

Water into Wine - John 2:1-11 (St Margaret's Tylers Green & Holy Trinity, Penn 221/1/2018)

Jesus Changes Water Into Wine: John 2:1-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

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

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

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.

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

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

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples put their faith in him.

Revelation 19:6 (NIV)

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus."

Genesis 14:17 (NIV)

After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying,

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

And praise be to God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

21st January 2018 - St Margaret's Tylers Green 9:30a.m. and Holy Trinity, Penn 11:00a.m.

Genesis 14:17 - Revelation 19:6 - John 2:1-11

Water into Wine - John 2:1-11

Today is the third Sunday of Epiphany. Epiphany started on January 6th, and the prayer book calls that day, 'The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles'.

The word 'Manifest' tells us what Epiphany is about..

Manifest means: "Show plainly to eye or mind; be evidence of, prove; display, reveal itself"

The word 'Manifest' comes from Latin, whilst the Greek word for 'Manifest' is - Epiphanes.

The season of Epiphany is to do with making manifest. But making what manifest?

Epiphany is to do with making Christ manifest.

To "show plainly to eye or mind; be evidence of, prove; display, reveal" Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. Revealing Jesus as the Son of God.

Today, we are at the start of John's gospel. The wedding at Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine, is the first of Jesus' miracles in John's gospel. John describes it as 'the first of Jesus' signs'. John's gospel tells us about seven signs, or miracles. Seven signs which point to Jesus as the Christ.

In case you are wondering:

"What are the seven signs in John's gospel?"

They are, in chapters 1 to 12:

Water into Wine:

Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum

Healing the paralytic at Bethesda

Feeding the 5000

Jesus walking on water

Healing the man blind from birth

The raising of Lazarus

Seven signs, in effect seven Epiphanies which "show plainly to eye or mind; be evidence of, prove; display, reveal" Jesus as the Christ. As the chosen one of God.

But there are other Epiphanies, still to come in John's gospel.

Jesus, nailed to a cross on Calvary. Was that an Epiphany?

I wonder what Jesus' disciples thought then? Where was the triumphant Jesus who had entered Jerusalem less than a week before on Palm Sunday. Where was the manifestation of Christ, the Messiah, now?

But that wasn't the end, there was to be another Epiphany. They were to see the resurrected Christ - the Christ who had been laid in a borrowed tomb - they were to see him back among them, speaking and eating with them.

The Resurrection was the real Epiphany - the greatest and the most important manifestation of Jesus as the Christ.

But that is jumping ahead. Today, we are at the start of John's gospel looking at the first of those signs.

In John's gospel, you often have the feeling that there is more meaning behind the text than the actual words are saying. That there are hidden depths to John's gospel. If only you could get behind the words, John is telling us something much deeper and more profound than the words which are actually written on the page.

Today's epistle reading has an intriguing link to today's gospel. The same apostle John wrote both the gospel of John, and the book of Revelation. The gospel is about a wedding at Cana, where Jesus is a guest. Revelation is about a wedding in heaven, where Jesus is the bridegroom, and we are the invited guests. Indeed, as Christ's church we are the bride of Christ.

The miracle at Cana involved Jesus taking something very ordinary. Water is one of the most ordinary things around. Something which we all take for granted. At Cana, Jesus took ordinary water and changed it into something extraordinary.

But he didn't do it on his own - there were other people involved. And without them, he couldn't have performed this miracle. And that is generally true of Jesus' other miracles.

There were other people involved and they all had something in common. They all had faith.

Faith is a common thread which runs through both the Epiphanies of Christ and his miracles. The wise men had faith. They followed their star and they had faith that the baby they found was the king that they were looking for.

Faith was an essential part of many of Jesus' healing miracles.

The last verse of our reading today says, 'and his disciples put their faith in him'. But that was after the miracle.

Jesus' disciples had been with him for less than three days, and John tells us, that up to this time they hadn't "put their faith in him".

At Cana, the first person to show that they had faith in Jesus, was Mary, his mother, when she said to Jesus, "They have no wine".

John doesn't tell us quite what Mary expected Him to do, but Jesus seems to have clearly understood her meaning from his reply: "“Woman, why do you involve me?” “My hour has not yet come.”"

That has been interpreted as a mild rebuke to Mary, or perhaps a disclaimer, but despite that "His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

We aren't told why Jesus' mother, Mary, and Jesus and his disciples were invited to this wedding at Cana, but it has been suggested there might have been a close family connection, and that Mary had some authority or position at the wedding. Not only was she concerned that they had run out of wine, but she also asked Jesus to intervene.

And Jesus, as an obedient Jewish son, told the servants to fill the jars with water.

There were six stone jars, each holding 20-30 gallons of water.

That's somewhere between 120 and 180 gallons of water.

I would imagine it took some time to fill those six jars from the nearest well.

The servants' real act of faith was when Jesus said, "draw some out and take it to the steward of the feast".

I wonder what you or I would have done. We'd seen the jars filled with water, and now Jesus tells us take some to the steward of the feast, who is expecting wine, not water. If he'd tasted it and said, "This is water", that could have been more than my job was worth. But they did as Jesus told them.

When those servants saw that the water had been turned into wine, that must have been an encounter with Jesus, which they remembered for the rest of their lives.

That was also a lot of wine, 120 - 180 gallons. It must have ended up as a very happy wedding celebration, with no chance of running out of wine again.

John tells us in a very matter of fact way, that as a result of this miracle, his disciples put their faith in him. But it must have been a life-changing moment for Jesus' disciples. Up to now they had been following a charismatic itinerant preacher, they had only known for two or three days. Now they saw him in a new light. This was no ordinary preacher or prophet. Jesus could turn water into wine. Who was this man they were following?

Jesus could take the ordinary, the mundane, and turn it into something extra-ordinary. And that is what happened to his disciples. Until they met Jesus, they had been ordinary working men, mostly fishermen, with ordinary mundane jobs and ordinary lives. But now all that was to change.

Now they were Jesus' disciples and Jesus was to change them, just as he had changed the water into wine.

At Cana, Jesus manifested his glory. After his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus's glory was to be manifest through his disciples when they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

They didn't yet know it, but they were to continue Jesus' ministry after his death, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they were to lead his church.

I feel sure that if Jesus had told them that, from the beginning, they would not have been able to believe it. They might even have changed their mind about following Jesus.

I wonder if I had known when I first became a disciple of Jesus, some 30 years ago, that one day I would be here preaching to you in this church, would I have thought again about the consequences of following Jesus.

But Jesus is in the business of changing lives.
Jesus is changing us through his Holy Spirit.

St. Paul says: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

Jesus can take each of us, ordinary as we are, and change each one of us into something extra-ordinary. Just as Jesus needed those first disciples to continue his work after he had gone, now he needs **us** to reveal his glory, God's glory, in the world.

We may not look or feel as though **we** could reveal God's glory in the world. But Paul tells us that "we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us".

Like the water in the clay jars at Cana, Jesus can transform us, as He fills us with the the new wine of the Holy Spirit.

Like Mary, and the servants, and Jesus' disciples, we need to trust him, to have faith in him. Not a huge amount of faith, but enough to say, "Yes, Jesus, I trust you".

The gospels are full of people who put their trust in Jesus and were changed forever. And Jesus still does that today.

When we take that first step of faith, Jesus can transform us, just as he transformed the water and made it into wine.

John is the only gospel writer who tells us his purpose for writing his gospel

In his epilogue, chapter 20, John tells us, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

John's gospel is the gospel of faith.

It is only through faith in Jesus, that we have life in his name.

Let us pray ...

Lord Jesus, You turned the water into wine.
Transform our lives, as we put our faith in you,
that the world might see your glory, revealed through us. **Amen**

Peter Strutt 21st January, 2018