

In some respects I am a creature of habit; I know what I like and I'm content for things to remain the same.

- I've had the same haircut for the last 4 years and I only changed my hairstyle because my former hairdresser moved away and I was forced to someone, and something, new.
- When I go to a restaurant, more often than not, I order a dish that I have previously enjoyed rather than risk ordering something new.
- I've got *my* spot at the family dinner table, I've also got *my* spot on the couch. I'm sure the other spots around the table, or on the couch, are just fine but I don't want *those* other spots—I prefer *my* spot.

Change requires, well, too much change, and change isn't easy, even for people who claim to enjoy it. Perhaps you're like me—I don't mind change as long as I'm the one leading it. But when change happens *to* me—when it comes unannounced and unwelcome—I can be as resistant to change as the next person.

It's been said that people change when the pain of staying the same becomes greater than the pain of changing. Which is another way of saying, we change when we have to, not because we want to.

All of you make some kind of choice to be here today; you could be *somewhere* else, doing *something* else, but here you are. Perhaps you're here today because you're comfortable here, you've got friends here, you like the music, or the coffee—you're not looking for change, you like the way things are at church, or in life. Perhaps you're not comfortable here, church isn't your thing, you're not sure about all of this Jesus-talk, but you're looking to make a change and you're wondering if Jesus can help.

If you could change something about your life, if Jesus could change something, what change would you seek? And how far would you be willing to go to see the change stick?

This morning, as we turn to John's Gospel, we will be reading a series of historical accounts that feature people in the midst of change. All of these people were moving from one reality to another, shifting from one perspective to another, letting go of what they knew in order to embrace something new. Faith asks us to do the same. Following Jesus implies that we leave where we are in order to go where He's going. My prayer is that as we read these accounts, God will fuel us to follow where Jesus is leading.

At this time, I'd like to invite you to open your Bible with me to John 1:35; if you are using the Blue Bible from the seat rack in front of you, you can find our text on page 860.

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" 37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" 39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to

Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).”

Last week I talked at length at the Baptist’s declaration concerning Jesus—the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*; it’s repeated once again here in abbreviated form. Upon hearing his remarks, two of the Baptist’s disciples, Andrew and an unnamed other, left John and promptly began to follow Jesus. Jesus, sensing He was being stalked, turned and asked what they wanted. Tongue-tied, they responded, “*Uh...where are you staying?*” What they really wanted was a conversation; the Baptist had described Jesus as the Lamb of God—they wanted to hear more.

After spending the day with Jesus, Andrew was convinced that He was the Messiah and the first thing he did was to find his older brother and bring him to Jesus. This behaviour is noteworthy in that this pattern repeats itself. We don’t know a lot about Andrew from the Scriptures; we don’t know if Andrew was a bright thinker, a courageous leader, or gifted teacher. What we do know is that Andrew regularly brought seeking people to Jesus; we can all learn a thing or two from Andrew.

Upon meeting Andrew’s brother, Simon, Jesus did something that awkward for everyone. We’ve all been in social settings—school, neighbourhood, or work—where we meet someone for the first time. Social convention requires that we introduce ourselves and ask the other person what their name is: “*Hi, I’m Mark, what’s your name?*” But before any such introduction took place, Jesus looked at Andrew’s brother and said, “*You are Simon son of John. You will be called...Peter.*”

I can’t decide if this is awkward or really audacious! Apart from naming my own child, I wouldn’t dare to give a complete stranger a replacement name. If any of you tried to rename me, I might say something like: *Who do you think you are?* In the case of Andrew’s brother, the name stuck; from that moment on, Simon became Peter, and Peter followed Jesus.

The name “Peter” means “rock,” and metaphorically speaking, it describes strength and stability. To say, “*Sally has been rock in her family,*” or, “*Jim is as solid as a rock,*” captures the intent of this name. But the irony is, on many occasions, Peter is anything but a rock—he was impulsive (speaking without thinking), fearful, and filled with pride. In re-naming Peter, Jesus spoke a word about Peter’s future, not his present. Peter was not a rock, at least not yet. Peter needed Jesus—we all need Jesus—to tell us who we will be, and, to bring about the change.

In vs. 35-42, we see Jesus beginning to form His team: there’s Andrew, an unnamed disciple—likely John (the writer of this Gospel)—and Peter; in verses 43-51, Jesus added two more. The next day, Jesus approached Philip saying, “*Follow me.*” Philip, like Peter and Andrew, James and John, was from the small town of Bethsaida. These young men knew one another, grew up with one another, and were ready to embark on an adventure together.

But it’s a little odd, at least from a Western perspective, that upon inviting them to become disciples, Jesus didn’t provide an itinerary, syllabus, or timeline. They literally didn’t know what they were saying “yes” to. There was no, “*This is where we’re going,*” or, “*This is what we’ll be doing.*” Jesus said, “*Follow Me,*” and they did.

There is something about this Master—disciple relationship that cuts against the grain of our culture. Most of us are more concerned about leading than we are following, or at the very least, we want to reserve the right to stop following if we aren't being led *where* or *how* we want. John will have much more to say on the Master—disciple relationship as his Gospel continues.

Back to the story...upon being called, Philip sought out a friend—Nathaniel—to tell him about Jesus. “*We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law...Jesus of Nazareth*”. Nathaniel’s response reveals the kind of rivalry that still exists between cities or towns —“*He’s from Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?*”

But as Nathaniel approached Jesus, the Holy Spirit gave Jesus a word of knowledge; Jesus *knew* something about Nathaniel—a knowledge revealed by God. Jesus was given insight into Nathaniel’s character; he was straightforward and honest and Jesus told him so. Nathaniel was taken aback. “*How do you know me?*” he asked. Jesus answered, “*I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.*”

Jesus *knew* Nathaniel, just as He *knows* us. There is nothing about you—or me—that surprises Jesus. At times we are a mystery, even to ourselves. At times, with frustration, we ask: *Why did I do that?*, or, *Why did I say that?*” Jesus knows us. He knows what makes us tick. All of the things that are a mystery to us, about us, are plain to Him.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit to reveal what He needed know in any given moment; when Jesus met

Nathaniel, the revelation He offered produced immediate faith. “*Nathanael declared, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.’*”

Nathaniel didn’t fully understand what he was saying, but that didn’t stop him from being a witness to Jesus. We are no different; we don’t need to have full or complete knowledge of Jesus in order to be His witnesses.

I’ve been reading an excellent book these days by John Stackhouse and I commend it to you; it’s entitled *Why You’re Here: Ethics For The Real World*. In it, Stackhouse helps Christians to think about who God has made us and where God has placed us. Too often we attribute the circumstances of our lives to chance, as though we could have just as easily been *someone* else, *somewhere* else.

Not so, says Stackhouse: “God wants the whole world back. So God wants [the] people of God to be in every ethnic group, in every location precisely to maximize God’s influence and draw the world most effectively to God’s heart...I am situated where I am, and I am the person I am, precisely to do what only a Christian such as I am can do...I alone have this set of relatives, friends, co-workers, enemies, neighbours, and so on...Therefore I alone can exert the particular benign influence on each of these people that I alone can exert. This can sound nonsensical of course, but I don’t think it is. Instead, it is vital to the realization that God has not made mistakes in making each of us who we are and placing us where God has in order to get done what God wants to get done.”¹

¹ John Stackhouse Jr., *Why You’re Here: Ethics For The Real World*, 112-113.

Are you a high school or university student? Are you an electrician, doctor, or barista? Are you a young mom, a grandfather, or an artist? Good! God wants to use *who* you are, *where* you are, to draw people to Jesus.

Let me offer one last thought before we move on to John 2. After hearing Nathaniel's confession, Jesus offered the following response: *"You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that."* He then added, *"Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."*

Jesus was true to His word, Nathaniel did see "greater things" things, but I want to draw your attention to vs. 51. In speaking about "open heaven," Jesus drew upon a well-known Old Testament story, found in Genesis 28. There we read of Jacob, who swindled his twin brother Esau out of his inheritance; when Esau discovered this theft, he threatened to kill Jacob. Knowing that it wasn't an empty threat, and Jacob fled for his life.

As the sun set, Jacob set up camp and went to sleep. As he slept, **12** *He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying... 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will*

bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'

16 *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.'* **17** *He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'*² And Jacob named the place where he had slept "Bethel" which means "house of God," or, "the place where God dwells".

Jacob's dream and Jesus' statement both feature an open heaven—both feature angels moving between heaven and earth. Jacob's dream features a staircase—the ascending and descending angels represents God's activity on the earth. God promised to give this particular land to Jacob's descendants and it seems that the link between heaven and earth is tied to *this* particular place. Note Jacob's response, "Surely God is in *this* place...*this* is the gate of heaven."

But in Jesus' statement, there is no mention of a staircase, or, of a particular place. Heaven is "open," the angels ascend and descend, but God's activity isn't tied to a particular place—it's tied to a particular Person. Jesus is making the bold statement that He, Himself, is the link between heaven and earth; He, Himself, is the centre of God's activity on the earth.³

John 2:1-11, *"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had*

² Genesis 28:12-13, 15-17.

³ Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary On The New Testament: The Gospel According To John*, 149.

also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. 8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

When it comes to 1st century Jewish weddings, we know that the wedding ceremony often took place at night, and, that the wedding festivities could last for up to a week. Jesus, his disciples, and His mother (Mary) were invited to attend a wedding in Cana, and everything was going just fine until the wine ran out. In a culture where hospitality was directly connected to honour (or shame), running out of wine was a disaster for the host family—it could ruin their good name.

Mary saw what was happening and approached Jesus, but Jesus addressed His mother saying, "*Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come.*"

I can assure you that culturally, Jesus' response isn't as harsh as it sounds to us in English. That being said, to address Mary as "Woman" instead of "Mother" speaks of a changing relationship. With the sign that Jesus performed here at Cana, His small town, private life was replaced with a public life that included travelling, crowds, and fierce opposition. One author notes that from this point onward, Jesus was primarily defined as the "Son of God" or "Son of Man," not as the son of Mary.

When it comes to the choices we make, often, we bend to the expectations of the people around us. For example, it can be hard to break free from our parents—their expectations direct us, and at times, cripple us. For others, it's the expectations of friends; not wanting to disappoint we say and do what others expect in order to secure their favour. For still others, it's the expectations of the crowd, industry leaders, successful people; we look at their lives and wanting to achieve what they have achieved, we take our cues from them.

Jesus was not immune to, or ignorant of, people's expectations. He experienced first-hand the wounds that came from disappointing others. But again and again we see Jesus taking His cues on what to say, or do, from His Father in heaven.

And this is what Jesus is doing here, with His mother Mary; His response was an act of self-differentiation. *I know what you're asking Me to do, mother, but my time has not yet come until the Father calls*

me to act. Jesus **is** the link between heaven and earth, He **is** the centre of God's activity, but from beginning to end, Jesus would live in submission to the Father, by keeping in step with the Holy Spirit, speaking and acting only as He was directed. *This is the way of Jesus...this is the path that all disciples are called to walk.*

Jesus offered a mild rebuke to his mother, and as I've explained, it was an act of self-differentiating submission to the Father, but note that Mary doesn't leave in a huff. It seems that Mary *knows* that it is time for Jesus to act. And so, immediately following Jesus' rebuke, Mary said to the servants, "*Do whatever He tells you,*" and the miracle unfolded.

I've pondered this exchange, trying to make sense of it, but none of the scholars I've read offer a satisfying answer. Mary approached Jesus saying, "*It's time to act,*" Jesus responded, "*My time has not come,*" and yet, moments later, Jesus transformed water into wine. The question is, ***why does Jesus say one thing, but do another?***

The orthodox Christian confession is that in Jesus Christ we have One Person with Two Natures—He is both fully God and fully human. And these two natures exist perfectly within Jesus "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."⁴ But in assuming our humanity, Jesus surrendered independent use of His divine attributes; this is the thrust of Philippians 2:6-7 and the language of "emptying" Himself. When God the Son became human, He didn't cease to be divine—He remained all-knowing and all-powerful—but Jesus embraced the limitations that all humans experience. Which means, for example, Jesus didn't know everything

about everything. It's clear that at times, Jesus asked people questions because He didn't know the answer. Like the rest of us, Jesus chose to be content to know what He could discover with His five senses, or, to know what the Father chose to reveal to Him by the Spirit.

And so, here's my sense of what took place between Mary and Jesus. Mary, prompted by the Holy Spirit, went to Jesus with her concern, "*The wine has run out.*" And Jesus, in an act of self-differentiating submission to the Father, said, "*My time has not yet come,*" but no sooner had He said these words than the Spirit whispered to Him, "*Jesus, it's time.*" At times, all of us discover the direction of God through others—Jesus was no different.

Vs. 6-8, Jesus noticed 6 large stone jars and He instructed the servants to fill them to the brim. After doing so Jesus told them to draw some of the water out and bring it to the master of the banquet. And somewhere between the stone jar and the master's lips, the water had been transformed into wine.

Vs. 9, And the quality of the wine was so superior that the master drew attention to it: "*you have saved the best till now*".

Conclusion: As I conclude this morning, allow me ask, and answer, one final question. If what John says is true—and Jesus' miracles were *signs*, revealing both His identity, and, God's intent to restore the world—*then what does transforming water into wine have to do with God's restoration of the world?*

⁴ Chalcedonian Creed.

With this first miracle, Jesus signals God's intent to do something new. Note that John offers a specific detail concerning the stone jars: "*the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing*". Through Jesus, former rituals would be rendered obsolete—He is the One who can make us clean. Jesus would become *the way* to God.

The master of the banquet stated quite innocently, "*You have saved the best till now*". He was of course referring to the wine, but on this side of history we can see that his statement could also be applied to Jesus Himself. In Jesus, God had saved the best till now. In Jesus, something new was taking place—Jesus offers new, superior, wine.

As Jesus transformed water into wine, it was a sign of His real intent—to transform people. Jesus isn't interested in behaviour management; He doesn't want to make us a little less angry or fearful. No, Jesus is after deep and lasting transformation, the kind of change that takes place at the level of our thoughts and desires; He wants to change us from the inside out.

John wants us to know, and agree with him, that Jesus is more than a mere man—much more. He is the link between heaven and earth, the centre of God's saving activity. Just as new wine requires new wineskins, we cannot come to Jesus and expect things to remain the same. That day in Cana, Jesus transformed water into wine, today His desire is to transform you. *Are you willing? Are you ready?*

Pray

Worship

Benediction