticed that? You could hear from about a hundred, all of you.

You know it, don't you? Moments when he spoke and said, no, thank you, Lord. And you turned back on him. Moments then when you've been sorry and repented in the depths of your heart.

And the moment, the moment you did that, you know what happened? Your Bible began to live again. For those years of disobedience, it didn't mean a thing. You could read it, it didn't mean anything.

Never got anything out of it. But the moment you submitted to his authority without reservation, the book began to live. I think you'd find that right.

Isn't it? We're all made in the same mold. Some of us are a bit moldier than the rest, but we're all made in the same mold. And some of us are beginning to learn that submission to his authority without reservation is the key to showing his glory.

Got the glory in your hearts tonight? Can I say that again? Submitting to his authority without reservation is the key to him showing his glory. Got the glory? Notice the effect of this miracle, won't you? In verse 11, Jesus, this the first of his signs, Jesus did Galilee, manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him. They'd believed before, but now it was with complete confidence.

So you see, from that first part of this chapter, Jesus comes into life's commonplace, meets every need, becomes real and precious, seals every act of obedience by revealing his glory, and gently leads us on to

know him better. He asks you not merely to trust him with a problem, but to leave it with him. Not merely to trust him with your burden, but to cast it on him.

Only he can work a miracle, but we have to do our part. Jesus said to them, fill the jars with water. We can't do his work, and he won't do ours.

So there's our marriage feast. Would you invite Jesus to your next party? Or would his presence spoil your plans? Where Jesus is, there's joy. Now we come to the second part of this chapter, the cleansing of the temple.

You find this in verse 13 through verse 22. This is the first cleansing of the temple. Here the Passover, verse 13, is mentioned for the first time in John.

Quite a fitting time to start his public ministry. You needn't trouble to look it up, but I certainly would ask you to note it. There's a tremendous fulfillment of Malachi, chapter 3, verse 1, and following verses.

Here is judgment beginning at the house of God. Malachi, chapter 3, and verse 1, and following verses. Incidentally, the other three Gospels record the cleansing of the temple at the end of the ministry of Jesus.

John doesn't say anything about that. You can take the references so that you can have a look and see. Matthew, chapter 21, verse 12 and 13.

Mark 11, verse 12 to 17. Luke 19, verse 45 and 46. Got those verses OK? I'm sure these two cleansing of the temple are not the same.

John draws attention to this to mark the commencement of controversy with Christ. Here's Him moving onto the ground of claiming to be Messiah. And here's the beginning of controversy.

Verse 18, What sign have you to show us for doing this? Was the question of the Jews. You notice in verse 21, He spoke of the temple of His body. The Jews, verse 20, The Jews then said it has taken 46 years to build this temple.

By the way, it began to be built in the year before Christ, B.C. 20. It was finished, complete, about A.D. 63. Complete then.

But it began B.C. 20. This incident is recorded in about A.D. 27. Something like that.

The temple isn't complete. But it's taken 46 years to get this far, to build this temple. And you mean to tell me you will raise it up in three days, but Jesus spoke of the temple of His body.

And they couldn't understand that. 1 Corinthians 6, 19 and 20. Paul said your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Is it the home of God. At conversion, the Spirit of God comes to dwell in us and tremendous potential is ours then on. Just think in a minute of the temple of which John spoke and which the Lord cleansed in verse 14.

What did he find in it? People changing money, changing Roman coins into Jewish coins. Business life. Sacrifices? All kinds.

That's religious life. Vessels of all kinds? That's domestic life. But no Jesus.

Business life? Religious life? Domestic life? No Christ. And what did Jesus do? He emptied the temple. Do you want to get rid of darkness? Then let the light in.

Do you want to be delivered from impurity? Let Jesus in. Let Jesus in. Forgive me using the word.

Would you like your stable cleansed? Well, let in the river. If you want the stable cleansed, let the river of life in. That's all.

Let him in. Everywhere. Don't try and spend five seconds of your life narrowing the gap between what you are and what he is.

I repeat, don't spend five seconds of your life narrowing the gap between or trying to narrow the gap between what you are and what I'm so thrilled to make the discovery which is supported by the Holy Scripture that Jesus is never in the self-improvement business. He's always in the Christ-replacement business. Then when I get that experience into my heart, I save myself from a nervous breakdown.

I save myself from consulting a psychiatrist, taking masses of pills, drinking masses of coffee, and just ending up in a sheer collapse. He doesn't want, want, to change and improve me. He just says, will you please step aside, get out of the way, and let me take over.

Let me run the business. They're all that, money in life, money changes, sacrifices, vessels. He entered the temple.

That's the first thing. Let the river in. Make room for him.

And then Jesus entered the temple. He entered it, then he emptied it. Can you picture it? Knotting together a few cords, verse 15, he advanced on all who disrespected his house, and he drove them out.

Have you ever seen the film Jesus of Nazareth? That's it then. I shall never forget the scene in which he's doing this very thing. It's terrifying.

Jesus just taking a few cords and driving out the lot and upsetting all the tables, and poof. And they were all amazed. Who was this daring to challenge their right to exist but had to get out.

Suddenly and resentfully they quit. Because Jesus is stronger than Satan and sin. And Satan to Jesus must die.

When I let him into business and stop trying to do it myself, he takes over. Boy, it's simply wonderful to realize what he can do. What a victorious Christ he is.

Mind you, many people would like to have him in the temple, of course, when he gets to heaven. But want him to come to terms with him. And say in effect, Lord, please, would you come into this room but leave the others alone.

Don't disturb them. And we want to have a little committee with him. And almost bribe Jesus into inactivity so that we can carry certain parts of our life to ourselves.

Can't do it that way. No, no. He'll do it so gently, if we're willing.

And the thing that thrills me to the core is this. That he'll only take away when he comes in, he only takes away what I would gladly renounce if I knew what he knows about the effects of it. Do you see that? Let

me start again.

Fasten your safety belts and prepare for landing. He'll only take away when he comes in to the temple of the Spirit. He'll only take away what really I would gladly, gladly renounce if I only knew what he knows about its effect.

And if he can't get his way by gentleness, he'll use a whip. Illness. Tragedy.

Disappointment. But he must have his way. And I find that he never ceases.

All through life he is inspecting the temple. Every room is empty. Do you see? It's only then that chapter 1, verse 16 comes true.

And from his fullness have we all received grace upon grace. I wish I just could tarry on that, but I mustn't. He emptied the temple and he employed that temple, employed it, used it.

In that place he taught other people. He entered it, cleansed it, emptied it, and used it. They challenge him on every issue.

What sign are you to show us for doing this? Etc. His answer was to speak of his death and resurrection. And later from the steps, from the steps of that temple, one day to stand up and cry, ooh, I wish I'd heard it.

If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth unto me, out of his inner man shall flow a trickle, no, a stream, no, a few drops, no, a river, no, rivers of living water. Have you ever said thank you? Ever seen a waterfall? Ever been to Niagara? Mm-hmm.

Aye, tremendous. Tremendous. Ever been to the falls in Rhodesia, Victoria Falls? Which Billy Graham says make Niagara look like perspiration.

One and a half million tons of water a minute coming down. Those falls there in Rhodesia. What a sight.

What a terrific picture. Do you know this? Every waterfall has got its own shape. They're all different.

What keeps a waterfall in shape? Flood tide. When the tide's at flood, whoosh, flowing, flowing, flowing, absolutely non-stop. But in dry season, shrinks, dries up, falls a bit of a trickle.

Say, every Christian has his own shape too. I don't mean physically, but I mean spiritually. Every church has its own shape.

What do you think, what do you think keeps a Christian in shape? What do you think, what do you think keeps a church alive? When they've said thank you to Jesus. And are just living, living in the flood tide of Holy Spirit life and blessing and power. The zeal of my Father's house, verse 17, ate up my life, cleansed the temple, and brother and sister, he'll do exactly the same for you and for me.

I don't mind how long or how deeply some habit has been entrenched. Only open the door like that to Jesus and let him cleanse, empty and use you for his glory. And he will.

I want to say to him all over again, a bit late now, but I want to say it all over again. Lord, please, take my obedience for granted. Right? Are you with me? Take my obedience for granted.

Phew. 726. Prayer.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. He has given the Holy Spirit to those who obey him. Lord, stop each one of us, any one of us, from just messing around, just playing religion.

Lord, make us mean business with you. When the going gets tough, let the tough get going. And as proved, the toughness and alertness and power of the Holy Ghost are adequate for every situation in our lives.

We thank you. We take you by faith. Our feelings may be awful and desperate, but we praise you.

Jesus is far above all, and he is so close to each one of us. Jesus lives and reigns in me. That's how I know it's true.

Lord, thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/15/SID15712.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alan-redpath/john-03-the-witness-of-works/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net