

## Reflection #13



Wine press in Cana.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So, they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there for a few days.

## John 2

The village of Cana persists today. There is a small church and an archeological site with exhibits of 1<sup>st</sup> century antiquities. At the site you are encouraged to do two things. First, you will be encouraged to renew your wedding vows if you are traveling with your spouse. The second is to buy some wine.

The second option is rather straightforward: buy wine; don't buy wine. But the first is rife with a strange sense of zeal, fear, or sadness. I have seen each of these in Cana.

Couples who have been married decades and would love to renew their vows do so with a kind of joy and gusto that is reserved for the unencumbered. This is fun to see.

And then there are couples for whom such a moment of renewal is awkward. It was the hope of their fiftieth anniversary; it is out of the blue and thus foreign to the need for control in moment of great importance. This is not fun to see.

Then there are those who are left wishing a spouse had agreed to join the trip or that a spouse was still alive or had ever been. These pilgrims are left to limp away from the moment or at the very best to be happy for others. This is hard to see.

Cana of Galilee is a great mystery to me. It is from John, so it is rife with questions of authenticity. Did this really happen? The Gospel of John is a theological work critiquing the first three gospels. John plays fast and loose with time and space; history is more art than science. "On the third day" is the opening lines of this account. Third day from what? Is this a reference to the resurrection; is this a creation story "on the third day God separated the waters and drew them to the sky?" This is a story of water to wine. Is he trying to suggest this is a place of birth and death?

So much of our pilgrimage will seek to have a direct connection to history, tradition, archeology. In this place Jesus fed the 5000. In this place Jesus was crucified. In this place Jesus healed Blind Bartimaeus. When you venture to Cana this is not straightforward. With Cana you are in a place to see the account of John; you are in murky waters. This happened on the "third day" should be a clue of poetry not history.

Seeing Cana as a "site" is as if you didn't get it. If you are looking for historical evidence and verifiability in a story of John, then you might need to start over. And then, there is the power of the place. Few other sites evoke such strong responses from pilgrims as Cana.

In Cana, according to John, Jesus performed his first sign. He turned water into wine. Jesus didn't offer the sign willingly. His mother made him do it. And what he did was ruin six very valuable jars of purification by changing their pure rainwater into wine. Moreover, he offered 300 gallons of wine to a wedding party. That is an insane amount of wine for a wedding. The unwillingness, the ruin, and the extravagance: these are the deep mysteries of the gospel.

That Jesus was human is the "stumbling block," Paul says, keeping many from belief in Jesus as the presence of God for us.

That we must die in order to live (be ruined in order to be pure) is the great truth behind the teachings of Jesus.

That grace is wild causes many to turn away and seek safety in fear.

As you continue to prepare your heart for pilgrimage, please consider Cana. Don't let it be a surprise. Let it be mysterious. Know this is a place that might be nothing to you. This is a place that might be a seed cast deep in your soul. The pilgrim path is not about finding the truth. The pilgrim path is about finding yourself in the truth that was there all along.

