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Jesus Cares for All Our Needs

John 2:1-25

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY **201st General Assembly**

- **TUESDAY (SESSION) @ 8:00 AM**
IN ROOM 203, RYAN BLDG.
- **MONDAY (WEEKLY) @ 1:00 PM**
IN ROOM 203, RYAN BLDG.

Capitol Commission Bible studies are held on Monday and Tuesday. The legislator Bible study meets from 8:00-8:45 AM in Room 203, Ryan Bldg. (during session weeks). An open-to-all Bible study meets from 1:00-1:30 PM in Room 203, Ryan Bldg. (please feel free to bring your lunch). The Bible studies are nonpartisan and non-denominational. Our studies will focus on the Gospel of John for the 2017 General Assembly.

– Jeff Whitebread, Pennsylvania State Minister, Capitol Commission

John 2:1-25: “A Treasure Hunt”

One of the traditions my parents created for my children, their grandchildren, when they were younger was organizing various treasure hunts in their house. These would begin with a location of the first clue, which then revealed the location of the next clue, and so on as they pursued their hidden treasure.

It was priceless to see our three kids scrambling around the house looking for clue after clue, hidden under a lamp, or behind a picture, or maybe inside a container in the refrigerator.

In order for them to find the small treat or hidden gift, they needed to follow the clues that were laid out for them. These times, especially when they were younger, were filled with growing anticipation as they explored parts of the house previously unknown, along with an uncertainty of what their search might yield.

John’s gospel is planned as a kind of treasure hunt, with careful and sometimes cryptic clues for us to follow. The scene has been set with the opening accounts of John the Baptizer and the calling of the first disciples. Now he is ready to identify the first clue, he points it out so that we might know where to begin.

A couple chapters later he also identifies the second one; but after that, we are on our own. It will require us to use our own imagination, along with some initiation as we seek to follow the clues to the end of his account about Jesus.

The Revealing of Clues

(John 2:11) - The word John uses for “clue” is “sign.” In doing this, he is setting up a series of signposts he will use through his account. These signs point to moments when Jesus did what he promised to Nathanael in the previous chapter. These are moments when the angels of God are

going up and down at the place where Jesus is present. Heaven was opened in these moments, and the transforming power of God’s love burst forth into the present world.

Our story has all the elements that we shall come to know as we work our way through this gospel. It is an account about transformation: a different dimension of reality that comes into being when Jesus is present and when, as Mary tells the servants, people do what he says.

The Generosity of Jesus

(John 2:1-2) - The wedding itself, in the town where Nathanael came from, would probably involve almost the whole village, and include several people from the neighboring towns as well; which is why Mary, her son and his friends were invited. Running out of wine as not just an inconvenience, but a social disaster and a disgrace. The family would have to live with the shame for a long time to come; bride and groom might regard this as bad luck for their married life.

(John 2:3) - This is one of two occasions when we meet Jesus’ mother in this gospel, the other time is at the foot of the cross. This is important because, Jesus seemingly strange remark (John 2:4), “My time has not yet come,” looks forward to the point when his time does come, when his glory is fully revealed, as he dies on the cross. That event is the ultimate place where heaven and earth meet. It is in this moment that it takes all the faith in the world to see the glory hidden in the shame; the creative Word present as a weak, dying human being.

While Jesus will address other kinds of problems going forward, what we are witnessing is the generosity and compassion of God which come to people who are in need as Jesus is brought into that situation. While not according to his plan, but simply because he was asked, he intervenes so that the celebration might continue. In this, we see his willingness to meet us in our real lives and help with the areas that matter to us. Is this our picture of God? Jesus, the Son, reveals to us a God that is interested in the things that matter to us. He acted for no other reason than he was asked, and cared genuinely about this seemingly insignificant need that was presented to him.

(John 2:5) - Now as mention earlier, Mary’s words are instructive. Jesus acts in accordance with us doing what he tells us to do. We are not seeking some mechanical approach to the vending machine of God’s activities in our lives. It is, and always will be a relationship, and as such we pursue interaction with Jesus and not just his presents.

(John 2:7) - Jesus tells the servant to fill six stone water jars holding 20-30 gallons, for a grand total of 120 + gallons of wine. Not 120 glasses of

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wine, or 120 bottles of wine, Jesus, at a minimum is making enough wine to fill 225 2-liter bottles of soda. Just a couple of observations about this staggering number: first, this is no small amount of wine, Jesus was providing an abundance of the very best wine for an out of the way small-town wedding. The generosity and kindness of God to his people is on full display, in this first sign, through the actions of the Son.

Second, this was no small task he asked the servants to accomplish. Simply considering the efforts and time to draw that much water from a well is significant. Vessel after vessel is drawn from the well, possibly carried to another location as they begin to fill one, two, then all six stone water jars. At this point, there is still no wine, during this whole operation there was simply water being drawn and poured into each of the water jars. What are the servants thinking as they do what Jesus asked them to do over and over and over again? But as we consider the time between Jesus's instruction and the miraculous event, Mary's words should ring in our ear, "Do whatever he tells you to do."

The transformation of water into wine is of course meant by John to signify the generous effect that Jesus can have, and can still have today, on people's lives. He came, as he says later, that they may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10).

The Engagement of Jesus

(John 2:13) – The magnitude of Jesus' actions at the Temple are to be seen as unique, no illustration can do justice to what he did. In addition, what John wants us to see is that this, too, is a moment when the angels are moving to and fro between heaven and earth.

The Temple was the beating heart of Judaism. It wasn't as if this happened at some local church on a street corner. This was the center of worship and music, the heart of politics and society, it was the place of national celebration and corporate mourning for God's chosen people. It was also the place where you would find more animals (alive and dead) than anywhere else. But, most of all, standing above all these, it was the place where Israel's God had promised to live in the midst of his people. It was the focal point of the nation, and of a national way of life.

(John 2:14) - It is into this context that an unknown prophet from Galilee came in and turned everything upside down. We must never forget, or take lightly just how shocking this must have been. And behind it all, the questions raised by Jesus' actions: What was wrong with the Temple? Why did Jesus do what he did? And, what is the meaning of his answer, when they asked him for a sign?

There is no doubt what John thinks it all means. It is Passover time; he earlier identified Jesus as God's Passover lamb, and now he enters Jerusalem at the time when the deliverance, redemption, and rescue from slavery was being celebrated. Somehow, John wants us to understand, what Jesus did in the Temple is a hint at a new meaning he is giving to the Passover, its fullest expression is to be found in him and what he will do.

It's also a hint – and a strong one – as to what Jesus thinks of the Temple itself. Clearly, he regards it as corrupt, and under God's judgment. The trade, the market-place atmosphere, isn't what it was supposed to be there for. But we are catching a glimpse, like the first rays of light from a sunrise, a new day is dawning and it is tied to Jesus, and his own fate.

(John 2:17) - John adds a bit of commentary to this incident. As the disciples reflected upon Jesus' clearing the temple, their understanding of Jesus' action is captured in Psalm 69:9, "zeal for your house will consume me." This passage in Psalms continues, in typical Hebraic poetry, "the insults of those who insult you fall upon me." Jesus is one who comes from the Father, he knows the Father, and he seeks to make the Father known through the totality of his life. We see on one hand God's kindness and generosity to a community at an obscure wedding by turning the water to wine of a quality and abundance that is hard to fathom. Now, we see his unflinching conviction to address a corrupt system that mars the God which he seeks to make known. Both are consistent to Jesus' ministry, both seek to make the Father known, as two-sides to the same coin, he is seeking the good of both God and his people in each account.

(John 2:18) - As they respond to his actions, they demand some kind of sign to validate this interruption in the offering of sacrifices, he speaks, very cryptically, about his own death and resurrection. He is the true temple: he is the Eternal Word made flesh, he is the place where the glory of God has chosen to make his dwelling.

(John 2:19) - The Jews had ancient traditions about the Temple being destroyed and rebuilt. It had happened before, and some thought it would happen again. Herod the Great had begun a program of rebuilding the Temple, and now, forty-six years later, one of his sons was completing it. Jesus takes the traditions and applies them to himself. He is the reality to which the Temple itself points. His death and resurrection will be the reality to which the whole Passover celebration points.

In the two vivid scenes are bookends, John has introduced us to almost all the major themes of the gospel story, and gives us a taste of where it's all going. But, as so often, he ends with a hint as to how people should respond. If you see the signs Jesus is doing, then trust him. Place your confidence in him. Jesus, after all, is the one who knows you through and through, and becoming his student is the only way to bring deliverance, redemption, and rescue from a life turned away from God and in on itself.

Book referenced:

Wright, NT. John for Everyone. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2004

Legislator Bible study: Tuesday, April 4th & 18th at
8 AM, Room 203 - Ryan Office Building
Open-To-All Bible Study: Monday, March 27th at
1 PM, Room 203 - Ryan Office Building