

From Water to Wine - Part 1

by Art Katz

Art Katz explores the transformative miracle at the wedding at Cana, emphasizing obedience and the connection between the old and new in faith.

Duration: 50:16

Scripture: Matthew 16:23, John 2:1, Romans 11:22, Hebrews 12:6

Topics: "Miracle"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. The speaker ponders the significance of the six stone pots used for purification, seeing them as a symbol of the incomplete and partial nature of the Jewish law and tradition. The speaker emphasizes the obedience of the servants who followed Jesus' instructions without questioning, highlighting the importance of faith and trust in God's commands. The speaker also draws parallels between the miracle at Cana and the New York call, suggesting that just as the water filled the pots to the brim, the church is called to bring the living water of the gospel to those who have only a limited understanding of salvation.

Transcript

Somehow the Lord has wine on his mind, wineskin and now the wine, and I've been a recipient of something precious this morning, but it's a remarkable phenomenon that several hours later you look at the same text and you wonder if you were ever inspired. Where did it go? So may the Lord restore what was given earlier today, not only restore it, but give added dimensions that waits for the corporate examination of this text and theme. So Lord, we ask your remarkable supervision and also provocation and stimulation to inspire questions, comments, not to show ourselves off, but to bring a fuller examination and a drawing out of the riches and the deeps of this text and the episode described therein.

So grant us, my God, that precious sovereignty of your Spirit, and I'm not ashamed to pray that what will take place this morning over these tables and in this room will be historic for all the Church. A note struck of uttermost significance that has waited for this hour, for this moment, and dovetails and brings in all of the elements of things that we have been discussing and the things to which my own life is being led has become a key of interpretation of this text. And that's characteristically prophetic.

So even as you're unfolding things, you're at the same time giving us opportunity to glimpse the prophetic thing in its operation, the very phenomenon itself is being exhibited before us, even as you lead us, my God, through these remarkable themes and things that have been touched and quickened. Give us an

avid ability to hang on to every word and to see what it is that is actually being performed in these days before our very eyes, not just as observers but equally as participants for the entire Church is a prophetic phenomenon. So we bless you, Lord.

And all of this requires such grace, such mercy, such enablement that issues my God from the throne of heaven and the very life of God, resurrected, glorified, ascended, without which, Lord, we would be as looking through that glass darkly. So come, Lord, grace upon grace. You came full of grace and truth, for you knew that without grace, the truth would be impossible to discern, to recognize, to assimilate, to take in.

Truth is requiring. It takes grace of comparable measure with the truth in your coming and even now in your coming this morning. And what we're asking is nothing less than divine visitation.

And you're giving us the encouragement and the courage to pray madly like that. What, that you could take an ordinary morning session and convert that into a visitation? Not only can you, but you desire that every session be that. Nothing less.

So thank you, my God, for the expansive prayers that we find ourselves praying that we have to suspect are your own. So if they're your prayers, you can equally fulfill them. And for that, we give you now the praise, the glory, and the honor in Jesus' name.

And all of God's people said, Amen. On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, obscure, nothing, little outpost of all Israel. And the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. Remarkable that he would condescend to come. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine.

And Jesus said to her, Woman, what is that to me? What is your concern to me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you. How does it say in the King James? Whatsoever he sayeth unto you, do it.

So precious Mary, Miriam, acting out of turn, asserting her Jewish motherhood, trying to manipulate, trying to extract something from her son, is chastened by a son who is not afraid to give her a stern reprimand of the kind that Hamlet gave his mother, when she cried out, Hamlet, no more. If you know the play, and you should know the play. When she was wearing the locket, with on the one side the picture of the husband that was, and the other side, the husband who now is, was the murderer.

The brother who murdered his brother in order to obtain his throne and obtain his wife. Hamlet, coming back from school, sees a vision of his father as ghost, saying, I've been murdered. And so the whole play is the unfolding of God's requitement and judgment and vengeance on the perpetrator.

But there's a scene in which Hamlet confronts his mother. She's a sensual woman. He accuses her of lying betwixt incestuous sheets.

Only Shakespeare could coin that. And then she cries, as she begins to get the point and can't take the truth, it's too painful. She cries out, Hamlet, no more.

You know, a mother's appeal, sentiment. And he says, sometimes one must be cruel in order to be kind. Isn't that remarkable? That almost deserves a place in scripture.

So we see Jesus very much in that same mood and mentality. Yes, there's a place for the respect for mothers, but not the place where it touches the holy things of God. My hour has not yet come.

Don't make of me an accessory to your motherly demand. I'm not here for that purpose. And then the remarkable thing is, he is here, and he accommodates that purpose.

Isn't that just like the Lord? But see whether she understood what she was saying. She said much. Chasten, you know, sometimes the best things come out of us in that condition.

Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. That whatsoever is going to be a key word in our understanding and interpretation of this text. For what does he then do? Well, standing there with six stone water jars.

The third day, six water jars. Don't miss the significance of numbers. Third day, rising again.

Already a premonition and a foreshadowing of that great third day. Six is the number of men. Six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification.

Each holding 20 or 30 gallons, but not full. Only partial. 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 chief steward. So they took it.

And when the steward tasted the water that had become wine, he did not know where it came from. Though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have drunk their fill. But you have kept the best wine until now.

Jesus did this, the first of his signs in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory. What will it be when he repeats this as a final miracle? The first is always a premonition and a foreshadowing of the last. And his disciples believed in him.

Maybe we can even say, and the world believed in him. When they shall see the reoccurrence and the fulfillment of what is presaged and hinted at here, they will become disciples and believe in him. And after this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers as disciples and so on.

So what do you make of that? Miracle. Huh? A miracle. Miracle, but what are the elements? Why the remarkable thing that they had to draw water out of a well and fill up these six pots.

There's something melancholy about these six stone pots for purification in keeping with Jewish practice, some resonance of the law and of tradition. And he employed that. Why couldn't the water have been drawn right from the well, right to the table? No, the water had to fill up what was only partial and incomplete.

And when it reached the brim, then they would have drawn off and that became the water turned to wine. Good thing that those servants didn't ask any questions because there's nothing to commend what they were told to do logically. Whatever he says unto you, do it.

He says go to New York, do it. He doesn't have to explain himself, but in the doing of it, something is set in motion of the miracle of the last days, like unto the first. But the water pots have to be filled up.

And the water is not wine, but it's good for purification, serves the purpose of the Jews at a certain level in their religious practice and understanding. But somehow, unless that is filled up to the brim with water drawn out of the well of salvation, it will not be turned to wine. And maybe, as I was sitting in the little prayer circle that I thought still dwelling on this, the water filling up maybe could be something like they themselves don't realize the implications and the significance of that measure of things they now possess.

And something must come to them as increase of that which they already have till it reaches the brim. There needs to be a fullness in what they understand as Jews that comes from something drawn out from the well of salvation and added to what they already have. He did not remove these stone things.

He did not supersede them. He did not put it aside as no longer necessary or finished in its purpose and now something new in its place is to come. He used what was existing.

He only added to it. But that addition transforms the whole substance of what was within from water unto wine. He's taking what is existing that had a limited ceremonial and legal use but transforming it into something utterly new by an addition.

And that addition is performed by servants who will obey him without question and without asking what does it mean or what sense does it make. Unless he has those servants at his disposal, the miracle itself cannot take place. And he's there but he's not a conspicuously seen presence.

The steward who's overseeing the whole wedding doesn't realize what the source of the new wine is. Doesn't realize that Jesus has set it in motion. He's just astonished to find that it's not only wine but it's better than the wine with which the marriage began.

And according to custom, and it has become a proverb, the best wine is served first and after people have drunk sufficiently and come into a kind of stupor, then you can serve an inferior brand and it's okay to continue the party. Remembering that these weddings ran for a week. This is not just a one-nighter.

It had to sustain an entire company for a length of time that required much wine. What astonished the steward was that the last one was better than the first. We've got to probe this.

This is more than just the convenience of a conveyance. The use of what he employed is altogether significant. It has to do with Jewish, ceremonial, legal, and traditional requirement, which we as Christians would say is finished in the New Testament dispensation and God has gone on to something new and something other.

No, the new comes out of the old. The new comes out of the existing. What transforms water to wine is what has been added into those stone pots, which we would look upon with a certain amount of disdain and maybe even disrespect.

He honored them, so to speak. There's a place for it, but it's stale. The water in there is stale.

It's inadequate. It needs to be brought to the brim by water that comes out of the wells of our salvation and are added. And then when it reaches the brim and then is drawn off, it becomes the wine.

This is a miracle of a remarkable kind. There's portent here. We've got to probe and understand if the first is an indicator of the last, what will be the last day's miracle if the Lord in his wisdom chose this as his first, having to do with this traditional Jewish setting and in the context of a wedding, a celebration of rejoicing.

Wine is joy. We're talking about a wedding last night, the wedding feast of the bride, so something goes together. And yet the Lord, present but not conspicuous, working through servants whose obedience is implicit.

He has only to say in order for them to do. And that's what his mother said. Whatsoever he sayeth unto you, do it, even if it contradicts all your categories, makes no sense at all.

It seems unnecessary. And why would he employ that? And why doesn't he just directly turn the wine right into the pitchers? Why does he have to go through that existing arrangement? Every one of these things is enormously significant. That's why I'm using the phrase, the well of our salvation.

The water that's being added is something that will come from us as servants. It's not just water, water. It's the water out of the wells of salvation that transforms the existing stale, stagnant water into something that becomes a life-giving source as wine.

Something has got to come from us, from what only we have access to. And if we will draw it out and invest it into the existing stone pot, most of us would think that that's a waste of time to have anything to do with the existing stone pot. After all, it's finished.

There's a New Testament that has replaced the old, and these are just forms that need to die away. But no, the Lord is saying, take the precious water of life, which has come to you through your salvation, and add it to what they already have. For the adding that you will bring will not only fill it to the brim, but transform the substance of it into a new substance called wine.

And unless you add it and use their conveyance, the whole miracle has lost its foundations, its possibility for fulfillment. If you despise those stone jars, if you want to pass them by and go directly to a pitch or a casket or whatever, it'll not be. You've got to employ what is looked upon by the Jews as legally and morally and traditionally necessary waters of purification.

Only the Lord has gone far beyond their understanding and their use to bring them into another dimension in which there will be joy, unspeakable and full of glory, a celebration to end all celebrations. Another thought is, water is often a symbol of affliction and persecution. Remember when the woman flees into the wilderness, the dragon, in his frustration, pours out water, a flood, that he could not devour her, now he seeks to drown her.

And water is always a symbol of persecution, and maybe what needs to be filled up in Jewish experience to the brim are waters of affliction. And out of that will be drawn out the wine of life. So that's another possibility.

One of the commentators reminds us that this is Mary's first contact or Miriam's first contact with her son after his return from his baptism in the Jordan and the Holy Spirit coming upon him and the Father saying, this is my beloved son in whom I'm most pleased. It's interesting, if this means anything to anybody, that Inger is saying to me, something has happened to you. I can't put my finger on it, but you're different.

I don't know when she came to that, but I think there's a corollary. Something happened to Jesus that was different that his mother did not recognize until that moment. Until that moment, he was still her boy and ready to run an errand.

But when he said, my time is not yet, woman, it's a very curt, always impolite address. The authority that was expressed and the sense that must have come to her. Oh, this is not the son that I remember.

Something has happened to him. He's speaking and giving evidence of an authority. And I don't want to stretch this, but maybe the church itself, if this miracle is to take place, needs to come to a comparable recognition.

Jesus has become only too familiar to us and has become a kind of errand boy to run our errands and do our bidding. We need to recognize him in a new kind of an awareness that releases him to command those servants. And so that also needs to be factored into our appreciation.

When we had a little Shabbat communion with the group that preceded you on a Friday night, the Shabbat, and I told them as I poured the wine into the little chalice with a saucer that in orthodox practice, unless the wine overflows the cup, it's not considered a valid Kirush. If it just comes to the brim, it's not enough. It's got to overflow.

What? Yeah. And so there's a remarkable sense of something that goes back into the history and tradition that is more indicative of our faith than we know. And they have retained it in their tradition.

See why there's so much treasure there for us that will enhance our own comprehension of our faith and then be able to explain to them their own practices that they don't understand. And maybe this is part of the thing of filling up those stone pots to add more water. There's water there, but it's limited, it's stale, it's stagnant.

It's sufficient for the minimal ceremonial purpose, but in order for it to be converted to wine, something has to be added to what they already have by servants who will obey the Lord without hesitation and turn their own water into a wine. And maybe that's the purpose of our coming to New York. The Lord will give us a grace to add anything out of the well of our salvation, an interpretation of things of which they already have, to add and to underline for them the implication of that which they already have in part until the full meaning will reach the brim and flow over, they will fall short of the revelation of the Lord and the joy that comes with the new wine.

And it goes back to the question of what is Jesus even doing there? This celebration is going to run a whole week long. Has he got that kind of time to waste and to invest in just the kind of, you know... So unless the Lord is present at places and times that we ourselves would question and not ourselves be present, this whole thing would not have taken place. So he's in the ordinary aspects of life and plays a role of such an inconspicuous kind that no one really knew except the servants what was the source of that miracle.

And I think all of these elements need to be factored in as being indicative of how the Lord is going to act in the last days. He'll be present. And I hope you guys are reading me right and not misunderstanding about this call to New York as if I'm blowing it out of all proportion.

But if it's not the Lord's coming, I had best stay home. So if the Lord is willing to come into the traditional everyday life of that people in order to factor in the miracle that takes place, he's performing again now what he performed again at the first. And they will not recognize that he's the source of their blessing.

Every element of this speaks volumes and I think the Lord wants us to draw out that understanding in the context of what is now presently before us. This thing of going to New York, this orthodox Jewry,

representative of Jewry by and large in the world, ourselves as representative of the Lord and of the kingdom, bringing the access to the well of our salvation, adding something to what already is, but not despising what already is, for the container which are the pitiful melancholy stone vessels and six of them, the number of men. And yet out of that framework comes this remarkable last days miracle.

The disciples, when they saw that, they gloried at the miracle. They gloried at the Lord. They believed in him.

It's indicative of the kind of faith and belief that will come when the world sees that these Jews have moved from ceremonial cleansing into a wine that is the joy of life because the Lord, whom they do not yet understand, is present and has compassion upon them and is willing to invest his time and presence all week long in order to set in motion this miracle of a transforming kind. The commentators say that Miriam's presence with Jesus indicates it was a family affair and that Jesus would come out of a politeness and respect for the family. They were his kin.

And maybe that's the only recognition that will be necessary in my being accepted into their feast is that we're kin. That whatever it is I believe, of course Jews can believe in Mahatma Gandhi and yoga and God knows what else, any weird thing, but they're still Jews. They're still kin and therefore accepted.

You know the story of how my contact with the ultra-orthodox community in Brooklyn began when I was at an airport in Kansas City waiting for two friends flying at an airport in New Jersey, Newark Airport, waiting for the arrival of two brothers from Kansas and there was a terrible blizzard and the plane did not come in until about midnight. The crowd was milling around and a young chassid with side curls, came up to me and he said, Mister, can you tell me how to get to, I forgot the town in New Jersey. I said, well, there's the limousine service, why don't you inquire? So he came back two minutes later, they're closed.

Can you take me? I said, are you willing for a Meshumet to take you? And Meshumet is a traitor, an apostate. He said, a nice man like you? I said, yes. He was willing that I should take him.

My two friends arrived. We got into my old Volvo. The windshield wipers had not worked for weeks and months and there was a whiteout, a blizzard.

I turned on the windshield wipers and they worked. And about two o'clock in the morning we arrived at this town in New Jersey, Yeshiva, of the Lubavitcher ultra-Orthodox sect. And it was the one night a month when they were celebrating Torah.

They were all up, the house was filled with lights, they were celebrating and dancing around the table, on the table nuts and fruit and schnapps and alcohol. You know the way Jews do? And within two minutes we were head-on in a collision of intense conversation. And who are you? And da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da.

I remember some of the key statements the brother was saying to me. We know you have a spirit, but we don't know what kind it is. They recognized something and there was a new convert who had been converted out of the Jesus movement.

His name is Ephraim Lehr, L-E-H-R, you can still pray for him. He's changed his name now to Richard. He's gone from Brooklyn to Florida.

But he had an afro, big red-haired afro, and he knew what I was about. He went to the rabbi, he said, hey, there's a guy here who's dangerous. The rabbi said, get rid of him.

And so he's getting rid of me. And I happened to have a copy of Ben Israel with me. I gave him the book as I was being thrown out.

About three days later, I get a phone call. Aaron? Yes, who's this? This is Ephraim. Ephraim? That doesn't sound like you.

The last time I heard you, you were foaming at the mouth. Well, I read your book and you have a Yiddish in the Shema. You have a Jewish soul.

He read that in Ben Israel. And that was the beginning of a friendship. He used to visit me in New Jersey with a Styrofoam cup and a plastic spoon.

He would take nothing else from me but boiling water. He would not eat anything because my home was not kosher. Wow.

And out of that began a relationship that has continued through the years. And I've been to the Brooklyn community of the Lubavitcher Hasidim, the most powerful and the most evangelical Orthodox sect in the world. When we're in Russia, we bump into them.

They have gone where Christians have never thought to be. And if you read Chaim Potok's books on Asher Lev, a Jewish artist out of the Brooklyn Hasidic community, you get the deepest sense of that reality. Make a note of the name.

Chaim, C-H-A-I-M. Potok, P-O-T-O-K. He just died about two weeks ago.

A dear man, a rabbi, and a writer. And I don't know of anyone who has more caught the flavor and the sense of this Brooklyn Jewish Orthodoxy than he. And Asher Lev is the son of one of the leading rabbis of that community in fiction, right under the chief rabbi himself, Schneerson, who has now died, and for whose resurrection they're waiting.

And this Asher Lev is his son who's an artist. And his masterpiece is called The Brooklyn Crucified Christ. Of all the masterpieces, that's what it's named.

And because he chose that as his theme, he is an affront and an embarrassment to the entire Hasidic community. And so the whole novel is the conflict between the son of artistic worth falling upon Christian themes and celebrating them in his art out of the bosom of an Orthodox Jewish community. So I commend those two books on Asher Lev.

And he's written about seven or eight books. Okay, how did I come to that? The relationship birthed by God on a seeming accident in a blizzard that remains to this day. Remember that I said on Sunday that I've come to a place now where I read every episode of the life of Jesus as being an eschatological sign, something that speaks of the end.

And here again, we see it in that first miracle as you have described. Remarkable that God could balance all these things because he knows the book of Isaiah, he knows the end, and the third day and all of these meanings and bring it to pass in a seemingly innocuous, ordinary event of a local wedding in a little nothing town of Cana in all of Galilee and all of Israel and somehow fit the whole thing together in a remarkable consistency that speaks of the end. Well, is he still God? If he's so capable of that kind of exquisite that that opens a thought.

There's two things that are so close and so parallel, they're out of line. Do something about it. Well, he does something about it, but he does not do it in order to meet the contingency, the requirement of just finishing out a party.

He's doing something that has enormous eschatological significance, and so he can't do it out of a response from conventional motherly requirement and concern for the well-being of people. Though he does act, it does meet that, but he's not acting out of the sentimental human context, but out of the divine obedience to the Father. And still... No, no, no, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

Because we can miss it. The two acts are almost identical, they're parallel, they run side by side, and we run the continual danger of more often falling onto the human sentimental side for expediency's sake and meeting a requirement of a social kind or politeness and missing the divine thing. We mustn't mistake the act.

It changes everything, whether it's an act that accommodates a mother or an act that accommodates the father, capital F. And so much of what we will be called to in the last days will be that close parallel. And we have to consciously turn our back on the tendency to act sentimentally and humanly in order to be reserved for the act that is divine and utterly significant. The same thing is true of our relationship with Israel.

They seem to run on a parallel line. Both Christian Zionists and we are concerned for the fate of the Jewish people, but if we lapse over on the sentimental and the human that they deserve a break and isn't it about time that they had a homeland, we miss the entire portent and significance of what is on the other side of that line which is divine. Now here's the thing.

In order to defer to what is divine, you're going to be misconstrued and seen as being inconsiderate, lacking proper affection, kindness, you're cold-hearted, you're indifferent. Don't you want to see Israel succeed? Do you mean? The obedience of his son is classic. At a crisis moment where he could have been tempted to be sucked into the vortex of natural human sentimental response to a need.

Instead he held himself and met that need not by deferring to that, but by deferring to the father and thereby exceeding what the mother herself would ever have desired. There are classic elements of this that need to be drawn out and this is one of them. One more point about this mother's request as against the obedience to the father.

I wouldn't put it past Satan to employ a mother and to use conventional, approved, nice things, good teacher, good master, good, good, good, good. What Satan can accomplish through blatant and apparent evil, he can also accomplish by playing upon and employing that which is good, that which is sentimental, that which is approved. And so we would more likely be seduced and drawn off from this absoluteness of obedience to the Lord by the subtlety of the enemy who worked for our mothers.

And every Jewish believer has got to step over the body of his mother. The first question that came to me aboard the deck of that Greek cargo ship on my way to Piraeus, Greece and Athens, the reading of the New Testament for the first time and receiving a revelation, the Lord out of the mouth of Jesus, let him who is without sin cast the first stone. That went like a sword through me and it was a divine revelation.

I knew that I knew. I was reading God. My first thought was, what will your mother say about this? This will kill her.

And so you have to make a decision whether you're willing to allow your mother to be killed for the truth of Christ's sake. And I would say that probably many of us are going to fall at this point where sentiment, conventional obligation, unwillingness to suffer the reproach of being unkind to our mothers, who will not have Hamlet's tenacity and who did not stop when his mother said, Hamlet no more, he went on. So there's got to be a ruthlessness, that's what I'm getting at, for the Lord's sake.

Those who follow the Lamb with us wherever they go, it's not a snap. It requires a ruthlessness and an obedience that will not be distracted or turned away by appeals to sentiment, to convention, to mothers or any other kind of thing that the enemy in his wiles knows how to employ and has, by such a means, brought many of God's servants out of the way and out from the place of immediate and total obedience. So it's a wonderful warning to us.

Watch out for mother. And be ruthless against her. Woman, why didn't he say mother? Something rose up in him because he knew that enemy, the enemy was playing upon conventionality in order to bring him to a line of conduct that would have completely nullified the miracle or it would have served the same end.

Mother, no. Woman, what have I to do with you is not so much as what do I have to do with you as a person. What have I, the son of God, obedient to the Father, to do with you and what you're representing to me now for an accommodation at the level of what is human and nice and warm and friendly and maternal and that has all... It's the world, the system.

It's playing upon those things that are out of the wiles of the enemy that are as ruinous to the purposes of God as blatant evil. What have I to do with that? There's an absoluteness in the Lord. Fierce thing rose up in him, this ruthlessness against even one's mother, which is really to say against oneself.

Abraham had the same issue when God said, Take your son whom you love and bring him up to the mount of which I will shew you and make of him a sacrifice. The same kind of paternal loyalty, fellowship, friendship, love, every kind of natural thing that the world delights in exalting had to be brought to the place of death. The issue of Isaac was not Isaac but Abraham.

The issue of Mary is not Jesus but Mary. And what Mary represents, bless her, Miriam, still a statement of the world who has not really come to a full recognition though she kept in her heart the things that were said about him. So I'm summing up.

Be on guard that the most dangerous threats through an absoluteness toward God as a remnant company of first fruits a bridal company being fitted for eternal union with him is the temptation and the seduction that comes not from that which is blatantly evil but that which is apparently good. You have to be as ruthless against that as you would about that which is blatant. So let me ask the congregation.

How will you receive rebuke? Will you smolder with indignation? Who is he to say that? And bask in self-pity that you've been misunderstood and misrepresented and for weeks and months you'll carry this kind of indulgence. Will you, like Mary, understanding the rebuke instantly be changed and then speak rightly? So this is a great question for the church because rebukes will necessarily come. Admonition and correction.

But a wise man can be rebuked, can be chastened and the fool refuses rebuke and correction. So God bless Mary for instantly acting on the word that came. He's a master of rebuke.

Get thee behind me, Satan, to his chief disciple. The Lord does not withhold. I love his severity because it's a statement of God.

And Paul says in Romans consider the severity and the goodness of God. We can't just emphasize the goodness and omit the severity because they are both expressions of the same God. But the flesh wants only to dwell upon the good.

But I love the severity of the Lord, the sternness. That's what makes God, God. And the Son exemplifies the Father in the same ability to bring a stern word when it's needed without edging.

What is our capacity as sons? Do we withhold it? Because we will offend or we will be misunderstood? It says that if you love your son, you chastise him. I think we have a whole generation, I've said this every single time that I'm speaking before God's people, a whole generation of young people freaking out and being tattooed and pierced and every other kind of madcap thing as a cry of desperation for failed fatherhood. Because they're not receiving the rebuke and the chastening of their fathers, which is a statement of love.

And so they're in defiance and thumbing their nose at failed fathers and doing every bizarre thing to aggravate them. So are we sons that reflect the Father who chastens Israel, chastens the church, chastens disciples, chastens his own mother? And are we willing when the occasion is right to bring also, to act also in an appropriate sternness and severity that the moment may require? Or do we walk from being like him? Because we're spoiling the church if we withhold the kinds of things that the Lord calls us to express. Okay.

And we mustn't think that they just turned on a tap and filled up their buckets and then filled up the stone pots. Everything had to be cranked. You know, there's labor in this, there's effort, there's application, there's cost, there's sacrifice.

It's not just a cheap obedience. So we're going to fill those pots up in the last days. It will make a requirement of us.

And if we're slothful, lazy, and indifferent and casual, we'll fail to bring it to the brim. Yes. Okay.

What would be the corollary of cranking the pump that draws the water up out of the earth to us? Would it be diligence to the word? Would it be showing yourself approved, a worker not being ashamed? And how much is that characteristic of the church presently, who read the scriptures casually, who do not study? But where do we see this kind of application of diligence to the word, hour after hour, but among the Jews? The Orthodox, 15 hours a day is considered the minimal requirement of the study of Torah. Of course, they substitute Torah for God in many ways, but they exhibit a diligence that's lost to us. We are so casual.

And so I don't think that, I think this needs to be factored in. The thing that makes it so graphic for me is after the Lord, after our first 10 years here, the Lord required a complete shutting down of the entire community. We were cast off.

The property was left unattended and open to the vandals and the weather for three years. And then I was given leave by the Lord after three years to return. I and some character that I found locally was living in a hut with a dog, two dogs and a pig.

I brought them onto the property and we began to make some repairs and restore. We didn't even have a pump. We had to crank the water out of the pump house.

And we had seven horses because I felt that we needed to begin to revive agriculture without diesel-operated equipment. We bought harnesses and horses. Daily I had to pump the water for the horses.

Those horses can drink a bucket of water. I won't say they drink it, they inhale it. Just like that.

A whole bucket that you have laboriously pumped goes like nothing. And there are seven of those animals and I want to tell you it was exertion and sweat. So I'm glad that the thought has come that this is not some kind of ease of magical obedience, no sweat, no stoop, no bother.

If we're going to obey the requirement, it's going to mean cranking the pump. Not that we can humanly force anything, but it's not going to come to us without a diligence and an application if it's going to be the water of life, the word of life that fills up what is stagnant. And if we're unwilling for that application and that exertion, the miracle just simply gets stymied at that point.

So much is required of these servants in their implicit and immediate obedience, whatever the cost. Much was required of Jesus in his own obedience to the Father, whatever the cost. Even taking the risk of offending Mother, praise God, Mother was able to receive that and then acted rightly thereafter.

But there's risk that attends any obedience that we need to recognize. Because the water that's added, let's assume that it's something that can only be brought by the servants of the Lord and not by the Jews who were resident there. Unless we bring it, it doesn't come.

And if it doesn't come, it doesn't turn to wine and there's no real wedding and real joy. So I love the Lord for that, that we are not just observers, but participants and not participants only, but the prime movers. Because they wait.

All they have is the stagnant water, the six pots, and the limited kind of Judaism that they're able to affect by that. But unless someone else makes the provision for them, which they would not have considered and are not able to make, they would be robbed of God's intention. And so there would be an eternal gratitude for Gentile servants who have been willing to labor and to obey the Lord implicitly and to complete their salvation by what they add to whatever already exists.

Not a bad statement. Well, I've got a few things to make of that and other things that will come after the break and then I'll share with you the notes that I made this morning while you were yet turning over on the other side. And then you can respond to that and see if that witnesses to your heart because it has everything to do with the New York Call.

The brother who said, Art's call to New York is a belt holding for all the church was true. It's a sign of the time that the age of the Gentiles is being fulfilled. What is turning his attention now to this ancient people, but more than that, they're going to them and the bringing of the water to them to fill up what they had only in a limited quantity commitment, which can never be salvational and only be minimal is a statement for the church.

Someone said it's not art going. It's been Israel going. And I think I could say even beyond.

It's not been Israel going. It's the church going. This is symptomatic.

This is a minuscule statement of a much larger intention of God for all the church toward the Jewish community in the localities where they are and in the world to fill up their stone pots in a service that only we can provide. So Lord, precious, remarkable, first miracle, so suggestive, full, redolent with implications for the last. And we ask my God as grateful as we are for what we have already enjoyed in sifting my God through this text that you'll yet give us a final statement and define and bring to acute understanding what you would have us to see from this in the very context of our own situation and the hour and time and call that has come.

So we bless you, Lord. We're asking for an impartation of uttermost significance, Lord, and that we're not reading anything into it. We're not dramatizing ourselves.

We're not romanticizing. We're not adding dimensions as if to show ourselves in any way, but that what you understand of this call and this invitation will be registered upon our souls, that we will be willing for the exertion. We'll be willing for the sacrifice.

We'll be willing for the diligence. We'll be willing for the selflessness that will not even be acknowledged, let alone rewarded, and yet it matters not to us if it will affect the great miracle of turning the water to wine. Bless us, Lord.

Bring us back to these tables and this room with expectant hearts, and give us the fullness of your heart with this text. We thank and give you praise for the privilege in Jesus' name. Amen.

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