



## TIME OF GRACE®

# *Fake News/Real Jesus: Finding Joy in the Unexpected*

## Study Notes

### *Summary*

Jesus' first ever miracle was making 150 gallons of alcohol! Turning water into wine was not only proof of Jesus' identity as God but also a reminder that God's great goal for our lives is joy, to celebrate in his presence by the miraculous work of his Son, Jesus.

- Jesus shows up in \_\_\_\_\_.
- **John 2:1,2:** <sup>1</sup>On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup>and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.
- Jesus does \_\_\_\_\_.
- **John 2:3-10:** <sup>3</sup>When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." <sup>4</sup>"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, <sup>9</sup>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 <sup>10</sup>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."
- Jesus blesses \_\_\_\_\_.
- **John 2:11:** 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.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Read John 1:43-51. Find three unexpected details of Jesus calling his first disciples. What do those details have to do with our lives today?

2. Do an internet search for the lyrics of Rend Collective's song "Boldly I Approach" (aka "The Art of Celebration"). What is powerfully unexpected about Jesus and the blessings he offers to all who believe in him?
  
3. **Challenge:** If you haven't started yet, try to read all of John's gospel by the conclusion of this sermon series.

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read John 2:12-25.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Fake News, Real Jesus: Finding Joy in the Unexpected**  
John 2:1-11  
May 3, 2020

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Let's imagine for a second that it's Mother's Day and you're a mother. What do you expect is going to happen? What do you expect your children will do for you? Will there be gifts?

Some people have very small expectations of God, and because they do, they don't expect God to show up at the times he has promised and do the things he has sworn that he will do. That there's an incredible amount of hope and security and confidence that Christians can have as long as we don't expect too little of our Father in heaven. And essentially, that's what John's going to teach us today. We're about to open our Bibles and dive back into the gospel of John. We're going to see how one of Jesus' best friends was an eyewitness to the first ever miracle that Jesus did. And within that incredible story, we're going to find three unexpected things to raise the bar of our expectations and hopefully our faith, our confidence, and our joy along with them. So if you're taking notes in your program, here's the first thing that John wants to teach us today. He's about to teach us that Jesus shows up in unexpected places. Don't set your expectations too low for the kind of places where Jesus, the Son of God, likes to show up.

Let me show you the proof of that in John chapter two. It says, "On the third day, a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding." So Jesus, about to pull off his first ever miracle, turning water into wine at a wedding, and John says it happened at Cana in Galilee. Now, quick show of hands - if a \$10 bet was on the table, how many of you could find Cana in Galilee on a map? Any takers? Alright, we've got zero people. We've got some longtime Christians in this church right now, too, and have zero people who could find it. And you know, actually, I don't blame you. Do you know that archaeologists and scholars would tentatively put their hands up as well? There are currently four places vying for tourist dollars that claim to be the ancient Cana where Jesus performed his first miracle. Apparently, the village was so small and the evidence so scarce that we're not even sure where it is - if it was in northern Israel somewhere or just across the border in modern Lebanon. I got into a fight the other day with a Lebanese friend at a soccer game where he told me Jesus' first miracle was in his home country of Lebanon and I said, "No, it's in Israel," and I didn't realize that this is why; because we're not even sure where it was. In other words, ancient Cana was kind of like modern Kaukauna. If you're watching like on Facebook live or on TV, you have no idea where Kaukauna is, that's kind of the point. It was not the center of the universe but the God of the universe apparently showed up there.

If you read your Bible a little bit today, you'd find out that Jesus had the incredible habit of doing that very thing. I mean, think of this: Jesus' identity is God. Not just a guy, not just a good rabbi or teacher; he is God. He is the light of the world. He is the way and the truth and the life. He is the word from the heavenly Father made flesh. But 2,000 years ago when Jesus took on that flesh and blood, guess where he showed up? In unexpected places. Where was he born?

The biggest city of the Roman Empire? The biggest city of the land of Israel? Nope. We sing every Christmas, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." An unexpected place. And when Jesus was living that perfect life, like before his ministry started and he did preaching and miracles, those first 30 years of just faithfully serving God, honoring his parents, loving his heavenly Father with his whole heart, where did that all happen? Jerusalem, the holy city? Nope. Up in the backwoods hills of northern Galilee in a little, tiny, dinky, one camel village called Nazareth. A place so small that when a guy named Nathaniel, who was from Cana, heard this rumor that the Son of God had appeared in Nazareth, he said, "Nazareth? Are you serious?" Because who would ever expect the Messiah to show up in a place like that? In other words, Jesus had an incredible habit of showing up in the places where people least expected.

Which kind of reminds me of Kwik Trip. Ever been to a Kwik Trip before? Yeah. If you're driving through Wisconsin or Minnesota, I think there are currently over 600 Kwik Trip gas stations. They have over 24,000 employees and they make millions of delicious donuts. You should try one after church today. You know the incredible part? The current, I think, co-CEO of Kwik Trip is the current founder; he's been doing it for decades. He's a wildly successful businessman who came from very little and God has blessed him with very, very much. His name is Don and do you know the only place in the entire Kwik Trip organization where Don's name and picture are front and center? It's not at the company headquarters. I actually took a picture of it; let me show you. It's in the bathroom. The owner and CEO, Don, puts his name and actually his very office number - that's not a joke - in the bathroom. He's so concerned that you know he cares about your experience in a Kwik Trip bathroom that he puts his contact information in every single store. Who would have expected the most powerful man in the organization to show up in a place like that?

Kind of sounds like Jesus, doesn't it? The CEO of all creation and where does he show up? In the restrooms of this world. In the places where you never expect to find a holy, perfect, all-powerful, glorious God. Come on, this is what we love about him, right? He's not just the God who shows up in the penthouse suite, the Fifth Avenue luxury store; he's the God who shows up in the unexpected places where you will spend the next seven days. He's the God of the average apartment, the God of the bunkbeds where kids get squeezed in when parents don't have enough to afford a big house. He's the healer who shows up in hospice care. He's the Redeemer who shows up at rehab. He's the deliverer who goes to DUI class. He is the God of the jail cell. The God of the breakroom. The God of the grill in the back of the fast food restaurant. He's the God who shows up at average colleges, small churches, and the places where you will go after this worship service is done. He's the God who sits in the lobby with you when you're struggling with anxiety and need a refill on your medication. He's the God who goes with you when it's your first day away from mom and dad your freshman year of college. He's the God who comes to divorce court when you're broken and you can't believe it's actually happening. He's the God of the funeral home. He's the God of the megachurch. He is the God of all creation. There's not a single square inch that your toes will touch this week where Jesus, in all of his glory and beauty, is not fully present.

Which is incredible! As some of you battle loneliness and hopelessness, there's certain places where you find yourself just overwhelmed with the responsibilities and pressures of life. You're trying to be a good parent. You're trying to make the grades work. You're trying to balance the

bills and take care of your kids and sometimes it feels like you're doing that all alone. But according to John, you're not. Do you know what the number one command in the entire Bible is? "Don't be afraid." And do you know what phrase almost always follows that command? "For I am with you." God says, "I'm with you." And so wherever you go and whatever fears you face, this is the incredible thing that God says, "Don't be afraid because I'm there." Jesus did not spend his days in Jerusalem and the capital of the Roman Empire; he spent it in Cana and Bethlehem, in Nazareth, and in the places where we take our daily breath. So brothers and sisters, do not be afraid. Jesus is the God who shows up in unexpected places.

And while he's there, he does unexpected things. If you're taking notes in your program, that's the second thing I want you to know: That Jesus, our Savior, does the unexpected. Tell me that isn't true as we jump back into John 2 and look at Jesus' first ever miracle. "When the wine was gone at the wedding, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.' 'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water.' So they filled them to the brim. He told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.' They did so 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 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 until now.'" I mean, come on, who expected that? If you had never read the Bible and I said, "Jesus is God and he proved it with miracles. What do you think is the first one he did?" You wouldn't say, "I think 150 gallons of alcohol." But that's exactly what happened; 150 gallons of alcohol. Can you believe that? I crunched some numbers and did the math this week. A hundred and fifty gallons turns out to be 757 normal size bottles of wine. And a standard pour is five ounces, which means there's five glasses of wine in every bottle, which according to my math means that Jesus, for his first miracle, made 3,785 glasses of wine. Three thousand seven hundred eighty-five glasses of wine. Can you believe that? I was going to try and visualize this for you and go to Walmart and buy 150 gallon jugs of water but even at Walmart's low prices, like I didn't want to bust the church budget by buying all that. Can you imagine? A hundred and fifty gallons! And it wasn't the cheap stuff, either. This wasn't bottom shelf, wine from a box. This is not the Boone's Farm that some of you used to drink back in your college days. This was so good that the master of the banquet, when he tasted it, his palate was shocked. He did not expect wine that good.

Why do you think Jesus did it? To get people hammered? Well, Job, I've got four gallons for you so drink up! No, we know that can't be true. Jesus, you know, taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." So he's not trying to get people intoxicated. I think he was trying to prove a simple and beautiful point; that he is the God who does unexpected things. That you expect him to do about this much and he does much more. And you expect it to be about this good and he does it that much better. And if you know the story of Jesus, you realize that's the perfect description for him: The God who did the unexpected.

Who of us would have expected God? The God who cannot be contained by the entire universe? Who would have expected that God to be contained in the womb of a teenage Jewish girl named

Mary? Who would have expected the God who has no beginning and no end, he's eternal, he is life and death cannot touch him? Who would have expected him to take on flesh and blood so he could die on a cross for our sins? Who would have expected God to be in a grave? And who would have expected God to burst out of it on Easter morning? My favorite part though - who of you would have ever, ever expected that a perfect, holy, unapproachable God would let people like us boldly come to his throne? You know what I would expect? I would expect kind of what every religion on earth teaches; that if you've been bad, you better do something good. If you lack self-control, if you got drunk, if you lost your cool, if you didn't honor your mother, well, you better balance that out. Karma, in my mind, is expected. It makes sense. Do you know what doesn't? Grace. That God would say, "Yeah, you did mess up and yeah, it was bad. I forgive you. I'll take care of that. I'll pay that debt. I'll suffer the wrath of God for you." "What do I have to do to earn it?" "Nothing." "Well, how much do I have to pay for it?" "Nothing." "Wait, God, you're just going to like love and save and accept me for free?" "Yeah." "Well, I didn't expect that."

I love teaching people about the good news of Christianity and here's what I say: Jesus lived perfectly. Then he took away all the imperfect things you've ever done and gave you all the perfect things that he ever did so that when God looks at every Christian, he sees perfection. He says, "Wow. You honored your mother all the time. You never talked back to her. You always went to church and you were always focused on the word of God. You never wanted to skip it. You always ran to God first when you were in trouble and didn't try to fix it yourself." And people say, "Ah, no, that's not me." But because of Jesus, it is you. God looks at you through his Jesus glasses and he sees everything that's beautiful and pleasing to him. That is the unexpected news of God's grace.

And this is why I sometimes get into a fight with our worship director, Jonathan. Have you ever met Jonathan before? He has the very important job of picking all the songs that we sing here Sunday after Sunday. And you know, I really try not to micromanage him and tell him what songs we should sing. I just expect one thing out of Jonathan; that he would let us sing the song, "Boldly I Approach Your Throne," at least once every Sunday. That's all I'm asking him, I mean, but he never quite listens to me but today, we got to so I'm kind of pretty excited today. You know why I love that song? Because of the lyrics. Were you paying attention? "By grace alone, somehow I stand where even angels fear to tread." Like angels! They never sinned; they're perfect. They shouldn't be scared to stand in the presence of God. But what do we sing? "Blameless I'm running home. Boldly I'm coming to the throne." Like God is God but people like us, because of Jesus, can run to him and instead of looking at us like what are you doing here? Instead, he throws open his arms and we run into them by the incredible grace of God. We get to come face to face with love himself. It's like my kids, right? I might be the pastor of this church but to my kids, I'm just their dad and they run and they come with boldness because they know that they are unconditionally loved. And this is the unexpected thing that Jesus does. We don't have to earn it, we don't have to deserve it. We look to him, we give him our sin, we put our trust in his cross and we boldly take hold of every blessing that God himself is offering.

See, Jesus is the God of the unexpected. He shows up in unexpected places and he does unexpected things and that means we're to John's third point for today. Write this down: Jesus also blesses unexpected people. Did you notice that at all in John chapter two? It's easy to miss

the first time you read about Jesus' first miracle; you get distracted by the 150 gallons of wine. Think about this: Who saw Jesus' first miracle? Did the high priest of Israel? No. The Pharisees? Religious leaders? No. Did the bride and the groom from that wedding? No. Did the master of the banquet? No. Did Jesus own mother, Mary? Not sure, maybe, but the Bible doesn't say that. No, who are the only people that we know saw Jesus reveal his glory as God? The servants and the blue collar guys who were at Jesus' side. Look how John 2:11 puts it. 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." I love that little detail. When God wants to prove his identity, he often doesn't do it to the rich and powerful. He doesn't show up with important people and important places. Instead, he goes to little, tiny villages like Cana and to the college kids who are serving the salads before the main course, he proves that he's God. This first sign that he did, this testimony of Jesus' real identity, was given to these poor fisherman who just weeks earlier were sitting on their boats trying to find hope and faith and peace with God.

And friends, that's so true for you, too. You might feel like an average mom and maybe you are. But Jesus blesses unexpected people. You might just be praying that you can afford tuition, just praying that your kid will finally get potty-trained, just praying that you can sleep for four hours straight because you're exhausted but here's the truth: Jesus blesses unexpected people. You might be the kind of couple that walks down the street and no one stops and asks for your autograph but Jesus blesses unexpected people. This might just be another church in another city in another country but Jesus blesses unexpected people. You might be just another person recovering from another divorce but Jesus blesses unexpected people. You might be another person in rehab just trying to stay sober but Jesus blesses unexpected people. You might go to McDonald's and eat your 20-piece nugget - is that just me? Do you guys order a 20-piece, too? And no one comes and asks to take a selfie with you because you're no one special, which is totally cool with God because he blesses unexpected people. And so, when you're not powerful and you're not rich and you're not famous, the story of Jesus' first miracle is so powerful and it's so beautiful because Jesus is the God of the unexpected.

And that, friends, is the real Jesus. Now, he's not promised to make you rich; he's never promised you an easy life or even a long life. But he has promised you real life. A life where God always shows up, where he always has grace, and it's always for a person just like you. Which is what I found out sitting back there. A few Fridays ago, we had our Good Friday service here at our church and our other campus pastor was preaching and the rest of the musicians covered the rest of the service so I didn't have to do anything except just come and watch and worship and so I did. And I sang the songs about the mighty cross of Jesus Christ and I listened to an incredible, just emotional, beautiful, message and I worshipped Jesus.

And then I came back for the second service and to be honest, I was expecting it to be exactly the same - same sermon, same songs, same visuals, same videos. I didn't expect something powerful to happen but it did. We were singing this song about the mighty cross of Jesus Christ and I looked down at the tattoo I have here on my arm. I have a tattoo of a cross and inside is a Hebrew phrase that translated means, "To the Lord." It's just my reminder that if Jesus loved me this much, everything I have is to the Lord. Like, you can take my time, you take my life, you take my money, you take my schedule, you take my sexuality, everything Jesus - is yours because you did this for me and gave me eternal life. And I've known that for years; that's why I

got the tattoo. But then something unexpected happened. As I was singing about the cross of Jesus, for some reason, I put my hand over my tattoo and I covered up most of the Hebrew except the first two letters and it struck me. The first two letters of this Hebrew phrase when translated mean "For me." For almost 10 years, I've had a cross inked on my body that begins with the phrase "for me." And as we sang about the grace of God and the mercy of God and the forgiveness of God at the cross, I realized that after all the stuff I've messed up, after all the promises I've made to God to be stronger and better and more self-controlled, after all the times I've dragged myself spiritually in a church, all of this is still for a guy like me.

And for people like you, too. And maybe you don't expect God to forgive you anymore; maybe you expect that his patience has run out. Maybe you expect like everyone else you've run out of chances. But here's what I know about Jesus: The Son of God who showed up in Cana of Galilee and created 150 gallons of wine and revealed his glory to the lowly servants is the God of the unexpected. And he has unexpected grace, patience, and love for people like you. Hallelujah and praise the Lord! Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for being a Savior full of grace and truth. It's really hard to believe the gospel; that your love really comes with no strings attached. That despite the fact that you're so passionate about us making the right decisions, at the end of the day, even if it all went wrong, you're still there and your face is still shining upon us and you're so gracious to us. Thank you, Jesus, that you came into this world not just to show off with miracles but to show us your incredible love and compassion. I thank you, Jesus, for choosing Peter and James and John; flawed men who were obvious sinners so that we would know that that's what you do. You choose people who are flawed and you give them faith.

I pray for this next season of our life, God. That we would live with less fear; believing that you are truly with us. I pray that you would do more than you ask, expect, or even imagine as we fix our eyes on your cross and believe that every spiritual gift is ours. We've been chosen, accepted, and included through faith in you as our Savior. And so, bless us today, God. We ask a special blessing on all the parents who are with us today. As they try to pass on the faith to the next generation, let it be about this, about the real Jesus, who loves in unexpected ways. Let their parenting be filled with good rules but even more, God, we beg you that you would give parents the wisdom to specialize in good news.

We celebrate you today, Jesus, your grace, your love, and your mercy. And we pray all these things in your name, Amen.