

**Christ Presbyterian Church**  
**Edina, Minnesota**  
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**John Crosby**  
**Block Party: Wedding at Cana | John 2:1-12**

We have several new staff members. Rich talked about the CPC Life Field Guide...it has the name of one of those new staff members—our new Director of Kids Ministries, Kathleen—and a little of her story is there. We have a young man, Petey Crowder, who is coming from the east coast...driving here even today. And this last year we were delighted to have Melissa and Jake join us. Jake is from Chicago, a church network down there, and actually a great thing about new staff is that they bring new ideas. So Jake said his church did a series a couple of years ago about the meals that Jesus ate, and how when He had meals with people, everything was different. We love that idea, and so that's where this idea for the Block Party series came from. We will do this all through the summer, and this first one, as Rich said, is about the wedding that Jesus goes to in Galilee. In doing my research, I read the sermon there and I loved it; I thought it was great. You know the difference between plagiarism and research? If you give credit, it's research. I researched their outline. You'll hear it today. But it's a great way for us to start the summer. And frankly, it's perfect because it's that time of year again. It's wedding season. But it's not just wedding season, it's graduation season, and also grad parties, and family reunion parties, and the season for birthday parties, and probably most of all, these block parties. That's where your neighbors that you haven't seen since Halloween come out like zombies and vampires and you're going *Oh, they're still here*. And you pull out the brats and the buns and throw them on the grill, and you put the ice out, and you call your friends. And at little parties and big parties, you celebrate life. Minnesotans love that stuff. You know who else loves it? Jesus loves that stuff. Jesus loves a good party.

One of my friends, Tony Campolo, wrote a book called "The Kingdom of God is a Party." Jesus never was invited to a party that He didn't go to. He lived the perfect life, and He died an unfair death, and He experienced resurrection for us, but He also loved parties. He didn't go to parties just because there was nothing else to do, but to bring life to the parties. Some of you maybe are here just for the baptism; you're not sure about the Jesus thing, that's great. If you were to come back and hear about Jesus and parties, I think you would see and hear in Him something that you hunger for.

So, block parties. Jesus' first block party was a wedding. I did a wedding here just this Friday and it was, like usual, just beautiful. A beautiful bride—one of the girls at our church, grown up into a beautiful woman—and a nervous, nervous groom, a broke Father-in-Law, and a long, big party afterwards. And at the wedding I told my default story. I always tell, either at the rehearsal or the wedding, about Jesus at His first wedding where it is a disaster. But if you invite Jesus to the party, things will be okay.

Now, the weddings that Jesus went to were a lot different than what happened here Friday. You know, twenty-five minute service, couple hours of wedding reception and everybody goes home. In Jesus' day, the celebration would have lasted for days, maybe even an entire week. Lots of food, tons of celebration...it was a punctuation in a tough life. You know I learned this week that in the Middle East, the fathers of daughters would start preparing for the wedding the year that their baby girl was born. They would take a big stone barrel, fill it full of juice, and let it ferment to become wine to be served at her wedding. And most of the time, if the family could afford it, they would do a new one every year. That's a lot of wine! That's because most of their weddings weren't the 120 people who were here for the wedding Friday. They'd invite the whole family and all the friends of the family and everybody who is in their little town, and every guest who is visiting town, and really anybody who wanted to come to the wedding party was welcome to be there. There was no movie back then about wedding crashers because everybody was supposed to come. And so it made it hard to know how many were going to show up. And that brings us to Jesus' first party.

The gospel of John says that three days after Jesus decided to return to Galilee—that's sort of in the north of Israel—with His brand new disciples, there was a wedding in Cana and Jesus' mom was there. [Let me just stop for a second. In John's story, Jesus' mom Mary only makes two appearances: once here at the wedding, and the second time at the foot of the cross.] But she's there, and Jesus and His disciples were all invited to the wedding, and when the wine ran out, Mary came to Him and said, "They don't have any wine." Jesus says to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with me? My hour hasn't yet come." But His mom, like all good moms, turns to the servants and says, "Whatever He says to do, do it." By the way...great advice. Jesus tells you to do something, do it. Now, there were six stone water barrels set there so that the Jews could purify themselves with clean water. They were twenty to thirty gallons apiece, and Jesus tells the servants to fill them all with water. So the servants filled them to the brim. Then Jesus told them to draw some out and bring it to the master of the banquet. And so they took it to him, and when the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine, he didn't know where it came from, but the servants knew. And the master called the bridegroom over—gotta be nervous, he's sweating bullets because, *come on, there's no wine...it's a disaster. My wife is going to kill me.* But the master said, "You know, everybody serves the good wine first, and then when the people have drunk a lot, they serve the cheap stuff. But you have kept the good wine to the last." This was the first sign that Jesus gave in Galilee, and it showed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

We see that Jesus comes to the party and He gives a gift that meets a real need. This is not – show up at the party and bring the sixth blender that you got for your wedding and give it to them. He gives them something they really need. He transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary, and I think that's what He wants us to do. When you show up at the little parties, the baptism party this afternoon, or the barbeque that you are going to have, He wants us to show up and represent Him. Let me give you two ways that that could happen. The first is when you go to a party, go to the party. I said Jesus never found a party He didn't go to...well, I think there are a lot of times when I go to the party,

but I'm not really at the party. Half of my brain is on my smart phone, and the other half of my brain is on my calendar, and the third part of my brain is wondering if I have forgotten something. When Jesus comes, apparently He's present there; He's fully there. Better to be fully there for an hour than to veg out all night. Now Laura and I, my wife and I, are quite different. I have a hard time...I love the first hour of the party. About an hour and a half in my eyes start to glaze over. About two hours later I turn to my wife and say, "Honey, I think it's time for us to go to bed so that all these good people can go home." But my wife, as we're driving home from the party, she'll say, "Did you see how excited she was in this relationship?" "Did you notice how he is still working through losing the job?" "Did you talk with her about whether it's cancer or not?" She had meaningful conversations all through the evening; she was fully present. She was there. And I was going, "Well, I talked about football with this guy." I'm not sure how present I was, but when we are present, we notice the things that nobody else sees. I wonder if that was Mary, who was fully present at the wedding and noticed the little squabbling around the edges, hearing that the wine was gone. She notices ahead of time what other people don't see, and she teaches her little boy Jesus to do the same thing. So when you go, be present.

Part of being present is saying *who's here, and who is sort of here but they aren't really here?* Do you notice those people? They are uncomfortable, they are in the corners. If you and I are present there, even just a hug, even just asking them, even just noticing them can make them feel like they're not just a face in the crowd. When Jesus comes to the party, He meets the people at the party. Do you? Or are you still watching your clock?

The second thing Jesus does when He comes to a wedding party or any party at all is He looks for a chance to bless other people. That doesn't mean *Bless you in the name of the Father and the Son...* Christians do too much of that. No, when He says that we are to bless other people at the party, He doesn't mean to be the life of the party, tell the best jokes, or be the center of attention. He means bring life to the party, not be the life, but bring life to the party. When Jesus does His first miracle, it's not an accident that it is at a wedding, because the Jews have been waiting for a long time for this wedding. See, the people of Israel had been looking for a king to come and rescue them for hundreds of years. They prayed and waited. All through scripture the Old Testament describes God's love for us as a wedding. The prophet Isaiah says that God is literally going to marry His people; as a young man marries a young woman, so will your builder, your creator marry you. As a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you. But it's been so long for the Jews. They've been waiting and they felt like God was angry at them, or worse, that God had forgotten, God had left the building. You go to a party, I guarantee you there are people there who feel like God is angry at them, or that God doesn't listen, or that God is far away. But then Jesus walks into the wedding and He shows that God hasn't forgotten them. And God sends you to parties so that people can see that God's love hasn't forgotten them. See, if a wedding is a sign that we are God's people, then the wine in the wedding is a sign of God's love for us. The wine is used as a symbol. We see it in the last party Jesus has. This is the first party Jesus has, and His last party is with twelve of His best friends in an upper

room. He's just about to die. And it says that He took the cup and poured the wine into it, and He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, and whenever you drink the wine, remember me." It's not just when we receive communion together; when we drink together, grace shows how God loves us even when we aren't loveable.

So when Jesus turns six jars into wine... again it's not Two Buck Chuck. The master at the banquet had never tasted wine like this. It wasn't a great year, it was God coming here—God saying *I've arrived at your party. I bring grace and love with me.* Now, you and I can't turn water into wine, that's not the point. But when you go to block parties, or you have some friends over for burgers, or weddings, or baptism parties, you have a chance to help people receive the grace of God. You are not called to be the life of the party, but you are called to bring life to the party.

This summer we are going to talk about parties, but the key is, let's bring God's love with us when we go to the party. So let me get practical for just a second. First, when there is a party on your calendar, pray that you will be present, and by that I mean pray that whomever you see there, you will really see there. Not just deep conversations—that's often not what people need, not touchy-feely—but see people the way Jesus did. And then, bless the party that you're at.

Laura and I came here and our kids were not much older than these babies that were just baptized, and we were in over our heads. We were drowning—about a year into it we were just drowning, and I hadn't slept in a year. And it was because of you... I mean it was because of the kids! I hadn't slept in a year, and Laura wasn't doing any better, and so one Saturday afternoon the kids finally have taken a nap for the last six and a half minutes, we have locked the doors, turned off the lights, it's great... and there's a knock on the door. So we go to the door, and one of our elders and his wife is there, and they have this big basket, filled with chocolate and wine and great food and chocolate and videos for the kids to watch and chocolate. And they brought it in and they put it on the kitchen table and they just gave us a little hug and they said *we know, we remember what that was like.* And they stayed for twelve minutes. The best gift they offered us was when they showed up and they said *we know how you feel. Let us just bless you with twenty-eight bucks worth of chocolate.* And the second best gift was that they stayed for twelve minutes and they left.

You don't have to stay a long time. You don't have to stay a long time to bless people, you just have to bring the grace of Jesus with you when you come. Just practically, in this season, one of the best ways you can bring the grace of Jesus to a party this summer is that you can find life giving things to say when it gets ugly. And trust me, after about forty-seven seconds it will get ugly, because forty-two percent of you think Hillary Clinton is a traitor, and forty-three percent of you think that Donald Trump is an idiot, and you're sitting at the same party. So if you and I can be in that kind of environment and find life-giving things to say when the negative arrives—and I don't mean *Oh yeah, how about them Cubs!*—but find something positive and gracious to say, you will bless the party. The second way you can be a blessing wherever you are at a party is find a way to serve. I don't mean be a martyr, but the other day I'm at a little

party and I see a ten-year-old little boy quietly get up and start to clear the table. I was like *Whoa! Can I buy one of those kids?* And it was just so neat. He was trying to help by clearing the table. Bless the party by serving... by holding a baby...by doing something that other people don't see.

And the third way that Jesus brought grace to a party is He invited other people. He brought his brand new disciples with Him to the party. There are no wedding crashers. But this summer there are a lot of people around you on the outside of your life looking in, and it doesn't mean invite them to church, it means invite them to the party. Invite them into your life. Show them you have had a little of this wine Jesus talks about. Be present and love them, and do you know what? God will do another miracle. He always does.

Lord Jesus, I thank You that Your very first miracle took place at a party. I pray that You would make me hungry, not just for the brats, not just for the music, but for the joy of being a blessing to other people at the party. That they will receive grace and they will know that they have been loved, and they will sense that You are good. Bless us at this party in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. Amen.

*The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.*