

Some Saw GLORY

“This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him.” John 2:11

Author and pastor Mark Buchanan lives in Northwest Canada. He writes, “I hate snakes. ... One evening I came home and Cheryl, (his wife) wide-eyed and pale, met me at the door. ‘We have snakes,’ she said She and my son had already managed to capture in a jar two of the babies. It was my job, I was told, to track, down the mother. I began with stiff caution, jabbing sticks under furniture then leaping back. Everything I pulled out – a wisp of dust, a stray hairpin, a snip of thread – [everything] startled me. Every sensation of something touching me –... the corner of a desk biting my hip, a strand of cobweb trailing across my neck, the frays of cut cloth tickling my arm – [everything] sent me into a spasm of thrashing. After a while, I got more bold, more determined, especially since I had looked everywhere and found nothing.

“She’s gone,” I said. “Must have got out somehow. She’s a bad mother. Abandoned the little ones to their fate. Imagine that.”

Cheryl wasn’t buying it. “Check again,” she said. “Take a better look under the hide-a-bed. Mark, I spend hours in this room every week. My parents are coming on Monday to sleep in this room. I won’t rest until I know it’s safe.”

So, I pulled the mattress off the hide-a-bed and poked my head under the frame.

Bingo.

There she was, curled up on the back ledge of the bed frame. She was only about 14 inches long and no thicker than my baby finger. But in my phobic, manic alertness, she may as well have been a Burmese python, smugly swallowing the dog, just getting started.

What followed was 10 minutes of slapstick comedy I chased that snake around, trying to pinch its, thin, wriggling body between two 4 foot sticks and drop in a small-mouthed jar. It kept

getting free to the accompaniment of our shrieks and hollers, and would scoot off to another corner. After several tries, it was glaringly obvious this approach was futile. I asked my son to fetch my garden gloves. I would have to pick it up.

I did it. There was no heroism or elegance in it. I held the snake away from me like I might a dead fish that had been left out in the sun. But I did it.

Over the next few days, as we found more snakes, we discovered that our 9-year-old daughter Sarah was fearless with them. She would simply pick each snake up with her bare hands, hold it near her face, scold it as though it were a naughty dog who chewed up the hose, then set it loose in the garden, telling it to go find its mother.

Here's the thing [he writes]. Ever since, it's been hard for me to rest in that room. Walking into it, I slow, halt, turn, look now this way, now that. ... I may never sleep in that bed again. ... I don't trust that bed.

The funny thing is, the bed hasn't changed at all. It's just as sturdy, just as comfortable. It can hold my weight, soothe my soreness. What has changed is my experience. I now harbor a suspicion that dread things lurk beneath. And so, I approach the bed with a guardedness that I won't let drop.

[He concludes] *"How I think about the bed determines whether or not I rest in it.* The bed, as I said, hasn't changed. But I have."

The Holy Wild, pp 17-21.

Friends, how Mark Buchanan thought about the bed determined whether or not he could rest in it. And, HOW YOU THINK ABOUT GOD, determines whether or not you will find rest IN HIM! – whether or not you will *really* TRUST Him, -- and find rest for your soul and your mind and your emotions in Him.

You see, the problem is that for every one of us, most of the time **Your God is too SMALL to find REST in Him.**

We scale God down. We trivialize Him. We turn Him into a parking place finder, or a divine weather pattern adjuster.

We come here today with our needs. What's your need today? What are YOU seeking from God? Do you come here today hoping

God will make the cold temperatures break, and it will warm up a bit? (I think we'd *all* like that, wouldn't we?) Do you come here today wanting God to keep bad accidents away? Or help with a health problem – maybe a serious one?

Whatever your need today, it's good to bring it to God. Yet, often we turn God into our problem fixer, our errand boy – instead of allowing Him to be the Lord and master of our lives.

How you think about God determines whether or not you can find rest in Him. And we've made Him too small, too weak, too marginalized to REALLY rest in Him – to entrust to Him ALL of our lives.

Only in a God who is strong, and in control – a God who will not take the back seat or play 2nd fiddle – only in that kind of God can you find someone worthy of committing your life and all your cares into His hands.

C.S. Lewis, the Christian writer, in the Chronicles of Narnia, there is a scene from the Narnia Adventure called "The Silver Chair." A spoiled, whiny child named Jill Pole encounters Aslan the lion, who is a figure of Christ. Jill grows thirsty, and she can hear from within the forest the sound of a stream. Her thirst finally drives her to find where the sound of the water is coming from. She goes through the forest carefully. Soon she discovers the stream but she is paralyzed by what she sees there – Aslan the huge, golden lion is sitting beside the water, still as a statue but terribly alive. She waits for a long time, hoping he will go away. Aslan finally speaks: "If you are thirsty, you may drink." Jill is startled by this and holds back.

CS Lewis writes: "Are you not thirsty?" said the lion.

"I am *dying* of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the lion.

... "Will you promise not to – do anything to me, if I come?"

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

"Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. [The Lion] didn't

say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

“I dare not come and drink,” said Jill.

“Then you will die of thirst,” said the Lion.

“Oh Dear!” said Jill, coming another step nearer. “I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.”

“There is no other stream,” said the Lion.

Isn't that lion a wonderful picture of Jesus?! He's a God who is strong and in charge. He won't put up with being marginalized, trivialized by us. It's either Him or nothing at all. God will not settle for only playing 2nd fiddle, taking the back seat in your life, or sitting on the bench. He IS EVERYTHING. He is in charge. He will *only* take first place in your life, and none other.

And He is a God who has what we really need. He is the ONLY one who can offer you what you really need, and He loves you enough to freely offer you what you really need. But He won't give you His gifts without you entering into a relationship with Him. He is powerful and dangerous. When God's around, you never know how He will change you. He's unpredictable. When God shows Himself – when His glory breaks out – there's no telling what He'll do.

In Jesus' life, every miracle He performs and every time He teaches we discover two truths: First, Jesus is gracious. And second, He's God. This is pictured in the story of Jesus' first miracle. Today we find that **The Jesus who changes water into wine will not be trivialized.** He is not our errand boy. Here we find a Jesus who is GOD: IN CHARGE. He will not be jerked around – not even by His mother. He comes into our ordinary life ... and He is Lord, true God, and strange things happen.

I have to confess, I haven't ever really liked this story. Changing water into wine seems too little. I want Jesus' first miracle to be something with thunder booms and bright lights flashing. Making wine seems too ordinary. I guess I really hadn't understood this story.

Weddings in those days were important events. Often the reception lasted a whole week with feasting and dancing and

drinking. It was customary for the groom to supply the wine, and there was no soda pop and no punch bowls in those days. Either folks drank water – which wasn't always safe – or they drank wine. It would have been a major mistake, a major social embarrassment to run out of wine.

The point, the Bible tells us is that **The miracle is a SIGN.**

Our Bible passage says, ***“This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee.”*** A sign points to something else.

If you look in your rearview mirror and see a flashing blue light, and you say “there is a police officer behind me,” you don't really mean that. What you mean is that the flashing blue light is a sign – a sign that a police officer is coming to pull you over. The sign precedes the thing itself. The sign points beyond itself to the real thing.

Jesus turning water into wine, we are told in the Bible, is a sign pointing to Jesus' glory. When I think of GLORY, I think of halos and golden streets in heaven and blinding light of holiness. But that's not really what glory is. Glory is seeing God for who He really is. Let me say that again because its important that you hear that: **Glory is seeing God for who He really is.** Part of that is God's brilliance and holiness in heaven. And part of glory is seeing God's heart of love and compassion for us. Seeing who God really is.

When the people at the wedding feast saw the sign of water changed to wine, they saw glory. They got a glimpse of who Jesus really is – God – and what He's like. Suddenly the wedding reception was transformed into a time of revelation – a time when God burst onto the scene, into their ordinary lives, and they were brought close to God. [are you with me so far?]

See, what Jesus was up to at that wedding is the same thing He is up to in your life here today. He wants to be your Lord, in charge and in control, the Only One who can save you and take care of your deepest needs. He is like the lion. How you think of Him – whether or not you relate to Jesus as God, and as your good and loving Lord – determines whether or not you will rest in Him.

In the story, there were 6 big jars there with a HUGE amount of water. What were they doing with all that water? The water is for

the Jewish rites of purification. Here, in this story, there are 120 to 180 gallons of water present for the ritual of purification.

The ritual of purification was strictly regulated. This was not water for washing germs off of dirty hands. This was water used as a sign of preparation to worship God – to meet Him. Worship is when we all come together to meet God, to get close to God, to be with God. And the Jewish Torah declared that everyone needed to get clean, by ritual cleansing, in order to get close to God. In fact, the Jewish Talmud (which is kind of a how-to-manual to practice all the Jewish rites) specified that only about a cup of water was necessary to purify A HUNDRED people! But here, in this story, there is well over 100 gallons of water! That's enough to purify the whole world!

Get it? Jesus takes that water away by using the water to point to God being here. Changing the water into wine is a sign that God is here. In place of the water, Jesus leaves Himself. He is the purifying water that is enough for the whole world.

The meaning of the story is not that Jesus took plain drinking water and turned it into delightful wine. The issue here is purification – making oneself right with God. The big church word for that is “justification.”

We've come here today to get close to God. Isn't that what church is about?! How *does* a person get close to God? Jesus has, in this His first miracle, transferred us from one means of getting close to God to another. He transferred us from rituals *we* do, to Himself. Jesus has become the new and only path to God.

He is like Aslan the lion sitting beside the stream of water. He invites us to come and drink, but warns us that there is no other stream and if we don't drink from His water, we will die. There is no other choice. It's Him or nothing else. He is gracious and loving – and yet He won't be trivialized or messed with.

So we come to church today, hoping to find self-esteem, or peace of mind, or for help making it through next week. All of that may happen here (I hope it does happen here for you today!). But it's not the main event. The main event is to come here hoping to meet, or more to the point, hoping to be met by God.

We come asking our need to be fixed. Instead we encounter GOD. And that's much better, much more powerful, much more transforming in your life, isn't it?

Someone once described us as prisoners on death row. We're like prisoners on death row who's greatest wish is to have a steak dinner for our last meal. While at the same time God's desire for us isn't to give us a steak dinner. His desire for you is to give you *freedom*.

God wants to give us so much more than we want for ourselves! We come with our needs of our day-to-day life. But God will not be our errand boy. He will not be trivialized. Instead God wants to give you so much more – He wants to give you Himself!

And friends, when God comes close to you, when He gives you HIMSELF, when you receive a new relationship with Him – that's much more powerful, and much more dangerous -- because when God is in the center of your life, in control, there's no telling what He will do. But we know that whatever He does is good – His purposes for you are loving and kind.

We come with our everyday needs, and instead -- right now & right here – we encounter God, and **He answers our real needs.** He offers you forgiveness. No matter what you've done, no matter where you've been, no matter who you are, no matter what you have or do not have – Jesus offers to remove your past, your guilt and stain. And He offers you a new start with Him in control of your life – leading and guiding and providing.

Earlier I mentioned C.S. LEWIS' *Chronicles of Narnia*, and in one of the books in that work, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, there is a scene where Mr. Beaver is asked whether Aslan the Lion (who is a figure of Christ Jesus) – whether Aslan is SAFE. At that question Mr. Beaver explodes, **“Safe! Who said anything about safe?! Of course he isn't safe. But He's good.”**

And that's what the Jesus in the miracle story, the Jesus who meets you today offers. He will not be just an errand boy. He will not take just a part of your life. he will ONLY be in the center, in control. And when He's in charge, that's dangerous! There's no tellin' what He might do to your life! BUT He's GOOD!

So friends, the question before you today is: **Will you turn your need and your life over to Him to do whatever He chooses?** Will you?

I don't know whether Mark Buchanan ever could get over the idea of the snakes that were once in his hide-a-bed – if he could ever find rest there again. But I DO know that a small, trivial Jesus will never be sufficient to offer you rest for your heart, and your mind, your emotions and your problems. He's a Jesus who not only changes water into wine, but offers life, glorious and dangerous, as He leads you.

Only a Jesus whose glory breaks out is worthy of your trust and can offer you REST. He's here today, asking for you.

Amen.