**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**JOHN-012**. **JESUS THE JOY BRINGER by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"1. And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. 3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. 4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. 5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. 6. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, 10. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him."*

*John 2:1-11*

The exact dating of this first miracle indicates an eye-witness. As Nazareth was some thirty miles distant from the place where John was baptizing, and Cana about four miles from Nazareth, the third dayis probably reckoned from the day of the calling of Philip. Jesus and His disciples seem to have been invited to the marriage feast later than the other guests, as Mary was already there. She appears to have been closely connected with the family celebrating the feast, as appears from her knowledge of the deficiency in the wine, and her direction to the servants.

The first point, which John makes all but as emphatic as the miracle itself, is the new relation between Mary and Jesus, the lesson she had to learn, and her sweet triumphant trust. Now that she sees her Son surrounded by His disciples, the secret hope which she had nourished silently for so long bursts into flame, and she turns to Him with beautiful faith in His power to help, even in the small present need. What an example her first word to Him sets us all! Like the two sad sisters at Bethany, she is sure that to tell Him of trouble is enough, for that His own heart will impel Him to share, and perchance to relieve it. Let us tell Jesus our wants and leave Him to deal with them as He knows how.

Of course, His addressing her as Woman has not the meaning which it would have with us, for the term is one of respect and courtesy, but there is a plain intimation of a new distance in it, which is strengthened by the question, What is there in common between us?What in common between a mother and her son! Yes, but she has to learn that the assumption of the position of Messiah in which her mother's pride so rejoiced, carried necessarily a consequence, the first of the swords which were to pierce that mother's heart of hers. That her Son should no more call her mother, but woman, told her that the old days of being subject to her were past for ever, and that the old relation was merged in the new one of Messiah and disciple--a bitter thought, which many a parent has to taste the bitterness of still, when wider outlooks and new sense of a vocation come to their children. Few mothers are able to accept the inevitable as Mary did, Jesushouris not to be prescribed to Him, but His own consciousness of the fit time must determine His action. What gave Him the signal that the hour was struck is not told us, nor how soon after that moment it came. But the saying gently but decisively declares His freedom, His infallible accuracy, and certain intervention at the right time. We may think that He delays, but He always helps, and that right early.

Mary's sweet humility and strong trust come out wonderfully in her direction to the servants, which is the exact opposite of what might have been expected after the cold douche administered to her eagerness to prompt Jesus. Her faith had laid hold of the little spark of promise in that not yet, and had fanned it into a flame. Then He will intervene, and I can leave Him to settle when. How firm, though ignorant, must have been the faith which did not falter even at the bitter lesson and the apparent repulse, and how it puts to shame our feebler confidence in our better known Lord, if ever He delays our requests! Mary left all to Jesus; His commands were to be implicitly obeyed. Do we submit to Him in that absolute fashion both as to the time and the manner of His responses to our petitions?

The next point is the actual miracle. It is told with remarkable vividness and equally remarkable reserve. We do not even learn in what precisely it consisted. Was all the water in the vessels turned into wine? Did the change affect only what was drawn out? No answer is possible to these questions. Jesus spoke no word of power, nor put forth His hand. His will silently effected the change on matter. So He manifested forth His glory as Creator and Sustainer, as wielding the divine prerogative of affecting material things by His bare volition.

The reality of the miracle is certified by the jovial remark of the ruler of the feast. As Bengel says: The ignorance of the ruler proves the goodness of the wine; the knowledge of the servants, the reality of the miracle. His palate, at any rate, was not so dulled as to be unable to tell a good brandwhen he tasted it, nor is there any reason to suppose that Jesus was supplying more wine to a company that had already had more than enough.

The ruler's words are not meant to apply to the guests at that feast, but are quite general. But this Evangelist is fond of quoting words which have deeper meanings than the speakers dreamed, and with his mystically contemplative eye he sees hints and symbols of the spiritual in very common things. So we are not forcing higher meanings into the ruler's jest, but catching one intention of John's quotation of it, when we see in it an unconscious utterance of the great truth that Jesus keeps His best wine till the last. How many poor deluded souls are ever finding that the world does the very opposite, luring men on to be its slaves and victims by brilliant promises and shortlived delights, which sooner or later lose their deceitful lustre and become stale, and often positively bitter! The end of that mirth is heaviness. The dreariest thing in all the world is a godless old age, and one of the most beautiful things in all the world is the calm sunset which so often glorifies a godly life that has been full of effort for Jesus, and of sorrows patiently borne as being sent by Him.

Full often clad in radiant vest

Deceitfully goes forth the morn,

but Christ more than keeps His morning's promises, and Christian experience is steadily progressive, if Christians cling close to Him, and Heaven will supply the transcendent confirmation of the blessed truth that was spoken unawares by the rulerat that humble feast.

What effect the miracle produced on others is not told; probably the guests shared the ruler's ignorance, but its effect on the disciples is that they believed on Him. They had believedalready, or they would not have been disciples (John i. 50), but their faith was deepened as well as called forth afresh. Our faith ought to be continuously and increasingly responsive to His continuous manifestations of Himself which we can all find in our own experience.

Jesus manifested His gloryin this first sign. What were the rays of that mild radiance? Surely the chief of them, in addition to the revelation of His sovereignty over matter, to which we have already referred, is that therein He hallowed the sweet sacred joys of marriage and family life, that therein He revealed Himself as looking with sympathetic eye on the ties that bind us together, and on the gladness of our common humanity, that therein He reveals Himself as able and glad to sanctify and elevate our joys and infuse into them a strange new fragrance and power. The waterof our ordinary lives is changed into wine. Jesus became acquainted with griefin order that He might impart to every believing and willing soul His own joy, and that by its remaining in us, our joy might be full.