

Changing water to wine is one of Jesus' most well-known miracles. Turn up at a pub or a party and tell people you are a pastor, and chances are someone will make a reference to this miracle sometime in the evening. I mean, who wouldn't want big tubs of great wine for the price of tap water.

In fact, when I was on holidays last weekend, we were sitting in a brewery at Tumut. In front of me were four beers to taste. I sampled each one and decided that a couple of them didn't taste that great. I then remembered what the master at this wedding banquet had said. I decided to drink the best ones first.

Now it wasn't just one or two bottles of water Jesus transformed into wine. He did it in bulk. He waited until 6 large stone jars were filled to the brim with water. John says each jar held between 2-3 measures. That means each jar held between 75 and 120 litres.

Now I want us to take a moment to appreciate how much this is.

I'm not an expert on wine, but I think [Slide 1] this is about 3 barrels of wine.

In his short history booklet, Dr John Koch wrote that the Schubert family produced 50 gallons of wine each year from their own grapes grown at Trungley Hall. The amount of wine Jesus transformed was about three times what the Schubert family made on their farm in a year.

To help us appreciate the size of the stone jars, here are a few containers. These green 75 litre Willow bins represent the smallest jars. These are so big that it's hard to find garbage bags big enough. And if we put two of these black 60 litre bins together, they represent the largest jars. So together, all these containers equate to approximately the same size and volume of those 6 stone jars.

Another way I was thinking of it this week, [Slide 2] was in terms of wheelie bins. The large wheelie bins found in most Australian homes hold 240 litres. Some council areas also use the smaller

120 litre versions. So if you can, imagine 6 small wheelie bins. Otherwise think of 3 of the larger wheelie bins. (or the combination seen in this photo.) Or if you live on a farm, [Slide 3] then you could think of three 44-gallon drums. This is approximately equivalent to the volume of water transformed into wine that we are talking about.

And if you have trouble comprehending that, another way to think of it is in terms of weight. [Slide 4] We're talking over half a tonne of wine. That's about as much wine as a standard box trailer can legally carry or about the weight of a large hay bale.

Whichever way you think of it, we're talking a very large quantity. This all illustrates that God is a God of abundance.

[Slide 5] If we ever doubt that God could ever love us, if we ever doubt that he could really forgive all my sin, we just need to look at the abundance of wine he produced at that wedding.

When the wine ran out, Jesus simply used what they had – jars and water – to provide an abundant blessing for the new couple and their wedding guests. And he provided in ways that neither the servants, nor the disciples, nor the bridegroom, nor the master of ceremonies ever expected. He used the ordinary for the extraordinary.

Likewise, [Slide 6] Jesus used an ordinary cross to demonstrate extraordinary love and perform extraordinary forgiveness in a way we would never expect. He also uses ordinary water to adopt us into his family in an extraordinary way.

Even today, God uses ordinary words from a book to bring extraordinary life and power into our lives. Today he will again use ordinary bread and wine to come to us in an extraordinary way.

When Jesus was invited to the wedding feast, he didn't have to go. When his mother told him they'd run out of wine, he didn't have to do anything. When humanity turned its back on God,

Jesus didn't have to come and die on the cross for you and me. Yet Jesus did all that, because he is a God of abundant love and compassion for humans. He loves you and cares about you abundantly. He loves you and forgives you abundantly. Completely.

**[Slide 7]** He doesn't want us to just whinge and whine about all that's going wrong in our lives and just give him all our prayer requests before we go about life on our own. Rather, he invites us to wine and dine with him at the big wedding feast in heaven. More immediately, he invites us to wine and dine with him and be nourished by his word each day. He wants us to spend time with him, get to know him, and give him all glory, thanks and praise along with our requests.

**[Slide 8]** This is the first of seven great miracles of Jesus that John lists. But John gives them an interesting name. He calls them all "signs".

**[Slide 9]** Signs aren't the thing itself. Signs point to something. If I see a sign to Trungley Hall or West Wyalong. That's not the locality or community itself. It's only a sign that points to where I might find that community. Likewise, when Jesus turns water into wine, it's not something for us to become fixated on. It's meant to direct us and point us to something greater. John tells us

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11, NIV)

If we are getting low on money, water, love, patience forgiveness, or some other resource, may we use this miracle as a reminder and sign of Jesus' abundant provision and glory. May we spend time with him and get to know him better each day. May we be nourished by his word, and may we trust in him even more to give us joy and provide for our needs in abundant and extraordinary ways we might not expect. Amen.