

His name was Nathanael; some called him Bartholomew. And just three days before he had met the greatest person ever born – the One who, for so long, he had dreamed of and prayed for. When his friend, Philip, first told him that he had met ‘the One,’ the promised Messiah, his response was less than hopeful: *“He’s from where? Nazareth? How could anything good come from there?”* But the next day Nathanael looked into the eyes of ‘the Great One,’ who knew about him under the fig tree praying for that very moment. And what else could he say other than, **“⁴⁹Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”** (John 1).

Three days had passed quickly with the Rabbi, who, yes, was indeed from Nazareth. To think that the Messiah could have grown up in a small town just up the road from Nathanael’s hometown! It seemed so unlikely that someone so wonderful would come from such an ordinary place; that someone so mighty would choose six less-than-mighty men to follow him; that the Prince of Peace would make time to attend this simple wedding in Cana. Now that he thought of it, how could anything good come from here, either?

Many years later, no one would know for sure the exact location of Cana. But one thing they would remember about this place: this was where Jesus gave the first brief, but powerful demonstration of his true glory. And he did it so subtly. Nathanael and the others noticed the way Jesus’ mother whispered to him the need for more wine, not wanting to embarrass the bride and groom over this critical oversight. They saw him telling the servants to fill water jars which, by the way, were actually supposed to be used for washing hands and feet. But when they tasted the water from those jars, it had changed into the best-tasting wine of the entire celebration.

Not everyone there appreciated what Jesus had done. But Nathanael and the others sure did. They already believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but this whole experience was nothing less than miraculous. And ever so quietly and so intensely, the flames of faith were being fanned. There was no way that they would ever again doubt that something so good and so powerful could come from Nazareth. For the rest of their lives, nothing would ever erase this first miracle, this sign of Jesus’ true glory, from their hearts and minds.

There was something in the way the events of that day played out, so quietly and yet so powerfully. Again, when Mary whispered to Jesus, **“³...They have no more wine,”** it was as if she just knew that Jesus could actually do something about it – that he *would* do something about it. Maybe she figured he had six new disciples who could help by running out and getting more wine. Or maybe she thought that the bad news would go over better if Jesus made the announcement the wine had run out; he was quite eloquent and authoritative in the way he spoke. Or perhaps she just knew that Jesus really was the only one who could possibly do anything – whatever it would be – to make this situation better. It’s not like Jesus had been performing miracles all around Nazareth, but his mother just knew. She knew he would do exactly what was right.

She had complete confidence in her Son, which is why all she said was, **“They have no more wine.”** She gave no specific instructions as to how she thought he should handle it. That’s because she knew that he did everything well – perfectly, in fact. She must have remembered the first time they visited the temple together, when Joseph was still alive, and her 12-year-old son said something to them that she never forgot: **“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”** (Lk 2:49). Every day after that for the next 18 years, she witnessed how everything Jesus said or did showed that he was always ‘in his Father’s house,’ doing what his Father had sent him to do.

And on this day, dealing with a wine shortage was exactly what his heavenly Father had sent him to do. Jesus knew it before his mother even asked, and when she approached him, he gently replied to her, **“⁴Dear woman, how is this a concern to both you and me? My time has not yet come.”** Not everyone would have understood what he meant, but his mother did. And after a while, so did Nathanael and the other disciples, along with the servants who had filled the six stone jars with water – *not* wine. What Jesus meant was, *“This matter is not your concern, but mine. If any help can be offered, I will take care of it, but when the time is right.”*

And that’s all Jesus had to say to her. She knew what he meant. He wasn’t refusing to help, but he was waiting for the right moment. Mary’s faith caught the promise that was hidden in Jesus’ words, which is why she told the servants, **“⁵Do whatever he tells you.”** What a privilege and gift for them to be personally involved in this first of Jesus’ miracles! They had front-row seats to this private demonstration his true glory, to see him for who he truly is: the Son of God who is powerful in word and deed, and who does everything well.

And when all was said and done, when the water was truly changed into the best-tasting wine, Jesus was still in his Father’s house – doing exactly what his Father had sent him to do. That was to draw ordinary, sinful men to himself, to create and strengthen that faith in him not simply as a Worker of miracles but as the Savior of all people. **“¹¹This, 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.

One of the beautiful facets of these miracles is simply that he chooses to share it with us, to give us a glimpse of his divine power. Without faith, though, the Scripture has shown over and over again that Jesus' miracles actually emboldened those who rejected him. In other words, the miracles themselves did not create faith, but they supported and magnified the words and promises of Jesus to be the Son of God and Savior of the world. And by grace those words and promises have us faith to believe without a doubt that He is who he says he is.

You know what? I've never seen Jesus do a miracle. I know God does miracles in our lives every day. That we can live and breathe, that we can think and reason, and even that we can believe in him – how are any of these things less than miracles? And the fact that you believe, it's not because you've weighed the facts and came to the conclusion that Jesus' claims make the most sense, is it? And apart from the eyes of faith in his Word, has anyone here actually seen Jesus' perform a miracle to prove that he is true God?

And yet we believe that Jesus is just that. He is true God who has revealed his infinite power and love to take care of every detail of our lives, even the ones that seem too simple and insignificant for anyone to care about, especially God. But that's just it. Because he is true God who chose to love us enough to die for us on a cross, he will always be ready and willing to do anything for us – even if it takes a miracle.

Isn't that why you expect miracles from Jesus? And why would we ever doubt him or wonder if our personal cares and concerns have somehow slipped under his radar. He showed Nathanael that he knows and sees all things – even what's in our hearts and minds. He proved that even our earthly needs are definitely within his realm of concern and control – even if it meant providing wine for a wedding celebration to continue.

True story. Sad, but true. I'm lying in bed all day Thursday, sick as a dog. Hadn't been this sick since I can remember. The dull throbbing of my head came from not eating anything, and I didn't want to eat anything, well, because I knew it would stay down for less than 60 seconds. And I thought, "*Lord, if you want to take this away from me, I know you can. You have the power to do anything, even to take away this mysterious virus, this messenger of Satan which now torments me.*" But as I moaned out loud (my wife wasn't there to cuddle me at that time), part of me was insisting that God's intervention really ought to take place as soon as possible. I'm glad she didn't hear me, either.

But that's embarrassing, isn't it? And I'm sure you've had a similar situation, where you came to God with a specific request. And after expressing your personal expectation, you hesitated a little to add those last words, "*not my will, but yours be done.*" Of course we want God's will to be done, don't we?

Especially if it's *when* we want. Yes, Jesus loves us, and he's promised to take care of our every need, even if it takes a miracle. So why do we expect him to answer our requests, to meet our expectations when *we* say? Maybe it's because right now you can't imagine a better outcome than what you want, and the sooner the better? Or because right now you're in so much pain and confusion that the only thing a loving and merciful God would do is to take it away? Jesus is supposed to be our Friend, and friends don't leave each other hanging.

It's not that Jesus has been an unfaithful Friend, or that he has left us hanging in any way. *He's the One who was left hanging for us. "Greater love has no one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends,"* (Jn. 15:13). Jesus is our Friend who laid down his life for us. But he's more than a friend. He is our God and Lord who has revealed his divine power to meet our greatest need. His resurrection guarantees our victory over sin, death and the devil. And he will handle every one of your life's seemingly impossible hardships, because he has always loved you and always will.

Nathanael knew if from the moment he heard Jesus' voice. "***You are the Son of God.***" Through faith, you have heard and believed Jesus' voice calling you to follow him. Follow him faithfully, and trust that you can lay your guilt and sins before him. Turn to his Word and sacrament, and receive the love and forgiveness he offers you. Present your requests to him with confidence, trusting in his gracious promises and generous love to provide for you in exactly the right way at just the right time. Expect miracles from Jesus, because you have seen his glory – the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14). Amen.