

Title: Running on Empty

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Text: John 2:1-11

Whose Time?

Battery issues:

We've all been there: You head out the door for a busy day and discover that your phone is down to 6%. No problem – you'll charge it in the car. Except that you can't find the charger. You're running on empty.

Of course, you might plug it in to one of those battery packs that give you an emergency charge – if the battery pack is charged, that is.

Or you could do what one inventor with too much time on his hands has come up with.

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He hooked his phone to the battery contacts of a cordless drill, put a mixer beater in the drill chuck, then spun the beater. Voila! Renewable energy. You only have to spin the beater for three hours to charge your phone.

Running on empty: It's just how our world works. The milk jug never refills itself when you have teenagers. The gas gauge never reverses its downward slide on its own. We live in a world where things *run out*. We all are used to those times when we seem to be *running on empty*.

Empty wine cellar!

That was certainly the case at a wedding that Jesus and his disciples attended in the village of Cana, not far from his home town. Weddings were so important that guests were exempted from many of the usual religious obligations. Jewish weddings were seven day celebrations, with lots of food and wine. That meant a week of taking care of lots of hungry and thirsty people!

Part way through the wedding celebration Jesus' mother came to him with bad news: The wine cellar was empty.

[Slide 3]*John 2:3 NIV*

When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother told him, "They don't have any more wine."

It was unthinkable that a wedding would run out of wine. In Jewish culture "it was customary to have food left over at weddings, that is never even to come close to running out." (Keener, The Gospel of John, I, p. 503) Now the entire wedding feast was a few sips from disaster.

Running on empty.

The Riddle of the "Hour"

Jesus responded with a riddle:

[Slide 4]*John 2:4 NIV*

"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

The "hour" that Jesus spoke of was to be the time when He went to the Cross to show God's deepest love for the world. Only then would God's true character – His grace and truth – be revealed. There could be no greater display of the glory of God. Until that time, the full glory of God would be mysteriously hidden in Jesus.

So what about a wedding running on empty? How did it fit into Jesus' timetable?

Water to Wine**"Just do it!"**

Servants were the little people of Jesus' day. They lived at the bottom rung of the ladder. In a way, their world was always running on empty.

At the wedding it was their job to fix the food and pour the wine. It was undoubtedly a servant who had sounded the alarm that the wine cellar was

running on empty. Perhaps Jesus' mother had seen them scurrying around in a frantic search for more wine. No wine meant no happy master.

She turned to them with a strange command:

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John 2:5 NIV

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

They had discovered the problem; now they were going to be a part of the solution.

Washwater?

Jesus gave them an even stranger command:

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John 2:6-7 NIV

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

Imagine the confusion of the servants: the wine had run out, and instead of sending them down the street to look for more, this rabbi was having them run to the well and draw out 150 gallons of water. This had to be the craziest thing they had ever been told to do.

Water to Wine:

But His next command went beyond all reason!

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John 2:8 NIV

Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

The "master of the banquet" was someone chosen to oversee all of the details of the serving of the wine at the festivities. He made sure that the

wine was of the right strength: not too weak, not too strong. He kept an eye on the partyers to make sure that things didn't get too crazy. No doubt, he was the first to taste each new batch of wine before it was served to the guests.

The servants did what they were told:

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John 2:8b-9a NIV

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.

Running on empty no more!

Whose Wedding?

Messiah's Wedding:

What kind of wine? The master of the banquet gave the verdict:

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John 2:9-10 NIV

He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

The best wine for last, and more of it than anyone could ever drink. In His unseen and unnoticed way, Jesus was painting a picture of God's New Creation. God had promised His people that one day the world would no longer run on empty:

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Isaiah 25:6 NIV

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,

A banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.

But the promise of abundance went far further than food and drink:

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Isaiah 25:7-8 NIV

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.

God's promise was that even Death itself would be once and for all put out of business. No more running on empty.

Who Knew?

Remember that prophecy of God serving all peoples the richest of wine? Well, the passage ends with these words:

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Isaiah 25:9 NIV

"Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.

This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

And this was the response of Jesus' disciples when they saw what He had done:

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John 2:11 NIV

This, 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.

The irony of the story lies in the fact that the master of the banquet, the bridegroom and the guests never knew the wine was running on empty. They never knew where the best wine came from. But the servants who

carried out Jesus' orders knew. And His disciples, who had watched the whole thing happen knew. They knew – and they saw a glimpse of His glory.

Running on empty no more:

Jesus said:

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John 10:10 NIV

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

This old world is the realm of the thief. It's a world in which we're always running on empty. It's a world in which even life runs out. But the same Jesus who rescued a wedding is here to turn our wash water into wine. You'll see His handiwork if you're a disciple. You'll follow His instructions if you're willing to be a servant. You'll see the very face of God, if you are willing to trust Him.

Running on empty no more.