

## **The First Sign of Trouble**

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John 2: 1-11

*Christ Church, Mexia, Texas*

Weddings can be nothing but trouble. In fact, if I took a poll among the clergy, many priests would probably say that they would rather officiate at a funeral, way before they would want to officiate at a wedding. Now you might find this preference for funerals over weddings to be morbid or odd.

But I tell you: Weddings can be nothing but trouble.

Weddings can be nothing but trouble because you have to deal with renegade mothers-in-law and picky mothers of the bride. Weddings can be nothing but trouble because you have to juggle the whims of photographers and florists and cake decorators and caterers and organists and bridezillas. And I can attest that weddings can be nothing but trouble because at the last wedding I officiated was outdoors, one of the bridesmaids fainted during the ceremony, falling into the shrubbery.

I tell you: Weddings can be nothing but trouble!

You would think that Jesus, being as smart as he is, would run the other way at the sight of receiving a wedding invitation. You would think that Jesus would be smart enough to run the other way at the first sign of trouble. Yet instead - at the instance of his own renegade mother - Jesus uses a wedding as the time to give the first of his signs. You see, there once was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. And Jesus and his mother and his followers are all invited. And not only has the guacamole been cleaned from the bottom of the bowl, but the wine has run out as well.

The Gospel of John pretty much implies that the guests are already pretty tipsy - which is always the first sign of trouble. And the mother of Jesus

comes up behind her son and whispers in his ear: “They have no wine.” Yet Jesus doesn’t know if this is the time to open up a whole mess of trouble. But his mother barks to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now standing next to the empty longnecks littering the ground, there are six stone jars, each holding 20 to 30 gallons. Jesus instructs the bartenders to fill the jars with water. And when they dip into the jars, they are filled with over 120 gallons of the best and finest wine they had ever tasted. (Which means over 90 bottles of fine wine.)

Now the guests have already drunk up all of the wine served by the caterer. Yet now they have an endless supply of wine to keep the party rocking.

I told ya: Weddings can be nothing but trouble.

Yet Jesus does not run away at the first sign of trouble. In fact, the writer of the Gospel of John tells us plainly and clearly by writing this, “Jesus did this, the *first* of his signs, in Cana of Galilee.” Jesus does not run away at the first sign of trouble. Because Jesus is a troublemaker. You see, in the Gospel of John, the writer doesn’t talk about Jesus performing “miracles.” Instead of talking about “miracles,” the writer of the Gospel of John gives us seven *signs*, signs that reveal that Jesus is an obscene troublemaker.

In the first sign, Jesus creates trouble – by producing an obscene amount of excellent wine to keep the party going at Cana.

In the second sign, Jesus causes trouble - by proclaiming that the son of a non-Jewish military officer who is near death is actually alive and well.

In the third sign, Jesus causes trouble - by stirring up water in a pool in Jerusalem, where a paralyzed man has laid for 38 years, and now he stands up and walks.

In the fourth sign, Jesus causes trouble - by taking five barley loaves and two fish, and he feeds 5000 people, with 12 baskets left over.

In the fifth sign, Jesus causes trouble - by walking on the water, with the

audacity to tell us, “Don’t be afraid!”

In the sixth sign, Jesus causes trouble - by spitting on the ground, making mud and putting it on the eyes of a man born blind, who then proclaims, “I once was blind, but now I see.”

In the seventh sign, Jesus causes trouble by - opening up the grave of Lazarus, whose body stinks after being dead for four days.

And after seeing all these seven signs of Jesus as a troublemaker, the religious men of privilege back in the day call a board meeting. And at this board meeting, they exclaim, “This man is performing too many signs. We can’t let him go on like this!”

So then Jesus gives us his last sign: Jesus is lifted high on a cross and killed. And on the third day, Jesus gives us a sign that he is the ultimate troublemaker: by rising from the dead, kicking death where it hurts, and turning the whole world upside down.

Weddings can be nothing but trouble.

Because the *first* of Jesus’ signs - is giving an already liquored up crowd an obscene amount of fine wine. And the *last* of Jesus’ signs - is giving us an obscene amount of abundant life and grace.

You see, my friends, the Christian life is not about getting all prettied up, prim and proper. No, the Christian life - is obscene. The Christian life - is about an obscene amount of fine wine. The Christian life - is about an obscene amount of forgiveness and grace and love.

Yet make no mistake about it: When we show signs of this lavish abundance of grace and love, Then we show signs of being - a troublemaker. This weekend in the United States, we remember *another* troublemaker for Jesus. This weekend, we remember Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King did not run away at the first sign of trouble. Instead, he

told us that he had a dream, a dream filled with a lavish abundance of grace and love. He told us that he had a dream, an obscene dream where all of God's people respect the dignity of every human being. His message of civil rights caused those of privilege to exclaim, "This man is performing too many signs. We can't let him go on like this!"

Martin Luther King showed signs of being a troublemaker. And lifted high on the balcony of a Memphis motel, he was killed. And now, with all the saints, Martin Luther King rises with Jesus, kicking the powers of this world where it hurts, and turning the whole world upside down. Weddings can be nothing but trouble. For at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, Jesus gives the first of his signs - a sign that he is a troublemaker in this world.

We are Christians.  
We are troublemakers.  
We show signs of a lavish abundance of grace.  
And we are killed for our obscene love.

Yet we rise with Jesus.  
We kick the powers of this world where it hurts.  
And we turn the whole world upside down.

My friends: We don't run the other way - at the first sign of trouble.

AMEN.