

The Wedding Gift

NHCO Sermon Series: The Chosen

“This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory” (John 2:11 NLT).

*Imagine you are at a fork in the road of life. There are many such forks: What if you married a different person? Chose a different career? Lived in a different state? Each choice determines how your life will play out — a kind of “point of no return,” if you will, not in the sense that there’s no hope for redemption or change, but a “point of no return” in the sense that there is no un-doing what you have set in motion, that your decision will inevitably lead you to a **series of decisions** that will determine your destiny, your legacy, for either good or bad. This is especially true when it comes to God.*

[Title slide] Week 5: The Wedding Gift: The Chosen: NHCO Sermon Series

Hey everyone. Mike Palompo here. Welcome to WEEK 5 of our amazing series, The Chosen. I’m standing at Leeward Community Church. This place holds a ton of memories for me, 16 years of memories, to be exact--while I was a youth minister back in the 80’s. This Church was basically the headquarters for my old outfit, Hawaii Youth For Christ, primarily because our boss, Pastor Sam, was also the Senior Pastor of this Church. All our staff meetings were here. We had these awesome youth rallies called “Jesus Rap” every other Saturday. Kids from all over the island would gather here to grow in their relationship with Christ.

It was in Youth For Christ that I met my beautiful wife, Mona. I was trying to concentrate on God and serving Jesus, but she kept chasing after me until I finally gave in. And right over there was where we got married--July 30, 1983. Needless to say that day DRAMATICALLY changed our lives forever. We stood before God, the Church, and all our friends and family and basically swore an oath that we would be bound to one another for the rest of our lives. I was saying to her that day, “Mona, I promise to love you and stay by your side no matter what.” “Swear to God?” “Actually, yes I do!” And she said the same to me. It’s one of the few moments in life where God wants you to swear by His Name that what HE joined together, you are not allowed to separate. By saying “yes” to each other, we were basically saying “no” to every other person out there. There’s a powerful sense of absolute finality to weddings. You’re like asking yourself beforehand, “Are you really really really sure about this? Because once you go through with it, there’s no turning back.” Can you un-do it? Yes, but not without catastrophic consequences to your soul and your children. Can you be redeemed after a divorce? Of course. That’s the beauty of our God. But my point is, weddings are one of those watershed moments in our lives that lead us to a SERIES of other CRITICAL decisions that will determine how our life plays out. But as we all know, weddings are also super exciting! Your whole lives ahead of you with the hope of so much joy and happiness. We’ve only just begun. So much of life ahead. A kiss for luck and we’re on our way. An absolute, no-turning-back finality AND a future and a hope of love and happiness for a lifetime. Wedding Days are a point of no return. Outside of committing your life to Jesus Himself, your wedding day is the most important commitment you will ever make.

Interestingly, it was at a wedding that Jesus chose to perform His first public ministry. Think this is coincidence? Keep listening. This was beautifully portrayed in episode 5 of the Chosen. Make sure you watch it if you haven't already. It accurately portrays that Jesus was at a wedding in Cana. For the bride and groom it was their big day, but the most embarrassing thing ever, happened. They ran out of wine for their guests. While the hosts were scrambling for a way to salvage this disaster, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, turns to her son. The actual Biblical account is really short and sweet. Mary simply says, "They have no more wine." Her meaning is absolutely clear to her son, Jesus, who obviously knows exactly what his mom wants. After all He has probably seen that look on his mom's face many times over the years. "Jesus, your room is dirty." "Jesus, dinner is over and dishes are not washed." "Jesus, the trash is piling up." Must be weird to raise the actual "Son of God," because it's not like you can tell HIM what to do. You just simply point out the obvious, knowing He will always know exactly what to do. But in this instance it kind of almost seems like He's talking back at His mom? Jesus says, "Mom, this is not My problem." I have to admit I didn't see that coming, but remember this is Jesus and His mom having a private conversation. And when you watch the Chosen you'll see how they pick up on this mother-son relationship that goes back decades. Well, Mother Mary is done talking. In the Bible, her next words are to the servants: "Do whatever He says."

When you watch Episode 5 of The Chosen, the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine is synchronized with an intriguing conversation that Mary of Magdala (not Mother Mary) is having with the Apostle Thaddeus. It's one of my favorite scenes in the series, and I want to take a moment to explain it because it's super easy to overlook what's going on. Thaddeus, also known as Jude or Judas, but not Iscariot, is a lesser-known apostle. There's actually very little we know about Thaddeus, but in The Chosen, the writers decided to give him a very interesting backstory. According to The Chosen (and this is not in the Bible), Thaddeus explains to Mary of Magdala that he was a stone mason by trade--not a smith, like his father.

Mary says, "Masonry seems like harder work."

"It isn't harder," says Thaddeus, "it's just more...final."

He goes on to explain that if a smith wants to change a horseshoe or a plowshare or a pot hook, he just puts the iron back in the fire and reshapes it to fit his designs.

As Thaddeus speaks, Jesus prepares to perform the miracle.

"Once you make that first cut into the stone, it cannot be undone."

"It sets in motion a series of choices."

Jesus is deep in prayer and meditation.

"What used to be a shapeless block of limestone or granite, begins its long journey of transformation, and it will never be the same."

Then in the episode Jesus says, "I'm ready Father."

He dips His hand into the jar once filled with water, and draws out supernatural wine.

Why did Jesus say, "I'm ready Father?"

In this amazing episode The Chosen is highlighting beautifully that this was the first PUBLIC miracle in the ministry of Jesus. Up to this point all His miracles had been private. But this happened at a very public event--a wedding. People would talk. The word would get out. There's no stopping it now. Just like weddings are a point of no return, the miracle at the wedding of Cana was, for Jesus, a point of no return.

By honoring His mother, Jesus submits to His Father and makes a decision that would set in motion a series of decisions that would accomplish His earthly mission. It is the first cut into the stone, and it cannot be undone.

This was in fact the greatest WEDDING GIFT ever given--not just because (as you will see when you watch the episode), Jesus saves the family from humiliation, but because the choice He made would inevitably lead Him to the cross, where He would save everyone from not just humiliation but eternal damnation. Like a wedding, your decision to follow Jesus opens the door for you to live in an amazing relationship. And like a marriage this relationship is not a CONTRACT. It's a COVENANT. What's the difference? A contract is 50-50. You're basically saying, "If I do my part, then you better do your part, or the deal is off." I meet you half-way with my 50, and you bring the other half. But is that what Jesus did with us? When Jesus was dying on the cross, did He say, "Look guys, I'm half dead, but if you don't put your faith in Me right now, I'm not going all the way. Believe in Me now or I'm calling this off." No. The Bible says, "God demonstrates His love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This means He gave 100% of His love to us while we gave Him zero. So a CONTRACT is 50-50, but a COVENANT is 100-0. Jesus put out 100%, while we gave Him zero. But once you begin your relationship with Jesus, you will learn to love HIM 100-0.

Jesus faced a fork in the road on this wedding day in Cana. Like a bunch of other people in the Bible:

1. God told Abraham to leave Ur in the Chaldees, his home, and follow God into literally "God-knows-where"--no heading, no course, just go. Abraham did and the nation of Israel was born.
2. God told Moses to go to Egypt and tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go." Moses did and the nation of Israel was saved from slavery.
3. God told Esther to risk her life and speak to the king. Esther did, and Israel was saved from annihilation.

The Bible is FULL of stories who made the decision to follow God, and yes, their lives were never the same again, but so was the world! Once you decide to follow Jesus, your life will never be the same again, but so will the lives of everyone around you.

Jesus could've followed through with His first thought which was, "Not my problem." Take the blue pill and go on living in private, hiding His secret identity. But instead He took the RED PILL and saved the whole world for all time. Look at the awesome implications of that decision. His Kingdom spread all over the world. Countless billions put their faith in the no-longer-secret Messiah, including a high school kid at Radford, who then lead everyone in his family to Jesus, went to a Youth For Christ meeting in Foster Village, became a leader in Youth For Christ, met the most beautiful girl in the world, who kept on chasing him around until he finally gave in and married her, right here at Leeward Community Church. Everything I said is true--except the part about Mona chasing me. It was the exact opposite way around. The point is Jesus' decision set in motion a series of events that made it possible FOR ME to make my decision which then affected the lives of everyone around me, including many of you.

And now it's YOUR turn to make YOUR decision. Maybe you're saying, "Wow, that's a big decision, and I want to know more." That is an excellent response, and at New Hope Central Oahu we are committed to helping you all we can. We have walked alongside many people as they wrestle with critical questions about God, the Bible, the Spiritual life. Seriously, we are not

here to get you to make a decision you're not ready to make. You wouldn't do that for ANY big decision in your life, right? Whether it's buying a car or a home, making a career choice, or deciding who to marry. You will do your research, gather all the facts you can, and weigh the evidence as carefully as possible. Is Jesus for real? And can you put your faith in Him? These are not easy questions. I would encourage you to approach it like an attorney! For example, do you know how much evidence a police officer needs before he can arrest you? According to law he only needs to be at the most 49% sure that you're guilty. That's called "probable cause." So an officer can be less than 50% certain that you're the criminal and he can put the cuffs on you. It doesn't mean you're guilty, but it's enough to get you arrested. Would you be willing to give your whole life to Jesus with less than 50% certainty that He's for real? I didn't think so. I wouldn't. Well, in a court of law the next level of certainty is called "clear and convincing evidence." This means you are 75% sure that you're right. This is ok for pretty big decisions like changing jobs and moving out of state. But in a criminal case can you put someone in OCCC based on "clear and convincing evidence?" The answer is no. So with 75% certainty you could move to the mainland and start a new job, but it's not enough evidence to put someone in jail in a criminal case. And I would say it's NOT enough certainty to give your whole life to Jesus. So how certain should you be? What level of certainty should you have before you devote the balance of your life to Christ? In a court of law there is a level of certainty called "beyond a reasonable doubt," and it means you are 95% certain that you are right. This is the burden of proof in every criminal case. In cases where the death penalty is involved the jury must vote unanimously, essentially saying that they are all "beyond a reasonable doubt" that the person is guilty. You might be tempted to say, "Well, if they're going to put a person to death, shouldn't they be absolutely certain?" In other words, shouldn't they arrive at a certainty level "beyond ALL doubt?" The trouble with that is it is an IMPOSSIBLE level of certainty to achieve in life. There is no way you can look at EVERY piece of evidence, examine ALL the facts. So with our finite minds, given our human limitations, "beyond a reasonable doubt" (95% certainty) is the best we can hope for in this life. My counsel to you: go on a serious Spiritual journey. Find out for yourself if Jesus is for real and if He is worthy of your total devotion. New Hope Central Oahu is committed to helping you on your journey. Once you go down that road, you will discover what every pilgrim through the centuries has experienced--that Jesus will encounter YOU along the way, that He has been waiting for you all these years, since you were born. And when He does your faith level will be "beyond a reasonable doubt."

Once you have a personal encounter with Jesus, it places you at a fork in the road. He invites you to follow Him, just as He invited the disciples to follow Him, and every person for the last 2,020 years, including that kid at Radford. Will you take the blue pill, ignore His invitation, and just go on with your life? If you do that is a decision that could lead you to a series of other decisions that could determine your destiny and legacy. And trust me, it won't end well. Or will you take the red pill and make a solid decision today to follow Him? Once you do your decision is the first cut in the stone that will lead you to a series of decisions that will lead to a transformation that will determine your destiny and legacy in this life and for all eternity. And there will be no better outcome for your life than living in the center of God's will.

If today you hear His voice, and you want to make that first cut in the stone and become a follower of Jesus, then pray this prayer with me.

“Heavenly Father, thank You for Jesus. Jesus, thank You for making the decision to go public and for the amazing series of decisions that eventually led You to the cross. As a result my sin is forgiven. I believe in You, Lord, and I receive You into my heart. I make this decision today to make You my Savior, Lord, and Teacher. Now lead me as I make future decisions to obey You with all my heart. Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & MEDITATION

1. By faith what did the Lord say to you in this message?
2. When have you made critical decisions that affected the direction of your life?
3. How did making that one decision set in motion a series of choices?
4. What is the significance of Jesus’ miracle at the wedding of Cana?
5. From “The Chosen Ep. 5,” explain the significance of the conversation between Thaddeus and Mary Magdala.
6. How is the decision to follow Jesus similar to the decision Jesus made at Cana? How certain do you need to be before becoming a follower of Christ?
7. If you’re not a follower of Christ yet, what is holding you back?