

The First Miracle of Jesus

by Bayless Conley

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Hey, I am glad that you're here. If you have a Bible, why don't you open it up to John 2? We'll be reading from there in just a few moments. Last weekend, we began a series from John's Gospel. Every weekend, we're taking a chapter and teaching from either a story, a picture, or one of the miracles that took place in that particular chapter. It's going to be good. Last weekend, Pastor Harrison teed it up for us. He covered a lot of ground. I was actually glad I didn't have to speak last weekend. I thought he did a masterful job of going over the verses that he went over. It was just really good. As he mentioned, John, which I believe is in chapter 20, shares the reason for recording the particular miracles that he did. He calls them signs.

During Jesus' earthly ministry up to the time of His crucifixion, John chooses seven miracles or signs. There is one post-resurrection, an eighth one, that happens in the 21st chapter, which involved 153 great fish. Signs are miracles that teach lessons. They are not written down just to amaze but rather to instruct. They teach us about the person of Jesus. They show us His glory, and they teach lessons. So, we're going to be looking at Christ's very first miracle. John recorded it in the second chapter. Before we do, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we just settle our hearts down. We leave all the stuff, all the concerns, all of the noise, and things going on in our lives. We just sort of leave it outside right now. We ask You to just close us in with Yourself. Teach us and instruct us. We thank You for the Holy Spirit, Who is present with us and abiding in us. Who leads and guides us into all the truth. Who teaches us. Lord, we pray along with the Psalmist of old to cause us to behold wondrous things out of Your law. It is our intention to not just be hearers but to be doers of Your Word. Jesus, may You be glorified. Amen. Amen.

Well, again, welcome. If you're in here, out on the plaza, watching online, or wherever you happen to be right now, we pray that God will speak to you. The last recorded prophet in the Old Testament was Malachi. From the time of Malachi, until John the Baptist came, and John was a prophet, there were 400 years of silence. There was no voice of a prophet heard in the land. It's interesting; according to Scripture, John worked no miracles. He was certainly the voice of one crying in the wilderness, but he was not a miracle worker. In fact, the last recorded miracle in Scripture was in Daniel 6. It was Daniel's supernatural deliverance from the lion's den. From that point in Daniel 6, the last recorded miracle, until the first miracle of Christ happened, recorded here in John 2, was 450 years. Very, very significant. We pick it up in John's Gospel, chapter 2:1-4 NKJV.

¹ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³ And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."
⁴ Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

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Now, I know as we read that in the English Bible, it sounds kind of harsh. It actually is not in the original language at all. In fact, the term woman was a very endearing term. When Jesus hung upon the cross and is just about to die, He looked at John. John and Mary, His mother, were there. He says to John, "Take care of My mother." Then He looks at Mary and says, "Woman, behold your son." It was very, very tender. When He said, "My hour has not yet come. The time to display My glory and begin to work miracles hasn't come yet." Apparently, Mary had some real insight that His time was about to come. There must have been something about the inflection of His voice and posture that let her know He was going to do something because look at the very next thing that she says. In verses 5–11 NKJV,

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." ⁶ Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. ¹⁰ And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" ¹¹ This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

So, this is His very first sign, His first miracle. Why was this the first sign that Jesus did, and why did John record it? Because this sign symbolizes conversion. It symbolized transformation. This sign symbolized change. My friend, moral and spiritual change is the first item on God's agenda for man. With that in mind, I want to talk to you about conversion and salvation from this story. I want to share some of the truths I believe this sign is meant to point to. Now, first, it said, "The master of the feast didn't know of the change. Only the servants knew." Only those who experience conversion understand it. A lot of my friends didn't understand what happened to me when I got saved.

You'd hear something like, "Bayless is different. Man, something is happening to him. He's not getting high anymore. He won't do drugs with us anymore. He's sober. You're not going to believe this, but I saw him in the park the other day. He was reading a Bible!" "You're kidding. Bayless?" "Yeah, and it gets worse. He talks about Jesus all the time, and he's going to church." "What? I don't believe it." "I didn't either, but it's true." They couldn't understand. For some of you, when you got saved, your family members and friends just shook their head, and said, "What in the heck has happened to them?" Friend, you can't understand it from the outside. You need to get on the inside by being born again to understand it. I also want you to notice that the contents were changed, but not the pots. Second Corinthians 4:7 NKJV says,

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about being born from above or being born again, Nicodemus didn't get it. He was thinking strictly on a natural level, and Jesus said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. That which is born of the Holy Spirit is the human spirit." Second Corinthians says, "That if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new." Well, friend, that's in your spirit. You're a spirit being created in the image of God, and you happen to live in a physical body. When you get saved, it's your spirit that has changed, not your body.

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Friend, if you had freckles when you got saved, I have news for you: you're going to have freckles after you get saved. That does not change. The pot doesn't change. It's the contents that are changed. I'm looking at a room full of pots right now, but there's wine in the pots. There's more to you than meets the eye. I've got this suit coat on. (He puts the suit jacket on the ground) "All right, get up, Bayless!" Everybody say, "Bayless, get up! Get up!" "Is there something wrong with him?" No, the suit is animated because I'm in the suit. The suit moves around because I'm in it. Friend, this body is just my earth suit. I live in this body, but this body is not me. It's my temple. It's my tabernacle that I live in while I'm in this world. It's only animated because I am inside of it.

The Bible says the body without the spirit is dead. It's lifeless. There is more to me than meets the eye. There is more to you than meets the eye. I've already experienced resurrection life in my spirit. I've already received life from God inwardly. The day is coming when I'll be changed outwardly as well. The day is coming when the pots will be changed. The tabernacle, the house that we live in, Romans 8 calls it the redemption of the body. Listen to this. First Corinthians 15:51–53 NKJV,

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—
⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

What a day that will be. But until that day, we have the down payment of the Holy Spirit. We must discipline our body and make it subject to us, even though it doesn't want to obey. The apostle Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 9:27 NKJV. "But I discipline my body." Well, who's the I talking? It's the spirit man on the inside. I discipline my body. I'm living in this body. He said,

²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Now, you get saved on the inside. I, for one, live in this body that was highly trained in evil for a long time. I have a new driver inside, but the body did not want to comply. The King James Version says, "I keep under my body, or I keep my body under." When I was a kid, we'd go to a public pool, or if there was some kid in the neighborhood who happened to have a pool, we'd go. They used to have these little Styrofoam paddle boards that were about this big. We'd get them, push them down, and then stand on them. That thing would want to come up, and whoever could keep it down longest would win.

That's like your flesh, your body. It's always wanting to get out. It wants to go somewhere it shouldn't go, look at something it shouldn't look at, and say something it shouldn't be saying. We're to keep our body under. By the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the power of God's Word, I can subject my body and keep it under. The longer I do it, the better I get at it. In fact, it's interesting. When Paul said, "I discipline my body," the Greek word translated discipline literally means "to hit with a fist under the eye." That's literally what the word means: to strike under the eye with a fist. One translation said, "I beat my body black and blue." He's not talking about literally. It's a metaphor. In other words, there's going to be a fight.

How many of you found that out? Yeah, yeah, your flesh wants to do stuff, but there's a fight. The man on the inside, if you will feed on the Word of God and strengthen that inner man and rely on the Holy Spirit, you can win the fight. You're going to have to discipline your body until

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Christ returns. The idea that I'm changed inwardly, and the more I feed on God's Word, the more I rely on His Spirit, the more I become transformed in my lifestyle, my actions, my inward meditations, my words will become more and more Christ-like as I continue in the way of the Lord.

Now, it says that those pots, those jars, were for the purification of the Jews. They were for ritualistic purposes and ritualistic washing. They would wash from their hands all the way up to the elbows. They would clean utensils in them. It symbolized ritual and religious tradition. Friend, I want to tell you that ritual will not get the job done. Religious tradition will not get the job done. Many folks think that by following rituals and adhering to their religious rules and regulations will somehow save them or open heaven's doors for them. I'm telling you, my friend, it will not.

You must be changed. The contents of the pot must be changed. Ritual will not save you. Tom Schulte, one of my dearest friends in all the world, and I were just talking, and I asked his permission to share this. Some of you may or may not know Tom was in the priesthood for 16 years. Four years of theology, where they studied everything except the Scriptures. They were steeped in religious traditions and ceremonies. He was very tender toward those things and very tender toward God.

He loved God but only practiced the rituals and ceremonies. He never heard the simple gospel message. He never heard the Word of God. He actually ended up leaving the priesthood because he wanted to get married. He and his wife, Trish, heard the gospel message, and they were all in. It was the one thing that was missing from his life. He had the traditions. He could light the candles, burn the incense, and recite the prayers in Latin. He could do all that but had never been saved.

It's like Cornelius in Acts 10. The Bible says Cornelius was a devout man. Meaning he had a genuine fear of God and a genuine reverence for God. Not just him; the Scripture says he taught his whole family to reverence God. It even went beyond that. When he sent the people and the soldiers to find Peter in Joppa, it says he sent a devout soldier. So, his influence to move people toward God had even gone to the military men who were under his command. The guy's a positive influence, and it says he prayed always. He gave alms generously to the poor to the point that his giving and his prayers had come up as a remembrance before God.

An angel appears to Cornelius and says, "You need to send for Simon, Peter. He's in Joppa. This is where he's staying. He will tell you what you must do." Everyone say, "Must do." So, Peter comes and preaches the gospel to them. They believe in Jesus and get filled with the Holy Spirit. In the very next chapter, Acts 11, Peter tells all of the Jewish believers back in Jerusalem what happened, and he expounds on what Cornelius said to him when he came to the house.

He explained how an angel came to him and said, "Send to Joppa for one named Peter, who will tell you words whereby you and your household will be saved." Cornelius was devout. He feared God. He prayed. He gave, but he wasn't saved. God has chosen through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. It's through hearing the gospel message and putting your trust in a risen Savior. It's not through ritual. It's not through our good works, as numerous or noble as those good works might be. Friend, religious ritual is not enough. Jesus said, "Unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God."

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A friend of my wife and I told us one day that the town she lived in was a fairly large mainline denominational church. She went and met the pastor. She said he was really gracious and really kind, until he found out what church she went to. He says, "Oh, you go to that born-again church? That's a bunch of rubbish. I don't believe in being born again." He was a seminary graduate steeped in religious tradition and ceremony, but unsaved. It was a case of the blind leading the blind. Jesus said when that happens, they're both going to end up in the ditch. I think a person's heart can be right. I'm not against ceremony. I'm not against tradition because we realize they point to certain things. So, I'm not against that at all. But, friend, that will not open the doors of heaven for you. That will not get you into God's family. You must put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Now, in verse 7, Jesus said, "Fill the water pots with water." It says they filled them up to the brim. I love it. They didn't fill them halfway. They filled them to the brim. They obeyed with zeal. That's the way it ought to be.

I think there's far too much half-hearted activity going on in the body of Christ. In whatever we do, we ought to fill up to the brim. If it's believing, we should do it with all of our heart. If it's preaching, we ought to preach in season and out of season. Not do it half-heartedly like we don't even believe the stuff we're saying ourselves. If it's studying, turn the Scriptures inside out. Meditate on them. Think of them. I mean, fill the vessel of study up to the brim. If it's praying, pray mightily. If it's giving, do it with liberality. Fill it to the brim. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart." In John 2:10 is an interesting part of the story. When they bring this wine to the master of the feast, and he tastes it, he calls the bridegroom over. He says, "Everybody puts out the good wine first. After people have drunk a lot then, they put out the inferior wine. You reversed things. You saved the best wine until now." Wouldn't you like to have tasted some of the wine Jesus made? I, for one, would.

Listen, the Christian life is better than our unsaved days. The best I had unsaved does not compare with the life I have now. My old life was inferior in every way. I wouldn't go back to it for any price. Did you notice that Jesus didn't charge for the wine? It was free. You can't buy salvation. You can't earn salvation. Here's the formula for salvation: It's by grace through faith, plus zero. Grace is the hand of God that reaches out and offers this free gift because of what Christ has done. Faith is the hand that reaches up and receives it, plus zero. I can't add my good works onto it or my personal merit. Nothing can be added onto that. It is strictly a gift of God's grace received by faith. This miracle of change was accomplished by the Word of the Lord and by the action of His servants. Men and women experience new life in Christ and are saved, as I said earlier, through the foolishness of preaching. Here's what the Scripture says. Romans 10:14 NKJV,

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

You know, we're born again through the incorruptible seed of God's Word, Peter said. But somebody has to plant that seed of the Word. For me, it was a 12-year-old boy in a park. I had a very close brush with death the night before due to an extreme overuse of drugs. I found myself in a park the next day. I somehow lived through the night. A 12-year-old kid came up to me and talked to me about Jesus. No one had ever done that before. I'd never heard the gospel before. The kid rocked my world. Then, through his influence and the influence of his little family, I ended up in a street mission a short time afterward, where I gave my life to Christ and was born again. Here's a thought. The servants were mere men with false inconsistencies and failings, but no one rejected the wine because of the weaknesses or failings of the servants. Don't reject

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the gospel because of the humanity of those who bring it. Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 4:5 NKJV,

⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

Why reject the meal because those who are serving it are disappointing? Let's take it a step further. You're going for a hike out in the desert. You get turned around. It's the middle of summer. You get turned around badly. Somehow, you intuitively know you've wandered way out in the wrong direction. You spend a night shivering. You realize when the sun rises in the morning, it's going to be blistering hot. You've run out of water. You wander more, and finally, about midday, it's like 120 degrees out. You realize you're not going to make it. You've had nothing to drink. You don't know where you are. You're exhausted. You're alone out in the desert.

You lay down, put your head on a rock, and say, "Oh, God, help me." All of a sudden, you hear something. You look, and there's a trail of dust coming your way in the distance. You prop up on your elbows and get to a seated position. All of a sudden, this old, beat-up, rusty Jeep pulls up, and this guy gets out. The first thing you see is his boots when he gets out of the Jeep, and there are holes in his boots. His clothing is sweat-stained and dirty. His hair is matted. He's unshaven. He stinks. He has bad breath. His skin is blistered. His lips are chapped, and he offers you some water and a ride out. You say, "No way! You stink! Look at you. You're unshaven. There were no proper introductions. I don't want you or your ride. Get out of here." "All right! Go ahead and die."

Listen, all of God's servants, as we read earlier, have this treasure in earthen vessels. I, for one, have feet of clay that go all the way up to my armpits. Don't you dare ask my wife after service what all my failings are because you'll be here all day. I'm working on it. I'm getting better. I'm growing. As I take in the Word of God, I'm going from glory to glory, from faith to faith. I'm increasing. I'm becoming more like Christ, like hopefully you are. Don't reject the message because of the failings of the one who brought it. The message is pure. The message is true, and the Savior is wonderful.

Now, the main lessons from this sign that John records have to do with conversion and salvation. There are other lessons as well, like the faith of the servants. I love what Mary said to them. "Whatever He says to you, do it." So, there are these huge stone jars. Jesus said, "Fill them with water." I'm sure the servants are thinking, "Did You misunderstand Your mother? She said they have run out of wine, not water. We've got plenty of water. They ran out of wine, Jesus." He says, "Fill them with water." They didn't say, "This is 150 gallons. Jesus, our little bucket that goes down in the well holds two gallons. It's going to take us 45 minutes to fill these things up, and it's hot."

No, they did it. They obeyed Him. Then, they say, "Okay, here you go." Jesus said, "Draw some now, and give it to the master of the feast." They have to be thinking, "You're kidding me. Look, Jesus, You understand this is my job? This is my livelihood. I'll never work another wedding again! I'm going to make a fool of myself. No one will ever hire me again. I've got a wife and kids to feed. I thought You were going to give us some money and send us into town to buy some more wine." But you know what? They obeyed with zeal. They dipped it out and took it to the master of the feast, and there is no indication that the water turned to wine before they put it in the hand of the master of the feast. It took faith to do what they did.

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Friend, almost always, when God is about to work a miracle for you, He issues a command first. When we obey it, the miracles follow. Our part is obedience. To discern what He's saying and then do it. His part is to bring about the miracle. It may seem like God is toying with you or having a laugh at your expense, but He's not. Many times, God will require you to do the ridiculous before He will do the miraculous. He requires you to fill the water pots with water, and then He turns them into wine. He wants you to let down the nets. He'll fill them with fish. You have to go walk around the city several times and shout. Then He'll make the walls fall down. Our part is to obey. His part is to bring about the miracle.

Our first little building we outgrew in five months. It was a storefront. Then, we actually leased a commercial office building right down the street from here, almost a stone's throw from where you're sitting. At that time when we leased that little building, if you counted all of the adults, the kids and their teddy bears, and all the pregnant women twice, we had 65 people. Like 40, maybe 45 adults, maybe. We rented this space, and I bought 160 chairs. There was some murmuring about that. "What an unnecessary expense."

In fact, I remember one of the most solid couples in church came to me later and said, "Pastor, we thought you were crazy! You bought three times as many chairs as we needed. We thought you'd lost your mind." But you know what? God filled the chairs. God filled them. We had to add another service. We had an evening service, and they were filled. In fact, the front row was about here. The drum kit was right behind me, and when I got to preaching, everybody in the first three rows got a shower. I was spitting cotton balls three rows back. Some of you may go back with us. There are still quite a few people in the church who were back from that original day.

We'd have to open the doors, and we'd put all these chairs outside. We had to get more chairs. We gave people umbrellas so they wouldn't get sunstroke. They'd sit out there in the rain, and we'd put speakers outside. We'd put chairs all down the hallways. In fact, if you had to go to the bathroom during service, you had to do it quietly because there were people with chairs sitting right outside the door. They could hear everything you were doing. Somebody asks, "Why did you buy all those chairs?" I was just filling my water pots. Just filling the water pots, and God did His part. He filled the seats, and sometimes, He even did some supernatural things. We've just had basically a steady growth with the church always, but there's been a few unusual things that have happened.

I remember, probably 39 years ago, I was in my office, which was a little spare room in our house. I'd bought a desk and a chair for \$25 at a yard sale. I was on my face on a Saturday morning, praying for the coming services on Sunday. Nothing like this ever happened again. So, this doesn't happen every third Tuesday. Thirty-nine years ago, an angel appeared in that little office. The moment the angel appeared, I heard a Scripture in my spirit. "Are not angels all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation?"

I had an immediate sense I was supposed to send this angel to do something. The thing that came to my mind was I began to think about people who didn't go to church, unsaved people, and unchurched people. I made a list and called the names out. People who were backslidden and who had come to church months and months before. We hadn't seen them in months and months and months. Again, unsaved people, people away from God. I made a list of about a dozen people. There might have been 15. Then suddenly, that angel disappeared.

The next day, Sunday morning, people didn't know what I was doing. I stood up to speak, and I just looked at the congregation. Yep, yep, yep, yep, yep, yep, yep. Every single person I named,

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every one of them to a person, was sitting in that service. Now, whether they had a dream the night before, that they were supposed to come to church, or somebody called them, or they just had this kind of desire out of the blue to go, I don't know how it happened. I just know what influenced them to come. My friend, God can answer your prayers. He can do things for you in ways that you never even thought possible. Your part is to obey and do what He has told you to do. Now, Jesus made a lot of wine, 150 gallons. Some people said, "Well, everybody must have gotten drunk." Well, a wedding then wasn't like today. It wasn't just a Sunday afternoon affair. A wedding then lasted an entire week, and the whole village was invited. Jesus met the needs of an entire village. He is Jehovah Jireh, the Lord, our provider. No matter what kind of a need you're facing right now, or how large it might be, it is not too difficult for God. Listen, it is not too difficult for God.

I was an assistant pastor for two years; I haven't thought of this in a long time, at a church out in Beaumont, California. It was called New Covenant Fellowship. It has a different name today. I was speaking in the service. While I was up there, all of a sudden, I heard words in my heart. It was really strange. I'm preaching a message from the Bible, and two words come in my heart. "Parking lot." I ignored it. I kept preaching, and those words came back, "Parking lot." So, I stopped. I said, "Okay. Does this mean anything to anybody here? Parking lot."

This guy, it's his first time at church, raised his hand. "Me!" He says, "I own such and such restaurant." We knew his restaurant. He said, "They tore up my parking lot six months ago. The city tore it up for whatever reason, and they've never been back to fix it. My parking lot's been torn up for six months, and my restaurant's about to go down." I said, "Well, let's just pray about that." So, we prayed that his parking lot would get fixed. He came back the next Sunday. He said, "Guess what? Monday morning after that last Sunday, the city was at my parking lot, and they fixed the whole thing. They did it all!"

My point is this: whatever your need is, it's not too difficult for God. It is not too difficult for the one who spans the heavens with the palm of His hand. There's no indication, by the way, that they drank all that wine. I personally think it was Jesus' wedding gift to that little couple. Sort of like the story of Elisha and the widow. She had a little bit of oil in her jar, and he said, "Go borrow vessels." She borrowed all these vessels. He says, "Is that all?" She says, "I can't borrow any more." He says, "Pour it out." She poured it and poured it, and the oil kept coming and filled all those vessels. He says, "Sell all the oil, pay your debt, and live on the rest."

I think Jesus just gave this little couple an exquisite gift for their wedding. Now, He did this miracle at a simple wedding in a remote town among poor people in Cana. Whoever heard of Cana? A little village in Galilee. Jesus did not do His first miracle in Herod's palace. He didn't do it in front of the religious elite. There were no kings and dignitaries present, just a young couple in distress and embarrassed because they'd run out of wine. Yet, Jesus met their need in that obscure village away from the famous and out of sight of the religious leaders. He did it in Cana.

Cana belonged to the tribe of Asher, of which the dying Jacob prophesied He will provide delicacies fit for a king. It certainly happened that day in Cana. You may feel pretty overlooked in the grand scheme of things. You might be thinking, "Does anybody even know I'm alive?" God sees you. Your needs are important to Him. People may not know you, people may not see you, but the Creator sees you. Your needs and the things you're facing matter to Him. You can experience delicacies fit for a king. It can happen in your life. You just need to do what this young couple had done. They invited Jesus to their wedding. Jesus isn't a gatecrasher. He comes into our lives and our circumstances by invitation. You need to invite Him in.

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I want to pray with you in just a moment and give you an invitation, an opportunity to be changed. Yeah, I'm looking at the clay pot, but there's something extremely valuable. There's something eternal on the inside. The day's going to come; you'll lay that body down in death if Jesus doesn't return first. It happens to everybody. It kind of freaks me out. I'm almost 70 years old. I don't know how that happened. It kind of snuck up on me. I'm still about 21 in here, and I still have my fair share of sanctified crazy, but it's just weird. It's a weird thought. The person living in my body and the person living in your body is eternal. You will spend eternity somewhere. You will. I have good news. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Born again, changed, and made into a new creation. Jesus said that which is born of the Spirit is your spirit. In the book of Genesis, as it opens up, we find the Holy Spirit is hovering and brooding over the face of the waters. What's He waiting for? He is waiting for God to speak that Word, "Let there be light." The moment God speaks, the Spirit creates.

Right now, the Holy Spirit is brooding. It's hovering in this place. You've heard the Word of the Lord. The moment you embrace it, creation takes place in you. You become a new creation in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit will change you, my friend. You can't get it through ritual. You can't get it through ceremony. It doesn't come by adhering to rules and regulations. It comes by trusting in the risen Savior. I want to lead you in a prayer. I won't be done. There are a couple of other thoughts that I want to share that I think will help you before we go today. If it helps you to close your eyes and bow your heads right now, you can, but only if you want to.

I'm going to pray. Actually, I'm going to count. I will count to three. If you want to get in on this prayer, I'm going to ask you to lift a hand when I count to three. By that uplifted hand, you'll be saying, "Yes, I want to pray." Then, I'll acknowledge any hands that are up, and then you can put them down. I'll lead everyone in a prayer. I personally believe that an act as simple as lifting a hand can help your faith begin to go to God.

The Bible says faith is expressed through action. It's very clear in the book of James 2. Just look at it this way: your heart is reaching up to God. Your hand is just an outward reflection of what's happening in your heart. I want to widen the invitation just a little bit. You may be here and have never accepted Christ. Maybe you are well aware of your sins and shortcomings. You know you need a Savior. Or you may be a backslider here today, a prodigal son or prodigal daughter. You had a genuine encounter with Jesus Christ at some point in your life. You may have loved Him as a child and had an encounter with Him as a young adult. Maybe you were in trouble at some point in your life, and you called out to God. He rescued you, but you've never lived up to the promises that you made Him. It's time to come home, prodigal. I want to pray with you as well.

One, two, if you want to get on the prayer, lift your hand. Three, just lift it high so I can see it all over the auditorium. Just keep them up for a minute. Most importantly, God sees your heart right now. Even an act as simple as lifting that hand is important. All right, it looks like virtually in every section hands are up. Go ahead and put them down. Just put a hand on your heart, and tie that heart of yours around these words, and speak them to God sincerely. Just say,

Oh God, I come to You right now. With all of my heart, I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe He died on the cross to take away my sins. I believe He was raised from the dead. I ask Him now to come into my life. Jesus, I confess You as my Lord and Savior. All I am and all I have, I put it in Your hands, Jesus. Wherever You lead me, I will go. Amen.