

John 2.1-11(T2); Isaiah 62:1-5; 1Cor.12.1-11.
2nd Sunday of Epiphany; 8:00 & 10:00 am
St. Andrew's Totteridge: 17th January 2016.

Grant, O God, that in the written word, and thru' the spoken word, we may behold the living Word, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

'When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine"' (v.3)

Last Thursday, and as with every Thursday in term-time, I was at morning worship with the youngsters of St. Andrew's school talking to them about the wedding at Cana. Each month the school adopts a Christian 'value of the month' and this January the value is that of 'responsibility'. We looked at how, whoever was responsible for arranging the drink at the wedding, had failed in their responsibility to ensure that their was enough to go round; at how if we fail in our own responsibilities people can be let down and even great things like wedding celebrations can be spoiled.

Jesus didn't allow the party to be spoiled – far from it. In fact he turned what could have been a disaster into a triumph. So much so, that the wedding guests all thought that they'd saved the best wine until the end. And this, I want to suggest, is the nature of the provision of our great and glorious God. He saves the best until last, he loves us that much.

This is what Epiphany is all about. The word 'epiphany' comes from the Greek: 'to make manifest' - a manifestation, a dawning, a realisation. God moves only when the timing is right; when people are ready to receive – just when the moment is most critical. The narrative that John unfolds, in this 2nd chapter of John's gospel, is just such a critical time.

It may be one of the most critical times in all of human history. For whatever reason, and I wouldn't dare to even guess at the reason why God acts where and when he does, this is the moment that he chooses to begin to lift the curtain on the nature of the gift he's going to grant to humanity.

Mary believes in her son, but then she knows who he is. She just speaks quietly to the servants asking them to do whatever he wants. No histrionics; no doubts or fears; just deep, deep, faith. As she was with the angel when he told her of the son she would bear, so she is now- ready and prepared to believe absolutely in a power beyond her understanding. She is the epitome of faith – she takes her responsibilities before God very seriously.

As with so much of creation, the production of wine is miraculous in itself. God provides the water as rain and the grapes of the vines swell with his goodness. All Jesus does is speed up the process and God shows his hand. This is the first time that God begins to unveil what he has done for his children. This is the moment the disciples, and thru' them us, get a chance to glimpse of the profundity of God's providence; the generosity of his heart; depths of his love.

What might have been adequate in the past is no longer sufficient. The water set aside for washing according to the Hebraic rites of purification represents the past; the Jewish law by which Israel had survived across the millennia is failing to provide the love that God demands from us all. It will be shown up for how it fails time and time again in the remaining days of Jesus' ministry.

So the wedding guests are not left bereft at this critical time Jesus shows how he can provide in a way that doesn't denounce all that has gone before – quite the contrary. He must provide in a way that is the fulfilment of the law, of all that stood before. He must transform it into something beyond its original constitution.

And so the water becomes wine – and not just a *vin ordinaire* – this is a *premier cru* saved for the most important of occasions. It is the greatest gift that a host can bestow upon the people he loves - a people he loves so much, that from the humblest of beginnings he will reveal the nature of the power & glory of his own incarnation on earth. Sent that we may celebrate, and be joyous; because as Isaiah says: *“the Lord delights in you... as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you”*.

Now this is not easy, but when we're disappointed, when someone fails us or when things go wrong; when things look like they can't get any worse but then they do; it is our responsibility to have faith and to encourage one another. *We can only receive if we're ready to receive* – this is critical -

but at times like these God comes amongst us to save the best until last – he loves us that much.

Let's remember, as the disciples had to, at that most 'crucial' of moments, when their Lord was taken from them to suffer an agonising crucifixion; when everything seemed lost – God kept the best until last.

And when Jesus reappeared after his resurrection and said to Peter that he would come again, let us believe in his words – because God keeps the best until last.

Spoken in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Amen.

John 2.1-11

The Wedding at Cana

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' ⁴And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' ⁵His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' ⁶Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. ⁹When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Isaiah 62:1-5

Vindication & Salvation of Zion

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. ² The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. ³ You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. ⁵ For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and

as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

1 Cor. 12.1-11.

Spiritual Gifts

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

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