**Sermon on John 2 v 1 -11 Sunday 16th January 2022**

Good morning, I wonder how many wedding stories you have heard and from those, how many were about the wedding ceremony itself and how many were about the celebrations that went on before and after. In the gospel reading this morning we only hear about the celebrations.

Weddings at that time were week-long festivals, banquets would be prepared for many guests and the week would be spent celebrating the new life of the married couple. Often the whole town was invited and everybody would come – it was considered an insult to refuse an invitation to a wedding. To accommodate many people, careful planning was needed, as to run out of wine was more than embarrassing it broke the strong unwritten laws of hospitality.

This Wedding was taking place on the last day of Jesus’ first week of His earthly ministry. Jesus and His disciples had been invited to this wedding and they went. It may be hard for some of you to believe this; but Jesus had a social life. After this wedding was a party and He was there and stayed for the celebration. If it is ok for Jesus to spend time with His friends and family; it is ok for us to do the same when we can.

Jesus’s initial response to Mary was that she did not understand God’s timing. I can imagine that she had often thought about the time when Jesus would begin to fulfil the prophecy that was given to her when she was pregnant with Jesus. She knew who Jesus was and that He could take care of this situation.

Her belief in Jesus tells us everything we need to know “Do whatever he tells you.” She knew that Jesus could and would solve the problem although she had no idea how. The servants did exactly what Jesus told them to do. They filled the 6 stone jars with water to the brim. Then they drew some out and took it to the master of the banquet. This may not sound strange to us; but these 6 jars were used for people to clean their hands and arms. This water was dirty and not for drinking; yet the servants not only filled them up completely; but they even took some of it to the master to drink. Taking dirty water to the master to drink could create some real issues for these servants. The point that we need to see here is that we need to do things exactly like Jesus tells us to do them; even if it makes no sense to us at the time. Jesus could have changed the water to wine without doing these other things, but He was using these servants to be a part of the miracle that He was performing. Jesus does miraculous things through us when we are obedient to Him. Those servants were the only ones to actually witness the miracle here. They would probably not have had a taste of it but they are the ones who would have gone home with a story that night.

The disciples that were with Him had just started following Him and they already believed in who He was. Over the next 3 years, their faith became stronger and stronger in Jesus. They began to realize that not only was nothing impossible for Jesus; but nothing was impossible for them through the power of Jesus.

So why did Jesus do this task? A friend faced a social faux pas possibly social embarrassment but did it call for a miracle? In the big picture of things wasn’t this a small trivial matter? Yes but that is just the point that’s the way Jesus is. If it matters to us then it matters to him. Our Christianity should not be bland and watered down it should be vibrant and full bodied. It should energise our lives and make our lives more meaningful and more joyful and yes more fun. Our lives should be enhanced by our faith so we live with boldness, courage and joy.

Jesus was on a mission to save the world yet he took time to attend a wedding. We may be tempted to think that we should not take time out from our important work for social occasions but maybe these social occasions are part of our mission. Jesus valued these wedding festivities because they involved people and Jesus came to be with people. Jesus shows compassion when people are in need. Those who believe in Jesus but run into situations they cannot understand must continue to trust that He will work in the best way.

I close with a story of a lady who knew to put all her trust in God no matter what.

Louise Redden, a poorly dressed lady with a look of defeat on her face, walked into a grocery store. She approached the owner of the store in a most humble manner and asked if he would let her charge a few groceries. She softly explained that her husband was very ill and unable to work, they had seven children and they needed food. John Longhouse, the grocer, scoffed at her and requested that she leave his store.

She said: "Please, sir! I will bring you the money just as soon as I can." John told her he could not give her credit, as she did not have a charge account at his store.

Standing beside the counter was a customer who overheard the conversation between the two. The customer walked forward and told the grocer that he would stand good for whatever she needed for her family.

The grocer said in a very reluctant voice, "Do you have a grocery list?" Louise replied, "Yes sir"

"O.K." he said, "put your grocery list on the scales and whatever your grocery list weighs, I will give you that amount in groceries."

Louise, hesitated a moment with a bowed head, then she reached into her purse and took out a piece of paper and scribbled something on it. She then laid the piece of paper on the scale carefully with her head still bowed.

The eyes of the grocer and the customer showed amazement when the scales went down and stayed down.

The grocer, staring at the scales, turned slowly to the customer and said begrudgingly, "I can't believe it."

The customer smiled, and the grocer started putting the groceries on the other side of the scales. The scale did not balance so he continued to put more and more groceries on them until the scales would hold no more. The grocer stood there in utter disgust.

Finally, he grabbed the piece of paper from the scales and looked at it with greater amazement. It was not a grocery list, it was a prayer which said: "Dear Lord, you know my needs and I am leaving this in your hands."

The grocer gave her the groceries that he had gathered and stood in stunned silence. Louise thanked him and left the store. The customer handed a fifty-dollar bill to the grocer and said, "It was worth every penny of it."

It was only later that the grocer was to realise that his scales were broken!

Amen