

Sermon 24 January 2021

The Wedding at Cana: Revelation 19: 6-10 and John 2:1-11

Towards the end of 2019 my family all received 'save the day' emails from my niece for her wedding in October 2020. Things were scaled down a bit by the time invitations were sent out, and I was delighted to have made the cut and to be in the 30 people she was then allowed. By the time September came she had to make the hard choice to scale things down even further and had to uninvite 15 people. I didn't make that cut. But the sun shone, her original plan to walk through the village from home to the church still happened, with bridesmaids keeping a social distance and my brother, bursting with pride, bringing up the rear and holding two bouquets. People in the village came to their garden gates to wish her well. She and her husband had not postponed the wedding, as for them the important thing was actually getting married. Instead of a big reception there was lunch in the village pub, and they would all have had to work very hard to run out of wine.

But despite the small numbers, there was a similarity with the wedding at Cana. It was a village affair. She was married within a community who had known her since she was born. And she and her husband had chosen to exchange vows making promises to each other and to God.

And the reading from Revelation tells of John of Patmos' vision of another wedding. A wedding between Christ, the bridegroom, and his church, the whole people of God, the bride. It takes place within a mighty thunder of heavenly choirs. Words that are familiar to us from Handel's Messiah – Hallelujah for the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth.

So, what is the connection between the gospel and Revelation? Apart from a wedding?

There's a clue at the beginning of the gospel reading. John writes, 'on the third day' there was a wedding at Cana. The gospel was written in hindsight. And what connection do we make with those words – on the third day? John is pointing us towards Jesus' resurrection. For on the third day he rose, and appeared, first to Mary and then to the disciples. Right at the beginning of John's gospel, the writer is laying out the ground work. And John of Patmos' Revelation is a vision of the risen Jesus, joining with those who follow him.

Jesus blesses the wedding guests and the host with a super abundance of wine – far more than they need. And in the vision, John of Patmos hears the angel say that God will bless those who follow Jesus – who, in the words of the vision, are invited to the wedding feast.

Turning water into wine is a sign, a sign that God is at work in Jesus. Amos and Joel in the Old Testament use the image of mountains flowing with sweet wine as being a sign of God's presence in the world. It's a sign that helps the disciples believe in him.

It is also a sign that Jesus is interested in the commonplace things in life. He works so that the host is not shamed by having run out of wine. And interestingly, he does so in a way that only the servants at the feast know what he has done. Does that point to the message in the gospels that Jesus has come to the least rather than to the powerful?

Does it point to today? So many of us feel we are simply surviving, being glad that we have simply got through another day. Can we see through that feeling, to know that God is at work

in Jesus? That this first sign of an outpouring of super abundance, can today, as the collect said, enable the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine into our hearts. Do we feel that Jesus is turning the ordinary into the extraordinary?

I was amused and a bit mystified when I first heard that younger users of Whatsapp thought that my generation were being rude when we finished our text/post with a full stop. To me it just seemed like the natural end to a sentence. But I've come to realise that if I leave it out, it enables, opens up, the possibility of a continuing conversation.

And that's what I think the combination of our two passages this morning are doing. Jesus doesn't put a full stop at the end of anything he does. Conversations with him are open ended, they are continuing. He blesses us today as much as he did those at the wedding at Cana. The passages introduce us to new life, new wine and new hope, whatever our situation.

Jesus' resurrection puts him alive and at large in the world. He comes alongside us. He is contemporary, not history. We carry forward the words of those who walked with him. And we look to him for reassurance, for encouragement.

We will have a time of healing prayer later on. We can pray for God to de-stress our minds to help heal our bodies. For our minds and bodies are mutually dependent, they have a functional unity. We can pray for restoration of relationships. For an acceptance of changing life circumstances. We can pray for courage and strength and hope. All these things are included within our prayer that God will bring us healing and wholeness.

Last Sunday I was taken back to a place of sadness and a cloud sat on my shoulder. One morning in the week I was prompted to read the psalms set for morning prayer. Psalm 147 says that the Lord heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. And that he takes pleasure in those who hope in his steadfast love. That lightened my darkness.

May we each know God's healing touch. Know the blessing of superabundant love. In the words of Malcolm Guite taken from his sonnet on the wedding of Cana, may we, amidst our daily living, know the spring of love, the fountain of all forgiving. Which flows when we need it, rich abundant free, better than some waters of outer weeping.

Amen

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