

The Church's prayer for Sunday 16th January

Eternal Lord,
our beginning and our end:
bring us with the whole creation
to your glory, hidden through past ages
and made known
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Bible Readings and Reflection for Sunday 16th January

A reading from Isaiah 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet,
till her vindication shines out like the dawn,
her salvation like a blazing torch.

²The nations will see your vindication,
and all kings your glory;
you will be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.

³You will be a crown of splendour in the LORD's hand,
a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

⁴No longer will they call you Deserted,
or name your land Desolate.

But you will be called Hephzibah,
and your land Beulah;
for the LORD will take delight in you,
and your land will be married.

⁵As a young man marries a young woman,
so will your Builder marry you;
as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,
so will your God rejoice over you.

A Gospel reading from John 2:1-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."



⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”

They did so, ⁹ 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 ¹⁰ 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.”

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

A reflection from Revd Claire Robertson, Lead Minister for Barton, Coton, Harlton and Haslingfield

In “The Brothers Karamazov”, Dostoevsky's great novel, a young man, called Alyosha, who had been intending to become a monk, is told instead by his beloved mentor, to go out into the world and live like Christ among the people. At first, the young man is very sad to hear this advice. However, as he reads the story of the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee he starts to embrace his true vocation with joy: to go into the world and live like Christ among the people.

Some Christians are called to a life of prayer in an enclosed order but most of us are called to go out into the world that we might share the transforming love of Jesus that way. We need to share this joy, that walking with Jesus brings by meeting people where they are in community.

So now let us go to John's Gospel to look at how Jesus' transforming presence is at work in the community in this story. John's was the last of the four gospels to be written, and has a mystical quality. The author chooses certain events in the life of Jesus, not only to enable us to believe that Jesus is Son of Man and Son of God, but also to bring us into relationship with God.

The wedding feast at Cana is not recorded by Matthew, Mark or Luke but for John, this event where Jesus turns water into wine, has a deep significance. An abundance of wine is seen in the Jewish scriptures as a feature of the messianic age to come. This sign that Jesus gave at Cana, signifies that the longed for saviour or Messiah of God's people has arrived - the messianic age has indeed come.



We are told in John's Gospel that this was the first sign, or miracle, that Jesus performed, and it was not performed in the synagogue or the Temple in Jerusalem, but at a wedding feast. This is a reminder to us all that how we participate in our community is an essential part of being disciples of Jesus.

If we read the previous chapter in John's Gospel we find that over the past few days Jesus has invited five people to be his disciples. They will be sent out to the farthest corners of the world to spread the gospel. These people are Andrew, Peter, Philip, Bartholomew and one other disciple who is not named but may well be the writer of the gospel. Jesus needs to train them to preach the good news. We might think that he would take them away to teach them, or even send them away to do a course at theological college. But instead the first thing he does is to take them with him to a wedding feast to teach them how to celebrate love and community.

Jesus has come to reveal, strengthen and deepen love. Being part of a wedding feast where a couple entrust themselves to each other for life in the sight of God and their community is a great way to do that. Participating in the joy of others is an essential part of what it means to follow Christ.

Marriage is also used as a symbol in the bible of God's relationship with his people as we heard in our first reading from the Book of Isaiah.

Mary, the mother of Jesus is at the wedding feast at Cana. The gospel writer states "There was a wedding feast in Cana and the mother of Jesus was there." Then he adds almost as an after thought "Jesus and his disciples had also been invited".

Being introduced before Jesus and his disciples is significant and implies that she was there as helper rather than a guest.

In the middle of this celebration there is a crisis. The wine has run out. This would be bad enough if the wedding feast lasted a mere day but in first century Palestine a wedding feast lasted a week.

Mary, immediately goes to Jesus with the problem.

She says: "They have no more wine."

Mary's behaviour here is a masterclass in prayer. She tells Jesus the situation immediately but does not tell him what to do about it...

His reply "Woman, why are you involving me?" sounds as if it is a refusal to act but Mary continues to trust that Jesus will intervene. We know this because she then goes to the servants and says:

“Do whatever he tells you.”

The servants may not be aware of Jesus’ power as this is at the beginning of his ministry. Cana is some miles from Nazareth where Jesus grew up and also some miles from Capernaum where Jesus has just moved. But Mary knows her son’s extraordinary gifts and his compassion for the poor. She knows that he wishes to participate in people’s struggles as well as their celebrations.

Because the servants know and trust Mary they follow Jesus’ instructions when she tells them “Do whatever he tells you”. We all have friends or family who don’t know Jesus’ love, compassion and power but who know and trust us. When they come to us asking for help in a situation perhaps we can ask them if they would like us to pray with them, or for them, as Mary did.

The instructions that Jesus gave the servants are quite time consuming – it takes a long time to fill up 100 litre jars which would have been about the size of one of our wheelie bins with jugs of water. The instructions are also potentially embarrassing – taking what appears to be water to the master of the banquet. But nevertheless the servants follow Jesus’ instructions and the result is an extravagantly generous answer to prayer.

So this week may we all be aware of the abundance of God’s love for each one of us and of the way God answers prayer changing water into wine in our own lives and in our village communities. Amen