

Do you know what it's like to have someone who only ever comes to you when they need something? Someone who, maybe they'll call you up, and after a minute or less of small talk, get down to the real reason why they called, because they need you to do something again. That seems to be the only reason why they ever call. Maybe to put it a little more bluntly, do you know it is like to be used by someone, to be used by someone for what you can give them and for no other reason? The pain that that causes and the hurt and the confusion? So I ask you, Christians. Why are we so tempted to use God in the same way, to use him for what he can do for us? But maybe you would say, like Malachi, when have we done this? When have we used the Lord? We use the Lord when we come to him to just solve our problems, to approach him as a way of last resort when all other helps have failed. I think we see this pretty clearly in the way that we approach miracles in the Bible, because how we understand those miracles that Jesus does is going to tell us a great deal about why we come to God. Does Jesus do miracles as a way simply of solving problems? Or does he do them for some other reason?

So I ask you: why does God do miracles, like here at the wedding of Cana? Is it just to solve immediate problems? And they certainly had a problem at this wedding. They ran out of wine! Something had gone wrong with the planning, and now it seems like they would have to end the party early, to the shame of everybody involved. So there is a very real problem that needs to be fixed here. But does Jesus do this miracle of turning water into wine only to solve that problem? And if we think that he is doing it for that reason, is it any wonder then that we would approach him in our own prayers for the same kind of reason?

Let me give you an example. When we're sick and we pray to God for healing, that's something we should do. That's a good thing. But if we pray to him for healing and he gives it to us, do we remember to give thanks, to say "Thank you, Lord, for this healing that you have given to us," or do we just kind of forget about it until the next time we're sick? Or maybe what's even more likely, if we don't get healing when we think we should be healed, if we don't get things on our timetable, do we become impatient? Do we start to wonder whether we did something wrong? Maybe God is not listening to me because I didn't pray hard enough, because I didn't pray long enough, because I didn't pray frequently enough. Maybe I sinned. I don't know what it is. I gotta figure it out, and then God will answer my prayer. That confusion, that hurt, that results from this kind of thinking.

Or let me give you another example. When we're praying about financial difficulties, and we pray to God and say, "Lord, will you please help me get that promotion? Will you please help me find a job? Whatever it might be, something to help me out of this immediate problem." If God answers that prayer, do we give him thanks? And if he doesn't answer that prayer, do we become impatient and start to wonder?

I think there was a very good example of this kind of thinking in the news in the past couple of months. There was a church down, I believe, in the southern part of the United States. I don't quite remember where; it's not really important. The details aren't important. But they had a family there who lost a very young child, like a three or a four-year-old girl who had died. A tragedy. I've been in those kinds of situations where people have lost very young children. They're confused. They're looking for some kind of comfort in the midst of that intense grief. But this church, instead of pointing this family to the promises of God, instead began to pray that God would resurrect that child, that God would raise her from the dead, something that God had never promised to do. I don't want to make it seem like they were being evil or that they were villains or something. I think they were quite sincere in what they were doing, but it's a good example of this way of thinking. They had a problem that they wanted God to fix, and so they asked him for something that he never promised. And I can only imagine the confusion and hurt and the pain that came when God, not surprisingly, didn't give them what he never

promised to give in the first place. They were looking for what God could give them, rather than what God had promised them. And so that's the way in which we might be tempted to use the Lord, to seek him as a way of solving our problems with his miracles.

So I ask you: why does God do miracles? Jesus does these miracles, and actually we are told why in our text for today. If you have your bulletin, I'd encourage you to look at the gospel reading, at the very end. Verse eleven. "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him." So here we have the reason why God did miracles: to manifest his glory. In other words, to show to his disciples and to show to us that he is in fact God. Only God can turn water into wine. Only God is able to do any of these miracles, and so when Jesus does what only God can do, we can see that he is in fact the Lord. And knowing that he is Lord, we know that what he says is true. That's why his disciples believed in him, because now they knew that whatever he had promised them would come true. When God promises us comfort, that peace which surpasses all understanding, and then he goes out and does his miracles, calming the storm so that it stops immediately, we know that he is God, and we know that he tells the truth that we will have a peace which surpasses all understanding. When God promises us that there will come a day when sickness and pain and suffering will come to an end, and then Jesus goes out and heals the sick and gives sight to the blind and causes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak, we know that he is God, and we know that he is telling the truth that that day will come, Christians, when sickness will come to an end. When Jesus promises us that he will forgive us our sins, and then he goes to the cross and dies and rises three days later, we know that he is God and that he is telling the truth, that our sins have been forgiven and that we will know that forgiveness whenever we come to him. And Christians, when Jesus promises us that he is the resurrection and the life, and then goes and raises Lazarus from the dead and raises all those from the dead that he did in his earthly life and also himself rose from the dead on the third day, we know that he is God. We know he's telling the truth. And we know that he will raise us again on the last day. What Jesus does, by doing this miracle, is show us that he is trustworthy, that he is true, that we can believe in him, even when it seems contrary to all our expectations.

So Christians, let us come today, not looking to fix our problems as if that's all that God has come to do. Let us trust in Jesus, Jesus, who has come to do what he says is going to do. And this miracle which he does for the disciples so long ago shows this very thing, that he will keep his word, that he will do what he says he will do. We don't need another miracle. This one's good enough. What he did two thousand years ago shows us that he will keep his promises. To him be the glory, now and forever. Amen.