

THE WATERPOTS AT CANA

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A SERMON
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*“Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.
And they filled them up to the brim.”
John 2:7.*

YOU know the narrative. Jesus was at a wedding feast and when the wine ran short, He provided for it right bountifully. I do not think that I should do any good if I were to enter upon the discussion as to what sort of wine our Lord Jesus made on this occasion. It was wine and I am sure it was very good wine, for He would produce nothing but the best. Was it wine such as men understand by that word now? It was wine, but there are very few people in this country who ever see, much less drink, any of that beverage. That which goes under the name of wine is not true wine, but a fiery, brandied concoction of which I feel sure Jesus would not have tasted a drop. The fire-waters and blazing spirits of modern wine manufacturers are very different articles from the juice of the grape, mildly exhilarating, which was the usual wine of more sober centuries. As to the wine such as is commonly used in the East, a person must drink inordinately before he would become intoxicated with it. It would be possible, for there were cases in which men were intoxicated with wine, but as a rule, intoxication was a rare vice in the Savior's times and in the preceding ages. Had our great Exemplar lived under our present circumstances, surrounded by a sea of deadly drink which is ruining tens of thousands, I know how He would have acted. I am sure He would not have contributed by word or deed to the rivers of poisonous beverages in which bodies and souls are now being wholesale destroyed. The kind of wine which He made was such that, if there had been no stronger drink in the world, nobody might have thought it necessary to enter any protest against drinking it. It would have done nobody any harm, be sure of that, or else Jesus our loving Savior would not have made it.

Some have raised a question about the great quantity of wine, for I suppose there must have been no less than 120 gallons and probably more. “They did not want all that,” says one, “and even of the weakest kind of wine it would be a deal too much.” But you are thinking of an ordinary wedding here, are you not, where there are ten or a dozen, or a score or two, met together in a parlor? An oriental wedding is quite another affair. Even if it is only a village, like Cana of Galilee, everybody comes to eat and drink and the feast lasts on for a week or a fortnight. Hundreds of people must be fed, for often open house is kept. Nobody is refused and, consequently, a great quantity of provision is required. Besides, they may not have consumed all the wine at once. When the Lord multiplied loaves and fishes, they must eat the loaves and fishes directly, or else the bread would grow moldy and the fish would be putrid. But wine could be stored and used months afterwards. I have no doubt that such wine as Jesus Christ made was as good for keeping as it was for using. And why not set the family up with a store in hand? They were not very rich people. They might sell it if they liked. At any rate, that is not my subject and I do not intend getting into hot water over the question of cold water. I abstain myself from alcoholic drink in every form and I think others would be wise to do the same, but of this each one must be a guide unto himself.

Jesus Christ commenced the gospel dispensation, not with a miracle of vengeance, like that of Moses who turned water into blood, but with a miracle of liberality, turning water into wine. He does not only supply necessities, but gives luxuries, and this is highly significant of the kingdom of His grace. Here He not only gives sinners enough to save them, but He gives abundantly, grace upon grace. The gifts of the covenant are not stinted or stunted—they are neither small in quantity nor in quality. He gives to men not only the water of life that they may drink and be refreshed, but “wines on the lees well-refined” that they may rejoice exceedingly. And He gives like a king, who gives lavishly, without counting the cups

and bottles. As to one hundred and twenty gallons, how little is that in comparison with the rivers of love and mercy which He is pleased to bestow freely out of His bountiful heart upon the neediest souls. You may forget all about the wine question and all about wine, bad, good, or indifferent. The less we have to do with it the better, I am quite sure. And now let us think about our Lord's mercy and let the wine stand as a type of His grace and the abundance of it as the type of the abundance of His grace which He does so liberally bestow.

Now, concerning this miracle, it may well be remarked how simple and unostentatious it was. One might have expected that when the great Lord of all came here in human form He would commence His miraculous career by summoning the scribes and Pharisees, at least, if not the kings and princes of the earth, to see the marks of His calling and the guarantees and warrants of His commission. Gathering them all together to work some miracle before them, as Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh, that they might be convinced of His Messiahship. He does nothing of the kind. He goes to a simple wedding among poor people and there, in the simplest and most natural way, He displays His glory. When the water is to be turned into wine, when He selects that as the first miracle, He does not call for the master of the feast even, or for the bridegroom himself, or for any of the guests, and begin to say, "You clearly perceive that your wine is all gone. Now, I am about to show you a great marvel, to turn water into wine." No, He does it quietly with the servants. He tells them to fill the waterpots. He uses the baths. He does not ask for any new vessels, but uses what was there, making no fuss or parade. He uses water, too, of which they had abundance and works the miracle, if I may so speak, in the most commonplace and natural style—and that is just the style of Jesus Christ. Now, if it had been a Roman Catholic miracle, it would have been done in a very mysterious, theatrical, sensational way, with no end of paraphernalia. But being a genuine miracle, it is done just as nearly after the course of nature as the supernatural can go.

Jesus does not have the waterpots emptied and then fill them with wine, but He goes as far with nature as nature will go and uses water to make the wine from, therein following the processes of His providence which are at work every day. When the water drops from heaven and flows into the earth to the roots of the vine and so swells out the clusters with ruddy juice, it is through water that wine is produced. There is only a difference as to time whether the wine is created in the cluster or in the waterpots. Our Lord does not call for any strangers to do it, but the ordinary servants shall bring ordinary water, and while they are drawing out the water, or what appears to them to be water, the servants shall perceive that the water has been turned into wine. Now, whenever you try to serve Jesus Christ, do not make a fuss about it, because He never made any fuss in what He did, even when He was working amazing miracles. If you want to do a good thing, go and do it as naturally as ever you can. Be simple-hearted and simple-minded. Be yourself. Do not be affected in your piety, as if you were going to walk to heaven on stilts. Walk on your own feet and bring religion to your own door and to your own fireside.

If you have a grand work to do, do it with that genuine simplicity which is next akin to sublimity, for affectation and everything that is gaudy and ostentatious, is after all mean and beggarly. Nothing but simple naturalness has about it a genuine beauty and such a beauty there is about this miracle of the Savior.

Let all these remarks stand as a kind of preface, for now I need to draw out *the principles which are hidden in my text*. And then, secondly, when I have displayed those principles, I want to show *how they should be carried out*.

I. "Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water." WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN OUR LORD'S MODE OF PROCEDURE? First, that as a rule, *when Christ is about to bestow a blessing, He gives a command*. This is a fact which your memories will help you to establish in a moment. It is not always so, but as a general rule, a word of command goes before a word of power or else with it. He is about to give wine and the process does not consist in saying, "Let wine be," but it begins by a command addressed to men, "Fill the waterpots with water." Here is a blind man. Christ is about to give him sight. He puts clay on his eyes and then says, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash." There is a man with his arm swinging at his side, useless to him. Christ is going to restore it and He says, "Stretch forth your hand." Yes, and the principle goes so far that it holds good in cases where it

would seem to be quite inapplicable, for if it is a child that is dead, He says, "Maid, arise." Or if it is Lazarus, who by this time stinks, being four days buried, yet He cries, "Lazarus, come forth." And thus He bestows a benefit by a command. Gospel benefits come with a gospel precept. Do you wonder that this principle which is seen in the miracles is seen in the wonders of His divine grace? Here is a sinner to be saved. What does Christ say to that sinner? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Can he believe of himself? Is he not dead in sin? Brethren, raise no such questions, but learn that Jesus Christ has bidden men believe and has commissioned His disciples to cry, "Repent you, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent." And He bids us go and preach this word, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But why command them? It is His will to do so and that should be enough for you who call yourself His disciple. It was so even in the olden times, when the Lord set forth in vision His way of dealing with a dead nation. There lay the dry bones of the valley, exceedingly many and exceedingly dry, and Ezekiel was sent to prophesy to them. What said the prophet? "O you dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Is that His way of making them alive? Yes, by a command to hear, a thing which dry bones cannot do. He issues His command to the dead, the dry, the helpless, and by its power, life comes. I pray you, be not disobedient to the gospel, for faith is a duty, or we should not read of "the obedience of faith."

Jesus Christ, when He is about to bless, challenges men's obedience by issuing His royal orders. The same thing is true when we come away from the unconverted to believers. When God means to bless His people and make them blessings it is by issuing a command to them. We have been praying to the Lord that He would arise and make bare His arm. His answer is, "Awake, awake, O Zion." We ask that the world may be brought to His feet and His reply is, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them." The command is to us, the vehicle of the blessing. If we are to have the blessing of converts multiplied and churches built up, Christ must give us the gift. It is altogether His gift, as much as it was His to turn the water into wine. Yet, first of all, He says to us, "Go and proclaim My salvation unto the ends of the earth," for thus are we to fill the waterpots with water. If we are obedient to His command, we shall see how He will work—how mightily He will be with us and how our prayers shall be heard. That is the first principle that I see here—Christ issues commands to those whom He will bless.

Secondly, *Christ's commands are not to be questioned, but to be obeyed.* The people want wine and Christ says, "Fill the waterpots with water." Well, now, if these servants had been of the mind of the captious critics of modern times, they would have looked at our Lord a long while and objected boldly, "We do not want any water. It is not the feast of purifications, it is a wedding feast. We do not require water at a wedding. We shall want water when we are going up to the synagogue, or to the temple, that we may purify our hands according to our custom, but we do not want water just now. The hour, the occasion and the fitness of things call for wine." But Mary's advice to them was sound, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Thus, too, let us neither question nor quibble, but do His bidding straight away. It may sometimes seem that Christ's command is not pertinent to the point in hand. The sinner, for instance, says, "Lord, save me. Conquer in me my sin." Our Lord cries, "Believe," and the sinner cannot see how believing in Jesus will enable Him to get the mastery over a besetting sin. There does not at first sight appear to be any connection between the simple trusting of the Savior and the conquest of a bad temper, or the getting rid of a bad habit such as intemperance, passion, covetousness, or falsehood. There is such a connection, but recollect, whether you can see the connection or not, it is yours, "not to reason why," but yours to do what Jesus bids you do, for it is by way of the command that the miracle of mercy will be worked.

"Fill the waterpots with water," though what you want is wine. Christ sees a connection between the water and the wine, though you do not. He has a reason for the pots being filled with water, which reason, as yet, you do not know. It is not yours to ask an explanation, but to yield obedience. You are, in the first instance, just to do what Jesus bids you, as He bids you, how that He bids you, and because He bids you, and you shall find that His commandments are not grievous and in the keeping of them there is a great reward. Sometimes these commands may even seem to be trivial. They may look as if He trifled

with us. The family was in need of wine. Jesus says, “Fill the waterpots with water.” The servants might have said, “This is clearly a mere putting off of us and playing with us. Why, we should be better employed in going round to these poor people’s friends and asking them to contribute another skin of wine. We should be much better employed in finding out some shop where we could purchase more, but to send us to the well to fill those huge waterpots that hold so much water seems altogether a piece of child’s play.” I know, brethren that sometimes the path of duty seems as if it could not lead to the desired result. We want to be doing something more, that something more might be wrong, but it looks as if we could thereby complete our design more easily and directly, and so we hanker after this uncommanded and, perhaps, forbidden course. And I know that many a troubled conscience thinks that simply to believe in Jesus is too little a thing. The deceitful heart suggests a course which looks to be more effectual. “Do some penance. Feel some bitterness. Weep a certain amount of tears. Goad your mind or break your heart.” So cries carnal self. Jesus simply commands, “Believe.” It does appear to be too little a thing to be done, as if it could not be that eternal life should be given upon putting your trust in Jesus Christ, but this is the principle we want to teach you—that when Jesus Christ is about to give a blessing, He issues a command which is not to be questioned, but to be once obeyed. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established, but if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. “Whatever He says unto you, do it.”

The third principle is this—*whenever we get a command from Christ it is always wisdom to carry it out zealously.* He said, “Fill the waterpots with water,” and they filled them *up to the brim.* You know there is a way of filling a waterpot and there is another way of filling it.

It is full and you cannot heap it up, but still, you can fill it up till it begins almost to run over. The liquid trembles as if it must surely fall in a crystal cascade. It is a filling fullness. In fulfilling Christ’s commands, my dear brethren and sisters, let us go to their widest extent. Let us fill them up to the brim. If it is, “Believe,” oh, believe Him with all your might. Trust Him with your whole heart. If it is, “Preach the gospel,” preach it in season and out of season, and preach the gospel—the whole of it. Fill it up to the brim. Do not give the people a half gospel. Give them a brimming-over gospel. Fill the vessels up to the very brim. If you are to repent, ask to have a hearty and a deep repentance—full to the brim. If you are to believe, ask to have an intense, absolute, childlike dependence, that your faith may be full to the brim. If you are bidden to pray, pray mightily—fill the vessel of prayer up to the brim. If you are to search the Scriptures for blessing, search them from end to end. Fill the Bible-reading vessel up to the brim. Christ’s commands are never meant to be done in a half-hearted manner. Let us throw our whole soul into whatever He commands us, even though, as yet, we cannot see the reason why He has set us the task. Christ’s commands should be fulfilled with enthusiasm and carried out to the extreme, if extreme is possible.

The fourth principle is that *our earnest action in obedience to Christ is not contrary to our dependence upon Him,* but it is necessary to our dependence upon Him. I will show you that in a moment. There are some brethren, I know, who say, “Ha! You hold what you call revival services and you try to arouse men by earnest appeals and exciting addresses. Do you not see that God will do His own work? These efforts are just your trying to take the work out of God’s hands. The proper way is to trust in Him and do nothing.” All right, brother. We have your word for it—that you trust in Him and do nothing. I take the liberty not to be so very certain that you trust Him, for if I remember who you are and I think I have been to your house, you are about the most miserable, desponding, unbelieving person that I know. You do not even know whether you are saved yourself nine times out of ten. I think you should hardly come and cry yourself up for your faith. If you had such a wonderfully great faith, there is no doubt whatever that according to your faith it would be unto you. How many have been added to your church through your doing nothing this year—that blessed church of yours where you exercise this blessed faith without works? How many have been brought in? “Well, we do not have very many additions.” No, and I think you are not likely to have. If you go about the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom by inaction, I do not think that you go *the way* to work which Jesus Christ approves of. But we venture to say to you that we who go in for working for Christ with all our heart and soul, using any means within our reach to bring men in to hear the gospel, feel as much as you do that we cannot do anything at all in the matter

apart from the Holy Spirit and we trust in God, I think, almost as much as you do, because our faith has produced rather more results than yours has done. I should not wonder if it turns out that your faith without works is dead, being alone, and that our faith, having works with it, has been living faith after all.

I will put the case thus—Jesus Christ says, “Fill the waterpots with water.” The orthodox servant says, “My Lord, I fully believe that You can make wine for these people without any water and by Your leave I will bring no water. I am not going to interfere with the work of God. I am quite certain that You do not want our help, gracious Lord. You can make these waterpots be full of wine without our bringing a single bucket of water and so we will not rob You of the glory of it. We will just stand back and wait for You. When the wine is made, we will drink some of it and bless Your name, but meanwhile we pray You have us excused, for pails are heavy carrying and a good many must be brought to fill all those waterpots. It would be interfering with the divine work and so we would rather take our ease.” Do you not think that servants who talked so would prove that they had no faith in Jesus at all? We will not say that it would prove their unbelief, but we will say that it looks very like it. But look at the servant there who, as soon as Jesus commands, “Fill the waterpots with water,” says, “I do not know what He is at. I do not see the connection between fetching this water and providing the feast with wine, but I am off to the well. Here, hand me a couple of pails. Come along, brother. Come along and help fill the baths.” There they go and soon come joyfully back with the water, pouring it into the troughs till they are full up to the brim. Those seem to me to be the believing servants who obey the command, not understanding it, but expecting that, somehow or other, Jesus Christ knows the way to work His own miracle. By our earnest exertions we are not interfering with Him, dear friends. Far from it. We are proving our faith in Him if we work for Him as He bids us work and trust in Him alone with undivided faith.

The next principle I must lay equal stress upon is this—*our action alone is not sufficient*. That we know, but let me remind you of it again. There are these waterpots, these troughs, these baths—they are full and could not be fuller. What a spilling of water there is! You see that in their trying to fill them the water runs over here and there. Well, all these six great baths are full of water. Is there any more wine, for all that? Not a drop. It is water that they brought, nothing but water and it remains water still. Suppose that they should take that water into the feast? I am half afraid that the guests would not have thought cold water quite the proper liquid to drink at a wedding. They ought to have done so, but I am afraid they were not educated in the school of total abstinence. They would have said to the master of the feast, “You have given us good wine and water is a poor finish for the feast.” I am sure it would not have done. And yet water it was, depend upon it, and nothing else but water when the servants poured it into the pots. Even so, after all that sinners can do and all that saints can do, there is nothing in any human effort which can avail for the saving of a soul till Christ speaks the word of power. When Paul has planted and Apollos watered, there is no increase till God gives it. Preach the gospel, labor with souls, persuade, entreat, exhort, but there is no power in anything that you do until Jesus Christ displays His divine might. His presence is our power. Blessed be His name, He will come and if we fill the waterpots with water, He will turn it into wine. He alone can do it and those servants who show the most alacrity in filling up the waterpots are among the first to confess that it is He alone who can perform the deed.

And now the last principle here is that *although human action in itself falls short of the desired end, yet it has its place and God has made it necessary by His appointment*. Why did our Lord have these waterpots filled with water? I do not say that it was necessary that it should have been done. It was not absolutely necessary in itself, but in order that the miracle might be all open and above board it was necessary, for suppose He had said, “Go to those waterpots and draw out wine”? Those who watched Him might have said that there was wine there before and that no miracle was worked. When our Lord had them filled up with water, there remained no room for any wine to be hidden away. It was just the same as with Elijah, when, in order to prove that there was no concealed fire upon the altar at Carmel, he bade them go down to the sea and bring water and pour it upon the altar and upon the victim till the trenches were filled. He said, “Do it a second time,” and they did it a second time. And he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time and no possibility of deception remained. And so, when the Lord Jesus

bade the servants fill the waterpots with water, He put it beyond all possibility that He should be charged with deception and thus we see why it was necessary that they should be filled with water.

Moreover, it was necessary because it was so instructive to the servants. Did you notice when I was reading it that the master of the feast, when he tasted the good wine, did not know where it came from? He could not make it out and he uttered an expression which showed his surprise, mingled with his ignorance. But it is written, "The servants which drew the water knew." Now, when souls are converted in a church, it happens much in the same way with certain of the members who are good people, but they do not know much about the conversion of sinners. They do not feel much joy in revivals. In fact, like the elder brother, they are rather suspicious of these wild characters being brought in. They consider themselves to be very respectable and they would rather not have the lowest of people sitting in the pew with them. They feel awkward in coming so near them. They know little about what is going on. "But the servants which drew the water knew," that is to say, the earnest believers who do the work and try to fill the waterpots know all about it. Jesus bade them fill the vessels with water on purpose that the men who drew the water might know that it was a miracle. I warrant you, if you bring souls to Christ you will know His power. It will make you leap for joy to hear the cry of the penitent and mark the bright flash of delight that passes over the new-born believer's face when his sins are washed away and he feels himself renewed. If you want to know Jesus Christ's miraculous power, you must go and—not work miracles, but just draw the water and fill the waterpots. Do the ordinary duties of Christian men and women—things in which there is no power of themselves, but which Jesus Christ makes to be connected with His divine working, and it shall be for your instruction and your comfort that you had such work to do. "The servants which drew the water knew." I think that I have said enough upon the principles which lie concealed within my text.

II. You must have patience with me while I try to apply these principles to practical purposes. LET US SEE HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS DIVINE COMMAND, "Fill the waterpots with water." First, *use in the service of Christ such abilities as you have.* There stood the water pots, six of them and Jesus used what He found ready to His hand. There was water in the well, our Lord also used that. Our Lord is accustomed to employ His own people and such abilities as they have rather than angels or a novel class of beings created fresh for the purpose. Now, dear brothers and sisters, if you have no golden chalices, fill your earthen vessels. If you cannot consider yourselves to be goblets of rarest workmanship in silver, or if you could not liken yourselves to the best Sevres ware, it does not matter. Fill the vessels which you have. If you cannot, with Elijah, bring fire from heaven and if you cannot work miracles with the apostles, do what you can. If silver and gold you have none, yet such as you have dedicate to Christ. Bring water at His bidding and it will be better than wine. The most common gifts can be made to serve Christ's purpose. Just as He took a few loaves and fishes, and fed the crowd with them, so will He take your six waterpots and the water, and do His wine-making therewith.

Thus, you see, they improved what they had, for the waterpots were empty, but they filled them. There are a good many brethren here from the College tonight and they are trying to improve their gifts and their abilities. I think you do right, my brethren. But I have heard some people say, "The Lord Jesus does not want your learning." No, it is very likely that He does not, any more than He needed the water, but then He certainly does not want your stupidity and your ignorance and He does not want your rough, uncultivated ways of speaking. He did not seek for empty pitchers on this occasion. He would have them full and the servants did well to fill them. Our Lord today does not want empty heads in His ministers, nor empty hearts. So, my brethren, fill your waterpots with water. Work away and study away and learn all you can and fill the waterpots with water. "Oh," somebody will say, "but how are such studies to lead to the conversion of men? Conversion is like wine and all that these young fellows will learn will be like water." You are right, but still, I bid these students fill the waterpots with water and expect the Lord Jesus to turn the water into wine. He can sanctify human knowledge so that it shall be useful to the setting forth of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I hope that the day has gone by when it is so much as dreamed that ignorance and coarseness are helpful to the kingdom of Christ. The great Teacher would have His people know all that they can know and especially know Himself and the Scriptures that they may set Him forth and proclaim His gospel. "Fill the waterpots with water."

Next, to apply this principle, let us all *use such means of blessing as God appoints*. What are they? First, there is the reading of the Scriptures. “Search the Scriptures.” Search them all you can. Try to understand them. “But if I know the Bible, shall I be therefore saved.” No, you must know Christ Himself by the Spirit. Still, “fill the waterpots with water.” While you are studying the Scriptures you may expect the Savior will bless His own Word and turn the water into wine.

Then there is attendance upon the means of grace and hearing a gospel ministry. Mind you fill that waterpot with water. “But I may hear thousands of sermons and not be saved.” I know it is so, but your business is to fill this waterpot with water and while you are listening to the gospel, God will bless it, for, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Take care to use the means which God appoints. Since our Lord has appointed to save men by the preaching of the Word, I pray that He will raise up those who will preach without ceasing, in season and out of season, indoors and in the streets. “But they won’t be saved by our preaching.” I know that. Preaching is the water and while we are preaching, God will bless it and turn the water into wine. Let us distribute religious books and tracts. “Oh, but people won’t be saved by reading them.” Very likely not, but while they are reading them, God may bring His truth to remembrance and impress their hearts. “Fill the waterpots with water.” Give away abundance of tracts. Scatter religious literature everywhere. “Fill the waterpots with water,” and the Lord will turn the water into wine.

Remember the prayer meeting. What a blessed means of grace it is, for it brings down power for all the works of the church. Fill that waterpot with water. I have not to complain of your attendance at prayer meetings, but oh, keep it up, dear brethren! You can pray. Blessed be His name, you have the spirit of prayer. Pray on! “Fill the waterpots with water” and in answer to prayer, Jesus will turn it into wine. Sunday school teachers, do not neglect your blessed means of usefulness. “Fill the waterpots with water.” Work the Sunday school system with all your might. “But it will not save the children merely to get them together and teach them of Jesus. We cannot give them new hearts.” Who said that you could? “Fill the waterpots with water.” Jesus Christ knows how to turn it into wine and He does not fail to do it when we are obedient to His commands.

Use all the means, but *take care that you use those means right heartily*. I come back to that part of the text, “And they filled them up to the brim.” When you teach the young ones in the Sunday school, teach them well. Fill them to the brim. When you preach, dear sir, do not preach as if you were only half awake. Stir yourself up. Fill your ministry to the brim. When you are trying to evangelize the community, do not attempt it in a half-hearted way, as if you did not care whether their souls were saved or not. Fill them to the brim. Preach the gospel with all your might and beg for power from on high. Fill every vessel to the brim. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. Nobody ever yet served Christ too well. I have heard that in some services there may be too much zeal, but in the service of Christ you may have as much zeal as ever you will and yet not exceed, if prudence is joined with it. “Fill the waterpots with water” and divine working, and it shall be for your instruction and your comfort that you had such work to do. “The servants which drew the water knew.” “Fill the waterpots with water” and fill them to the brim. Go in for doing good with all your heart and soul and strength.

Further, in order to apply this principle, be sure to *remember when you have done all that you can do, that there is a great deficiency in all that you have done*. It is well to come away from tract-distributing and Sunday school teaching and preaching, and go home and get on your knees and cry, “Lord, I have done all that You have commanded me and yet there is nothing done unless You give the finishing touch. Lord, I have filled the waterpots and though I could only fill them with water, yet I have filled them to the brim. Lord, to the best of my ability I have sought to win men for You. There cannot be a soul saved, a child converted, or any glory brought to Your name by anything I have done, in and of itself, but, my Master, speak the miracle-working word and let the water which fills the vessels blush into wine. You can do it, though I cannot. I cast the burden upon You.”

And this leads me to the last application of the principle, which is—*trust in your Lord to do the work*. You see, there are two ways of filling waterpots. Suppose these people had never been commanded to fill the waterpots and their doing it had had no reference to Christ whatever. Suppose that it had been a freak of their own imagination and they had said, “These people have no wine, but they shall

have a bath if they like and so we will fill the six waterpots with water”? Nothing would have come of such a proceeding. There would have stood the water. The Eton schoolboy said, “The conscious water saw its God and blushed”—a truly poetic expression, but the conscious water would have seen the servants and would not have blushed. It would have reflected their faces upon its shining surface, but nothing more would have happened. Jesus Christ Himself must come and in present power must work the miracle. It was because He had commanded the servants to fill the waterpots with water that, therefore, He was bound, if I may use such an expression of our free King, bound to turn it into wine, for otherwise He would have been making fools of them and they also might have turned round and said, “Why did You give us such a command as this?” If, after we have filled the waterpots with water, Jesus does not work by us, we shall have done what He bade us, but if we believe in Him, I make bold to say that He is bound to come, for though we should be losers and dreadful losers, too, if He did not display His power, we should have to lament, “I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing.” Yet we should not be such losers as He would be, for straightway the world would affirm that Christ’s commands are empty, fruitless, and idle. It would be declared that obedience to His Word brings no result. The world would say, “You have filled the waterpots with water because He told you to do it. You expected Him to turn the water into wine, but He did not do it. Your faith is vain. Your whole obedience is vain and He is not a fit Master to be served.” *We* should be losers, but *He* would be a greater loser still, for He would lose His glory.

For my part, I do not believe that a good word for Christ is ever spoken in vain. I am sure that no sermon with Christ in it is ever preached without result. Something will come of it, if not tonight, nor tomorrow, something will come of it. When I have printed a sermon and seen it fairly in the volume, I have before long been delighted to hear of souls saved by its means. And when I have not printed, but only preached a discourse, I have still thought something will come of it. I preached Christ. I put His saving truth into that sermon and that seed cannot die. If it shall lie in the volume for years, like the grains of wheat in the mummy’s hand, it will live and grow and bear fruit. For instance, I have heard, but lately of a soul brought to Christ by a sermon that I preached twenty-five years ago. I hear almost every week of souls having been brought to Christ by sermons preached at Park Street and Exeter Hall and the Surrey Gardens and therefore I feel that God will not let a single faithful testimony fall to the ground. Go on, brethren. Go on filling the waterpots with water. Do not believe that you are doing much when you have done your utmost. Do not begin to congratulate yourselves on your past success. All must come from Christ and it *will* come from Christ. Do not go to the prayer meeting and say, “Paul *may* plant and Apollos *may* water, but”—and so on. That is not how the passage runs. It says just the contrary and runs thus, “Paul plants, Apollos waters, but God gives the increase.” The increase is surely given by God where the planting and sowing are rightly done. The servants fill the water pots—the Master turns the water into wine.

The Lord grant us grace to be obedient to His command, especially to that command, “Believe and live!” and may we meet Him in the marriage feast above to drink of the new wine with Him forever and ever. Amen and amen.

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