

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 19 January 2025 - The Second Sunday of Epiphany

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Isaiah 62.1-5; Psalm 36.5-10; I Corinthians 12.1-11; John 2.1-11

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Steven Rothwell, Curate Training Officer and Training Incumbent

It was bad news for the wedding guests in Cana when the wine ran out. Jesus steps up and enacts his first miracle. This miracle story seems to brim with invitation to metaphorical interpretation. It is a story that just cannot be taken at face value. At least not whilst you are sober! Maybe that is the whole point. This is not a story for sober judgement.

Back then a wedding was like a street party that could go on for days. Running out of wine in the middle of it was a social disaster. I read somewhere that running out of wine during a wedding back then was grounds for a lawsuit!

Jesus' mother said to him, "They don't have any wine" and he responds: Woman, what does that have to do with me? My time hasn't come yet.

There's so much going on in this short exchange.

The wine has run out; Jesus says what's that got to do with me?

But Mary won't let go. She tells the caterers Do whatever he tells you. A smart move on her part. She puts Jesus in one of those awkward spots where he's going to look like foolish if he doesn't do something.

Whenever we read about Jesus' miracles its worth remembering that

Jesus is not there at our beck and call to perform miraculous acts but when he does its usually to reveal Gods glory. Theologians have asserted this water into wine episode as just as significant as healing people, for it contains some of the essential elements of what Jesus was about: salvation, grace and transformation.

Salvation because the wedding feast becomes a symbol of Gods kingdom; the water is representative of Jewish ritual and purification; the wine represents a new promise. Whilst Jesus brings the salvation of the Jews, salvation is for the whole world.

Grace because it is God's grace that offers the salvation. We can't demand it; it's a gift. And it comes in abundance for Jesus does not make an adequate amount of wine but a huge quantity; and good wine at that!

And transformation: that's what the whole story is about - the alchemy of one thing becoming another, of the ordinary becoming extra-ordinary. God's gift of love is both

purifying and intoxicating. It's an insight into how the world is, both ordinary and extraordinary.

The first 12 chapters of John's gospel have been referred to as the Book of Signs (cf C.H. Dodd). The suggestion is that Jesus does not so much perform miracles to be marvelled at, but in fact created signs of what may come, signs of Gods glory, signs of the extraordinary gift of Gods love.

What are we to believe about this story? That God cares enough about a random wedding to turn water into wine, but either can't or won't do anything about any of the horrors that are happening across the world today?

The Bible is full of people asking that question. For example: Job complains If I cry "Violence!" I'm not answered; I shout - but there is no justice (Job 19.7). Psalm 22 - the words Jesus spoke from the cross - begs: My God! My God, why have you left me all alone? . . . My God, I cry out during the day, but you don't answer. The prophet Habakkuk accused God: Lord, how long will I call for help, and you not listen? (Hab. 1.1).

There are responses – that God is there in the suffering, and we can always turn back to God no matter how lost we may become, but I'm still left feeling slightly dissatisfied. I have to acknowledge God's ways are not our ways.

The story of the water into wine is a sign that reveals how God works in the world. Maybe what we're supposed to do with this story: consider how God works, not when God works.

John doesn't spend much time focusing on the miracle itself. He just wants us to know that it happened. That somehow, between the servants drawing the water from the jars and it reaching the lips of the headwaiter, it became wine. The emphasis in the story is on the willingness of Jesus' mother to speak up when she sees a problem. And on servants who listen to what Jesus says. And on vessels being filled to the brim and sharing what they've been filled with.

Somewhere in there - John doesn't tell us when or how - a miracle occurs. The water becomes wine.

Maybe the question isn't Why isn't God showing up and putting things right but How does God empower people to respond to the needs of the world?

The miracle of the water-into-wine is about how God lovingly empowers the church to be vessels of grace and truth in the world. When we are filled to the brim. When we keep our eyes open and speak up. In that process God works miracles, perhaps even greater miracles than water into wine.

They occur in the ordinary and the extra-ordinary occasions in our lives. In the meetings with ordinary people, in those encounters with others who give us a glimmer of light. And in those extra-ordinary happenings when we feel that the spirit is moving, that something divine is changing things.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

God of wedding parties and new wine, of love and laughter, dancing and singing, we give thanks for the times when we can celebrate all your good gifts.

And we pause to pray for those among your worldwide family who today may be feeling left out in the cold.

Bless those people who are drawn to Christ and new life. May their journeys bring them to discover Christ anew in the people they share their faith with.

Bless the church, that abundant love may flow in our prayers and our prayers flow into generous words and deeds.

Bless the many folk who are caught in vicious circles of violence and can see no way to escape. We pray for hope for all people who seek quality and value in their lives.

Bless those among your children whose every waking hour is spent in pain, and whose sleep is restless. We pray for Christ's healing touch to make a difference.

Bless those folk who with much trembling, hand their lives over to you this day. May they find faith and courage for the days to come.

In the name of the Christ who makes all things new. **Amen**

For an idea for a children's-focussed talk see <https://dskidsermons.com/2013/01/08/january-20th-2013-dollar-store-magic-trick-ball-and-vase/>

Suggested hymns/songs

All Hail the Power of Jesus Name

At the Name of Jesus

Christ from whom all Blessings Flow

Christ is Made the Sure Foundation

Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies - Wesley

For the Beauty of the Earth

How Great is our God

In Christ there is no East or West

Let all the World in Every Corner Sing

Lord Who at Cana's Wedding Feast

The Church's One Foundation

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- reflectionary.org – lectionary-based resources
- engageworship – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)