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Mennonite Japanese Church (Vancouver)

Gospel of John 2: 1-11

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Is there something missing? No, it's someone's absence!

Today is the story of the famous miracle of Jesus Christ that every Christian knows. It is a miracle when Jesus turned water into wine when the most important part of a wedding ceremony was gone. Weddings are the brightest moments in life, all times and places. Is it just May last year? There was a wedding ceremony for Ryohei and Bethany. After the wedding, his mother Yuko reported that the weather was nice and there was a wonderful wedding cake and everything went smoothly. By the way, if Ryohei's wedding was missing something small, this might have evolved after the ceremony was over. What if the photographer had a cold and had a high fever and couldn't come to the ceremony suddenly? I think that the wedding ceremony turned into a painful memory because the couple couldn't record the wonderful memories of their wedding. It's horrifying just to imagine it. Because it's a wedding ceremony, we need perfect preparation and harmony.

By the way, in the time of Jesus, around AD27, a big problem happened to a wedding ceremony in Cana region of Israel before Jesus started his ministry publicly. At that time, there was no wine that would make the ceremony and banquet the most exciting. This was a big blunder that couldn't be called a slight mistake, and it was a great shame for both families to be very rude to the guests who came to the banquet. Instead of being blessed, it would become cursed.

But, a miracle happened in this terrible pinch of life. This story is so famous that I will briefly summarize the main story. Jesus' mother believed that Jesus would solve this serious situation, and immediately asked Him for help, saying, "They have no more wine." And she told the servants "Do whatever He tells you. Do anything for Him." According to the Jewish cleanliness, there were six stone water jars, each containing 80-120 liters. When Jesus saw the water jars and commanded to the servants "Fill the jars with water." And they did exactly what Jesus said. They filled water until the edge of water jars. After that, Jesus said, "Now, draw some out and take it to the master of banquet." Ha! Is this water? They might have wondered if they would take the water to the master of banquet. However, they took it exactly as Jesus said. They were holding their breath while watching the master of

banquet drinking the water. This was a moment of crisis about whether his neck would be hit. "What's this? Who drew this stinky water? Come out!", But the master of banquet was probably tasting the water that had been turned into wine. And he said: "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink ; but you have saved the best till now!" He praised the finest wine. Bravo!

At this moment, the servants cried wow! And rush to Jesus, wiping their tears. "Water has become wine! Water has turned into wine! This is a miracle!" As you all know, an excellent product made in Japan was invented in the covid-19 shock. There are several products on the market, but I would like to introduce just one. MTG e-X, a device about the size of a PET bottle, is a super hit product that turns tap water into a disinfectant. The inventor seems to have been able to extract chlorine from tap water and use it as a disinfectant. We human beings who have Creator God as our father could discover a great scientific product in 2020. Therefore, you can imagine that Jesus could make water into wine because He is God. Since Jesus is God the Creator, not a chemical reaction using something inside, he created a completely different new thing.

Do you believe in the miracle of Jesus? So what does the Bible say? Please look at verse 11 again. "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in Him." The miracle of turning water into wine was not only just of providing to people in their lack, but also of the need to realize Jesus as God the Creator. John 20:30, 31 says. "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." All miracles in the Bible teach us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and God the Creator. Because there is no way to obtain eternal life other than Jesus Christ. Covid-19 is about to go down, as several vaccines are already out. And with high medical care, human being could aim for an average life expectancy of 120 years. However, no matter how hard human beings try, the problem of the origin of life and death cannot be solved. I pray that we all believe in Jesus through this sufferings and His miracle will happen in our lives.

Here we can learn some lessons. First, there are shortages in life that no one can solve. At a happy time like a wedding, the wine has run out and there is no joy at all, and everyone has experienced anxiety and sorrow at least once in our lives. Even just a year ago, Japan counted down every day until the opening ceremony of Tokyo Olympics 2020,

and the whole country was excited like a wedding ceremony. However, immediately after that, it suddenly became Covid -19 shock, and our joy disappeared in an instant, leading to anxious days. There is no vaccine! There is no cure! Every time the media pick up the news of Covid-19 and makes a noise. It seems like screamings that we have no more wine! There is no wine!

Then, you will be wondering what can be the ultimate solution to the depletion and shortage of wine today. The Bible teaches the fundamental solution. It is to solve the problem of sin and obtain eternal life. God says through the prophet Jeremiah around BC 627. Jeremiah 2:13, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." This word says that the sin of people is they abandon God, the source of life and is digging cisterns for themselves. The Bible points out that the life of a sinner lacks God the Creator because we have sinned by abandoning God. In all ages, people did not recognize God the Creator and relied on our own wisdom to dig for ourselves. But unfortunately, the cisterns we dug is broken. We constantly draw water for our needs in the broken cisterns. However, the moment we put water in them, it completely spills from the broken cisterns. The Bible tells us about the foolishness and emptiness of those who have abandoned God the Creator and who are living on our own power and knowledge.

As modern people, we have achieved feats that human being has never achieved, such as the dramatic development of the Internet, the development of AI, and the development of advanced medical care. It looks like a very flashy wedding world. Who would have thought that a contagious disease called covid-19 would develop in such serious situation? Even in this age, the unexpected shortage of wine suddenly occurs like at the wedding ceremony in the time of Jesus. We all hope that we could have a vaccine and cure, as if we are looking for wine in Jesus' age. This lack of wine is true not only in society and the country, but also in the lives of individuals. Even when we have all wealth, honor, and talent, we feel that there is something lacking. We can see it, when many famous people such as actors and business men had chosen their own death.

So what should I do? John 4: 14, "whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Jesus came to this world about 2,000 years ago and has become a spring of life for human being. By believing in Jesus, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit is given to each of us, and the spring of life comes out every day. The finest wine overflows every day for us. This wine glorifies God and is a great joy to many people and to us individually, and each one can live

a life like having the finest wine.

I spent more than a dozen years in crisis due to a series of unexpected events such as divorce, raising children who are very difficult, failure of immigration, unemployment, and separation from my own family. I thought that I was losing everything like, fatherlessness, lack of money, nobody would be my guarantors, etc. I was sad and running around everywhere to solve the problems I face every day. My eldest son was bullied at school for about several years and was absent from school. When this problem was resolved, my second son fight in the park and I had to go to the police office at midnight, apologized and brought him home. And there was a constant quarrel between brothers in the house, and I cried every day, and at last I thought I couldn't raise my children by myself, so I went for counseling with my children to the child consultation center. These problems happened on a daily basis and I was just overwhelmed by the problems. I seem like lacking of wine, in the fatherlessness. I wish I had a father for my kids at home, I wish I had one relative at least in Japan. I was always just thinking about what I didn't have. At last I was in depression and it has become worsen.

However, God gave me a chance to recover. I was able to cry out to God from my heart, as I had no wine at all. "Jesus, there is no wine. Please help me." Then I went to the seminary as a last resort, reading the Bible and praying every day. As a Christian, another challenge has begun. Something miraculous happened to me. I was just asking for wine for my daily lives, but gradually I could see Jesus the eternal life. The more I read the Bible and pray, the more I can find Jesus. The wine what I needed became the secondary in my life and I gradually woke up to the values of eternity and God the Father, which are completely different from the values of the world. II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." This world is not everything. There is a new world after death. God has taught me spiritual truths of thousands of years. Jesus died on the cross for me and was resurrected. Therefore, by believing in Jesus, I can have an eternal life. I have returned to the origin of this truth and restored my soul. When I was reminded by this grace again, joy, hope, and satisfaction overflowed as if the water jar that had bottomed out was filled with Jesus' finest wine. Let me give you a little testimony of how my life has changed since then.

Did I suddenly remarriage with a rich man? No. As usual, it is a single-parent family without a father. There is still a shortage of wine. However, the life of living with God is different from before. It happened one night at the end of November, suddenly I got a call

from the police at 2 am. At that moment I was asleep, so I was very surprised. The police officer asked me. "Are you the mother of Taishi Uchima?" Yes. "I'm guiding your child now, so please come to the police station." My second son, Taishi was being guided by police for wondering out at night. I hurriedly changed my clothes and left my apartment in a hurry. I have never ridden a bicycle at 2 o'clock in the middle of the night. There were people in the mid night. It's scary and cold as I ran on the dark road where drunk people were walking. At that time, my heart became warm and mysterious thoughts arose. Someone seemed to be talking. "I am Taishi's father." I intuitively understood that this voice was God. I said. "You are surely Taishi's father, aren't you? So, will you take care of him until the end?" It was my first experience in my life, which of hearing God's voice. While heading to the police station at 2:30 midnight, Heavenly Father consulted with me about raising children. And he solved the absence of a father. He called himself "I am your father and Taishi's father." After that, I felt indescribable joy and my heart became warm. I bowed deeply to the police officer in charge of the youth Division. I apologized, "I'm sorry. I'll give him proper guidance from now on!" But there was joy in my heart. In my heart, I was able to believe that "Taishi is okay, because the Heavenly Father will take responsibility for raising him more than I do." Everyone, the next day was even more amazing. I wanted to convey the voice of the Holy Spirit to Taishi. Because it's also his own issue. But suddenly Taishi told me. "Mom, last night. The police officer was asking many times to me just before you came. "What about your father? Where is your father?" But I answered, "I don't know about my dad." Then, when I answered "Why?" He asked again. And I told him "I haven't seen my dad since I was 1 year old," And then he didn't ask me any more about father. When I heard this story, I got goose bumps and I was about to tear. But I can't cry in front of my child, so I taught him about the voice of God I heard when riding a bicycle around 2 o'clock last night. "Taishi, your father is Heavenly Father. Don't forget it." Taishi said, "Yeah. I understand." What a blessing! After this, I found the word in the Bible, Matthew 23:9, "And do not call anyone on earth 'father', for you have one Father, and he is in heaven." God has given me the grace of encouragement in my life to me and my children, who have little faith. In this way, I finally started to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit these days. You already have a lot of experience. We all want to continue to believe in Jesus and walk with Him every day.

Sometimes I wonder why do I experience such a hard time. I always feel something is missing. However, I realize that all sufferings that I have experienced helped me to find Jesus Christ. Then, I realize that I had come to understand eternal life, which is completely different from the happiness that the world is thinking.

Are you lacking of something now? Did you lose your joy? Please look for Jesus

Christ. Please pray to Jesus, "There is no wine. Please help me." The goodness of Jesus who had given his life for us will surely respond to our prayers. And our life will experience fullness from all shortages through Jesus. Be sure to protect your daily life as well as your spiritual blessings.

Let's pray together.

My beloved Heavenly Father. Thank you for your words today. We are facing various problems. Socially, there are problems with Covid-19, and personally, there are illness, parenting, relationships, and financial difficulties. There is no joy and it makes us sad some time. We pray that each of us can meet Jesus Christ, the loving and omnipotent God who solves these problems today. And please let the Holy Spirit work on each of us so that we can declare that Jesus Christ is my savior and be full of joy. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.