



Sunday 24th January 2021

Epiphany 3 - Morning Worship

Welcome

The Greeting

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.

All Let us recognise his presence with us.

As God's people we have gathered:

All let us worship him together.

Hymn 59 *Blessed assurance*

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory
divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His
blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day
long.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day
long.*

Perfect submission, perfect
delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on
my sight;
Angels descending, bring from
above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

This is my story...

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and
blest;
Watching and waiting, looking
above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in
His love.

This my story...

Opening activity *from ordinary to extraordinary*

Confession

Leader God shows his love for us in that,
while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Let us then show our love for him by confessing our sins in
penitence and faith.

Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Against you, you only have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.

Christ, have mercy.

All **Christ, have mercy.**

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution *(we are reminded that God forgives all who repent)*

Leader Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen**

Collect *(Prayer for the day)*

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the
wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your
heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your
mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is
alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and for ever.

Amen

This time @Connect group

Hymn 396 *Just as I am*

Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to
thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,

to thee, whose blood can cleanse
each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse,
relieve;

because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Bible readings

John 2:1-11 – Claire Lee, All Souls'

¹On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."

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

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

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

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

They did so, ⁹and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰and 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."

¹¹This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Revelation 19:6-10 – Andy Holcombe, St Mark's

⁶Then 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.

⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

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

⁸Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

⁹Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God."

¹⁰At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to

the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Sermon – Jonathan

The life and soul of the party

"It was the happiest day of my life, the day I gladly took Esther as my bride. We had known each other since we were children, both growing up in Cana. Our parents were friends so we were delighted when they 'suggested' that we marry each other. We didn't have much choice, but Esther was a lovely girl and I could have done much worse!

The whole village attended the wedding as well as our extended families and some friends from neighbouring villages, so it was the usual large gathering, one of those bright days for everyone in the midst of Roman occupation. We were quite stressed beforehand, making sure everything was well organised, because the reputation of our families was at stake. Our friends Joel and Anna were married last month and everyone in the village had said what a wonderful party theirs was and we didn't want to bring shame on our families.

It was all going so well, until I sensed there was some unrest. The music and dancing suddenly stopped and people began to mutter to each other. What was happening? I saw the master of the banquet looking concerned, gesticulating wildly and someone came over to me and told me that the wine had run out! Thoughts rushed through my head. What a disaster, the party still has many hours to run. Who didn't order enough wine? Who's been drinking all the wine? How are people going to have fun without any more wine? What is everyone going to think of us and our families? This is going to bring bad luck on our marriage.

Then out of the corner of my eye I noticed Jesus and his mother having a serious discussion. Jesus was from Nazareth, a short distance away, and he was gaining a reputation as a wise teacher and gathering disciples. I saw some of the servants taking large water jars away and it looked like someone was taking charge so I left them to it. The music started up again and I began to relax.

The next thing I knew the master of the banquet came over with a cup of wine in his hand and took me to one side. He said quietly 'I've done plenty of these weddings and usually the best wine is served first to impress everyone and then when everyone is a little merry and doesn't care any more what they drink, the cheaper wine is served. But you have done it

the other way round. I thought we'd run out, but one of your guests, Jesus, gave some instructions to the servants and they brought out this choice wine.'

I was a little confused, I didn't know about any choice wine, so I asked one of the servants what had happened. He replied: 'When someone said the wine had run out Jesus' mother told us to do whatever Jesus said. She said it in such an authoritative way that we felt we should do so, even though Jesus wasn't the master of the banquet. So when he told us to fill six of those huge ceremonial washing jars full of water, although it sounded strange, we hurried off and did so. When we came back we put them down in front of Jesus. He then told us to draw some out and give it to the master of the banquet to drink. As we did so we noticed it didn't look like the water we put in them and the master confirmed it by telling us it tasted like the finest of wines. I don't know what happened, we are all stunned. And then the master came over to you.'

I dismissed the servant and thought about everything I had heard. I was amazed and delighted, because for an awful moment I thought our special day and our families' reputations would be tarnished and that our marriage would be cursed with bad luck. I don't know what happened, but I'll have to look out for this Jesus of Nazareth, he's clearly someone special."

In this season of Epiphany we have been seeing how Jesus is slowly being revealed as the son of God and Messiah, through the visit of the wise men, his baptism, the calling of the first disciples and today his first recorded miracle, albeit a reluctant one. This wedding at Cana reveals much about Jesus, the life and soul of this party, and I want to briefly highlight three aspects:

1. Jesus likes a party.

Jesus can come across as very serious in the gospels as he tackles big issues of justice and righteousness, love and power, so many people think of him, and the Christian faith, as good, but boring. Whereas the reality is that Jesus was incredibly social and loved to eat, drink and party. He was even accused, as he says in Matthew 11:19, of being "a glutton and a drunkard" because he had a reputation of enjoying dining out and parties. In Luke 5:33 the Pharisees and teachers of the law compared the praying and fasting of John the Baptist's disciples with his own disciples who were "eating and drinking" to which Jesus

replied “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?” Jesus’ time on earth was a time for celebration.

A number of his parables are about weddings and banquets and the image in the reading from Revelation 19 describes heaven as a magnificent wedding feast. God made this world full of good things to enjoy and heaven will be even better.

At the wedding in Cana when the wine ran out, and no doubt people were a little merry, Jesus didn’t rant about the evils of alcohol and say something like “well they’ll have to drink water and sober up!” There may be a number of reasons why he turned the water into wine, and he is not advocating drunkenness, but I’m sure in part he wanted the joy of the party to continue.

2. Jesus revealed his compassion

The gospels show how compassionate Jesus was in the healings of lepers, of blind and lame people; in the feeding of the 5000 and in the hunger people had for his teaching. But I believe, as we saw in my retelling of the events, this act of turning water into wine at the wedding was an act of compassion for the poor couple and their families who would have had their special day and their reputation ruined and who would have interpreted it as a curse on their marriage.

Compassion was probably the reason his mother called him to one side when the wine ran out, so it ran in the family. In fact Jesus’ compassion ran so deep that he intervened even when reluctant to do so because he didn’t feel it was the right time to start the miraculous side of his ministry.

This shows me that Jesus’ compassion is not just for the big issues like disability or loss of a loved one or injustice or the marginalised, but is also for the smaller things like the ruining of a special day or a reputation. Jesus cares about the mundane and ordinary in our lives, his compassion is broad and deep. So nothing is too small to bring before him in prayer, he cares for every aspect of our lives and has compassion on our feelings.

I know during this period of lockdown many people are feeling very low and depressed, and some even feel guilty feeling this way because they know they have it much better than many others. But Jesus understands our feelings and wants us to bring them before him honestly and surround us with his love and compassion.

3. Jesus transforms the ordinary to the special

One of the highlights of this miracle for me is that Jesus didn't just turn the water into wine, amazing though that was, he turned it to the finest wine. Of course in the world of the miraculous it was probably no harder for Jesus to turn it into a Châteauneuf-du-Pape than a Merlot. But this miracle was indicative of Jesus' ministry. By turning ordinary, common H²O, into the finest wine he was revealing the transformative power of the gospel to change each of us from ordinary to extraordinary through the power of the Holy Spirit as we saw in the many characters from Acts of the Apostles we looked at last summer.

Jesus wants the best for us, but he also wants us to be the best we can be, to realise our full potential as loved, forgiven children of God who can bear witness to God's power to transform each human from ordinary sinner to forgiven saint. Saints who, full of the Holy Spirit, united as the church of Christ can transform our society, one person at a time, with His love.

I've titled this sermon the "Life and soul of the party", because that is what Jesus was at that wedding. I don't know that he was the best dancer there, or told the funniest jokes, though he may have held everyone in the palm of his hand with his conversation, but he brought life to what threatened to be a dying party and brought soul with his compassion on the bride and groom.

He wants to be the life and soul of the parties of our lives, if we invite him to come in. And he will be the life and soul of that eternal heavenly banquet that he promises to all those who trust in him.

Hymn Our God (Is greater)

Water You turned into wine, opened the eyes of the blind
there's no one like You, none like You!
Into the darkness You shine, out of the ashes we rise
there's no one like You, none like You!

*Our God is greater, our God is stronger
God, You are higher than any other
Our God is Healer, awesome in power
Our God! Our God!*

Into the darkness You shine, out of the ashes we rise
there's no one like You, none like You!

Our God is greater . . . (repeat)

And if our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?
And if our God is with us, then what could stand against?
And if our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?
And if our God is with us, then what could stand against?
Then what could stand against?

Our God is greater . . . (repeat)

And if our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?
And if our God is with us, then what could stand against?
And if our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?
And if our God is with us, then what could stand against?
Then what could stand against?

Our God is greater . . . (repeat)

Creed *(We stand to declare our faith)*

All **We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from
Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one
Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For
us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was
incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was
made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered
death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the
Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right
hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers ~ Mick Moorse

This morning we shall be looking back and seeing how the Lord has helped us, then look forward in confidence praying for those who help in some way.

Let's think back to remember occasions when we have been conscious of the Lord's help.

We gratefully acknowledge that You are the eternal one and God for evermore. We give thanks for the ways You have helped and kept us through this year of uncertainty and difficulty. Often that help has come through people, family members, friends, neighbours or strangers. We remember them now Lord . . . and thank you for them. Asking that you will bless them, just as they were a blessing to us.

The current situation demands that we should help and encourage others wherever possible.

Heavenly Father we look ahead and recognise that we too may be of help and encouragement to others. Help us to see when we can meet the need others have, help us to be encouragers. May we always be responsive to Your spirits prompting.

Looking ahead we pray for the vaccination programme.

First of all we give a heartfelt thanks for the provision of the vaccines. In record time too! We also pray for the programme itself, praying especially for the decision makers, help them we pray to make right decisions, so that many benefit.

Thank you too for the volunteers who are making this vast programme workable, may they know Your help and blessing.

As we give thanks for the NHS we pray for all who play a part in it's functioning. Help them we pray as they help others especially draw near when they are under pressure or tired. Protect them we pray.

Lastly we remember those we know who are facing illness or some other difficulty Peter & Eileen Bliss, Patrick Chapman, John Hunter. Watch over them and strengthen them we pray.

Merciful Father accept these prayers in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Leader So we pray with confidence as our Saviour taught us
All **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**



**your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Notices

Hymn 617 *Stand up stand up for Jesus*

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
Ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner,
It must not suffer loss:
From vict'ry unto vict'ry
His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished
And Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
The trumpet call obey;
Forth to the mighty conflict
In this His glorious day.
Ye that are men, now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger.
And strength to strength oppose.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you;
Ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the Gospel armor,
And, watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long:
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song;
To him that overcometh
A crown of life shall be;
He, with the King of glory,
Shall reign eternally.

Blessing

Leader May the peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

Leader Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All **In the name of Christ. Amen.**