

Dan Phillips: The Party

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by Dan Phillips

The Party

In only one place in the story of Jesus does his mother take an active role in his ministry. It happened just at the beginning. In fact, it was the beginning of his life as a religious figure.

Jesus was gathering his disciples. Of course, they were not called disciples yet. They had answered Jesus' call, but they were not sure about this man yet. Moreover, they did not know what he intended to do. Nevertheless, he did tell the best stories. Therefore, when Jesus invited them to go with him to his cousin's wedding, they went along gladly.

Jesus was happy to attend the wedding. He was not too sure about starting a ministry. He had been baptized, and called these men to follow him. Now he was getting cold feet. A wedding sounded fine. Besides, he had known Daniel all during childhood, and he was one of Jesus' favorite cousins. So, when Jesus heard Daniel was getting married, he stopped looking for those that would help him in his work, and took all his new friends to the wedding.

Jesus and his group arrived late, and had not been there long, when the wine supply began to run short. It was probably because of the all the large, exuberant fishermen he brought with him. His mother, Mary, came over to where he was telling a story. 'Jesus', she said 'they have run out of wine. Help them.' Now Jesus did not like getting his stories interrupted, and he was there with all his friends, so he also did not like

his mother so carelessly telling him what to do. Even more, he did not want to end his joy at participating in this human activity.

He knew, as did his mother, that he was on the verge of a very different kind of life, and he was hesitating. Nevertheless, his mother thought that this was the perfect time for the family and friends to find out how special a person he was. Besides, he had always been such a good and capable son. It was only natural for her to turn to him to take care of this family problem.

Moreover, it was a doozy of a problem. Wedding feasts were joyous occasions, and lasted for days. Wine was an essential part of the wedding feast. Everyone loved to drink, relax and celebrate. A failure in the wine supply would not only spoil the mood, but it would be a social disaster for the family. People would talk about this for years. The bride's memories would not be of the great wedding she had, but of the terrible disaster at the wedding feast.

Therefore, while Mary had casually handed the problem to Jesus, it was not a casual problem. It was severe, and a test of his abilities. If more wine could have been bought, surely that would have already have been done. However, there was no more wine to be bought in the village of Cana, and no time to go to another village and get some. Therefore, Jesus was given the problem, the need.

Now Jesus understood all of this as soon as Mary spoke to him. In addition, he understood that his mother was challenging him to demonstrate who he was, what abilities he had. He did not like this! He asked her why she was bothering him. It was not time for him to 'come out' yet. Nevertheless, like most mothers who ask something of their grown children, she did not listen to his protestations. She simply turned to the servants and told them to do whatever Jesus said.

Jesus had a problem here because he knew that once the "miracles" started, people would listen to him because of what he could do, not because of what he said. As he thought his messages, his stories, were more important than the miracles, he did not want to do them unless he had to. In addition, its a little tough to relax and be part of the gang when you have just done something that nobody else has ever done, or could do.

Therefore, Jesus had a short conversation with God at this point. God shared with Jesus that she also thought it was time for him to get started. Moreover, she reminded him that she would use others as she had just used Mary: to give Her message to Her people.

Therefore, while Mary was walking away Jesus ruefully thought about how sometimes in life we need a jolt to get us started. We know what we are supposed to do, but we are reluctant to step out and do it. Moreover, of course, it is often our mother, or father, or closest friend, who jabs us with a cattle prod, and lets us know its time. As he thought of this, as he realized that his friends would never think of him the same way after this, he was a little sad. However, that was a part of the burden he had to bear. Better that his friends learned of his talents now, in this un-threatening environment, than later when things would be much tougher.

Therefore, he turned to the servants, who stood waiting to see if this amazing son could do that they could not do. They knew there was no good solution to this problem, so they wanted to see what would happen. When he commanded them to fill up the water pots, they assumed that he was going to take exquisite revenge on his mother. They figured he was going to serve the guests water, and let the guests get angry with the family. That would serve the family, and his mother, right. They had asked too much of this man, and he had tricked them into drinking water instead of wine.

They were a little puzzled at how much water he wanted, but then they were not paid to think, only do. Therefore, while Jesus and his friends (who had now gathered to see what was happening) looked on, the servants filled six water jars with approximately 150 gallons of water. It was a lot of work, and took some time. Meanwhile, the guests were calling for more wine. The steward of the wedding feast, one of Jesus' uncles, looked like he was going to cry! Things were getting a little nervous.

Finally, the water jars were full, and Jesus told the servants to take the wine to the steward. The servants did so with extreme anticipation. Some good gossip was going to come out of this practical joke! The steward doled out the water/wine to the guests. The servants waited for the explosions! However, what happened then floored them!

The guests began to exclaim at how good the wine was! Then the steward went to Daniel and raved about the new wine. 'Usually people serve the best wine first. But you saved the best for last.' Laughing at the vagaries of the young, the steward hurried off to share this great new wine with all the thirsty guests.

The servants were stunned, of course. All of them surreptitiously had some of the wine at the first opportunity, and it was good. Jesus' friends, of course, had been some of the first to try the new wine, and they too were stunned. It was great wine, and as they drank, they compared their views of what had happened. The verdict: Jesus was good! It was a miracle. They were looking forward to following this holy man! Anyone who could turn water into wine was all right by them.

Jesus, of course, knew that no matter how good the wine was (or maybe because it was so good) the party was over. His life would never be the same. He could not be one of the boys again. Therefore, he sat in a corner with a glass of very good wine, feeling a little sorry for himself. Mary came over to

thank Jesus for the wine. She stayed long enough to show him how happy all the guests were. Moreover, as the wedding guests gradually heard about how the wine came to be, they began to wander over to Jesus to listen to his stories.

And so it began.