

Why Jesus Drank and I Don't

John 2:1-10

“Every Wedding has a Story.” And some of them are funny, actually after the fact most of them are funny, but they aren't necessarily seen as funny at the time, especially if you were the bride.

I'm sure the story with this wedding was how they hadn't ordered enough wine and half way through the festivities the proverbial well ran dry. And that would have been an embarrassing wedding story, although a week later it probably wouldn't have made a difference. But what happened after they ran out of wine, that became a great wedding story.

Most people are familiar with the story or at least the concept and wide brush strokes of “Water being turned into Wine.” Very early in the ministry of Jesus, this is actually his first recorded miracle, Jesus and his apostles get invited to a wedding party. Now we would think of this as the reception, but in that culture and day this was the wedding. There was probably no ceremony, the couple probably didn't recite vows to one another and make promises they might or might not keep. In that day and age it was decided, either by the couple or their parents that they would be married and they announced it. Bob and Sue are now married. And then they celebrated, there was a big feast and apparently not enough wine. And it was during this feast that we read these words: ***Read John 2-4***

At this point Jesus may have assumed the discussion had ended. But just because he was thirty didn't mean that Mary was any less his mother, so she does a mother thing. She puts Jesus on the spot, she turns to the servants and says: ***Read Verse 5***

You gotta hate it when someone does that to you. My mind wonders how Mary knew that Jesus could do anything; think about it, this is “supposedly” his first miracle... But maybe it was just his first public miracle; I mean there had to be a reason that Mary thought Jesus could do anything about the fact that there was no more wine. I wonder if there were times at home she ran out of flour or sugar or wine and Jesus did “something” about it.

And so he did do something about it, ***Read Verses 6 –10***

This was not just any wine, apparently it was really good wine. And there wasn't just a little bit of it. We are told that each of those stone jars would have held

somewhere between **20 and 30 gallons**, so between the six of them there was at **least 120 gallons of wine**. That's a lot of wine! This is a great story; it reveals a lot about Jesus character and his personality. The fact that he was concerned about his mom's feelings, that he was at a party and apparently enjoying himself that he would take the time to make sure that the couple special day wasn't ruined.

But you know sometimes I wish that John had skipped this story, it would have saved me from answering a lot of questions through the years and it would have made it easier to justify the Wesleyan church's stand on alcohol. Now at this point some of you have perked up and are thinking "The Wesleyan Church has a stand on alcohol?"

Yep, we're against, and we've been against it for 150 years. And we're not just a little bit against it we're a lot against it. In our membership commitments subsection 4 it says and I quote: 4) "***To demonstrate a positive social witness by abstaining from all forms of gambling and by abstaining from using or trafficking (production, sale or purchase) in any substances destructive to their physical, mental and spiritual health, such as alcoholic beverages, tobacco and drugs (other than proper medical purposes of drugs).***" Guess that says it all. Yep, we're against smoking', drinking' and gambling. And when people find out they say "**but Jesus drank wine and he turned the water into wine.**" Amazing how much bible knowledge people have when it's in their interest. And then if they are really trying to make a point they say "Well I guess Jesus couldn't have been a Wesleyan then."

So right off, I will concede that it would appear that Jesus did indeed drink wine, and I will not even try to insult your intelligence by trying to convince you that what he turned the water into was not actually wine but was simply grape juice.

So because I'm preaching a series on contemporary issues, I thought this would be a great time to discuss: "**Why Jesus Drank and I don't.**"

1. I don't drink because I have other options.

It Was a Different Time Imagine living in a time when the water supplies were used for bathing and washing clothes and there was no effective way of treating waste water, that's a fancy term for sewer. And then add to that a lack of refrigeration and you can understand what Palestine was like 2000 years ago. Matter of fact very similar to the conditions in many third world countries today.

Which would explain why we drank so much bottled water when we were in El Salvador and Guatemala.

There was a pretty good chance that drinking the water would kill you or at least make you sick. Pure water was a rare commodity and there weren't a lot of other options, there was simply no reliable method to keep juices and milk from going off after period of time and so the most practical solution was using the antiseptic qualities of alcohol. Wine could be stored and carried for almost indefinite periods of time without the fear of it going off and it could be added to water to kill any harmful bacteria that would be present. 2000 years ago they drank wine because there weren't many if any options, today there are. You can go to a tap and get a glass of clean safe water. You can go to your fridge and get a glass of cold milk or juice. If you need to take a beverage on a trip there are hundreds of safe options. So... **I don't drink because I have other options.**

2. I don't drink because I don't know where the line is.

It Was a different Place Again we need to move ourselves from where we are today to where Jesus lived two thousand years ago. The culture of wine was different. As I said before it was an important part of everyday life simply because it was a safer alternative than water. Because of that it was a part of daily life, it was drunk with meals and was part of celebration. Jesus was probably brought up drinking wine from the time he was a child.

However within the culture of the day it was not something you did for recreation, it was not something you did to get drunk, as a matter of fact getting drunk was a social taboo, pretty much in line with how people feel about those who drink and drive today. Drinking wasn't a solo activity nor was it a team activity, they didn't have taverns and it wasn't about getting high or seeing how much you could drink.

In the scriptures there is no clear prohibition from drinking, but there is against drunkenness. As a matter of fact it's not a just a little thing. In **Galatians 5:19-21** **When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.**

That's pretty harsh, drunkenness will keep you out of heaven.

And listen to **1 Corinthians 5:10-11** **But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people.**

Keith Drury is a professor at Indiana Wesleyan University and one of the Wesleyan churches great theologians and philosophers of today in one article about alcohol he wrote: *“Abstinence is a clear line. OK, OK, I know the Bible doesn't forbid alcohol. It condemns drunkenness. But drunkenness is a foggy thing. When does a social drinker get drunk? After one drink? Three? Six? A dozen? See? I can't say for sure. Most Bible students agree that drunkenness is sin, but when does the drinker get drunk?”*

And so because I'm not exactly sure where that line would be for me, or whether when I got close to the line I would be able to keep on this side of it, I will not drink.

3. I don't drink because my culture doesn't dictate it or require it.

It Was a different Brew Historically speaking the wine that Jesus drank 2000 years ago wasn't a whole lot different than the wine that is around today. Somewhere between 3 and 11% alcohol content, but we are told by those in the know that in that culture the wine was very seldom drank straight up, instead it was mixed with water, usually 2 to 3 parts water and 1 part wine.

And there was nothing stronger than wine, when the bible speaks of strong drink it would have been unmixed wine. Add to that that distillation was not discovered until about 1500 A.D. so much of what people drink today would have been completely foreign to Jesus and his friends. To compare the wine that Jesus drank with what can be found in many home today would be the equivalent of comparing the donkey he rode to the car in your driveway.

Dr. John MacArthur says “...since anybody in biblical times who drank unmixed wine (9-11% alcohol) was definitely considered a barbarian, then we don't even need to discuss whether a Christian should drink hard liquor--that is apparent!”

So if you are going to use the “They drank wine in the Bible” as an excuse to drink than you should be willing to only drink what they drank in the bible. And there are absolutely no biblical grounds for drinking hard liquor at all, none, zip, zero, nada.

4. I don't drink because it destroys lives.

And the fourth reason I don't drink is... Just Because In my 20 years in the ministry I have stood at the coffin of a teenager killed by a drunk driver, I have sat across the desk from women abused by drunk husbands and have seen marriages dissolve because of alcohol abuse. **And I will not support an industry that destroys lives, wrecks marriages and kills people.**

Alcohol commercials are some of the best commercials on television. They are creative and clever. The Clydesdales, the fun... “It just doesn't get any better than this.” The glamour... Alcohol ads link drinking with happiness, wealth, prestige, sophistication, success, maturity, athletic ability, masculinity, creative and sexual satisfaction.

The irony is that these are the very things that chronic alcohol abuse destroys. Yet millions of Americans believe the commercials.

- ❖ **18,000** killed every year in alcohol related crashes. **One** person dead every thirty minutes. **One** person injured every minute
- ❖ Alcohol affects all parts of the brain, which also affects the heart rate, coordination, speech, and destruction of brain cells
- ❖ About three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives. (NHTSA, 2001)
- ❖ Alcohol is closely linked with violence. About 40 percent of all crimes (violent and non-violent) and 75% of reported incidents of spousal violence are committed under the influence of alcohol
- ❖ Alcohol is society's legal, oldest and most popular drug. (Narcotic Educational Foundation of America, 2002)
- ❖ Children of alcoholics are three to four times more likely to become alcoholics themselves. So if you've got a family history of heavy alcohol use, you are at a greater risk of developing alcohol problems
- ❖ It is generally believed that 2/3 of the nation's population drink alcohol Roughly one in eight American adult drinkers is alcoholic or experiences problems due

to the use of alcohol. The cost to society is estimated at approximately \$166 billion each year.

- ❖ The alcohol industry is a 65 billion a year industry. They spend over 2 billion on TV advertising alone.
- ❖ Researchers have released reports linking alcohol and breast cancer.
- ❖ Alcoholism has become the fourth major health problem in North American.

5. I don't drink because I don't want to influence others.

Romans 14:21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. And that's an example that I never wanted to set for my children or anyone else's.

And I know some of you are sitting there with your arms crossed, maybe not on the outside but on the inside and you're thinking, don't throw stones fat boy, gluttony is a sin too.

Point taken, but I've never known anyone to hammer back a dozen big macs and then get into their car and run over a kid. I've never met someone who polished off a big plate of nacho's and went home and beat their wife or who missed work in the morning because they had too much to eat the night before. Or went to an all you could eat buffet and ended up in a stranger's bed.

Can I stand here and tell you the Bible says not to drink? Nope but here is what it does say **Proverbs 20:1 "Wine produces mockers; alcohol leads to brawls. Those led astray by drink cannot be wise."** And we are told in **Ephesians 5:18-19 "Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts."**

And I know that Jesus drank wine. And if you are going to follow his example he also had a great prayer life, he studied the word of God, he fasted and he tithed. Am I saying that you can't drink? That's not what I do as your pastor, I challenge you on your behavior and point you to the word of God. And you might be saying "Pastor Myron I don't agree with you on this point." Well don't let that keep you from coming back.

If you drink though I'd challenge you to ask yourself why you drink and what would be missing in your life if you gave it up.

And as we move into our Communion celebration this morning you might be interested to know that Welch's grape juice was developed first as a non-alcoholic communion wine in 1869 by dentist Thomas Welch.