

**Materials for Virtual Worship - Sunday, 24 January 2021
The Third Sunday of Epiphany**

**Please use this material with the order of service for
Virtual Worship for Christmas & Epiphany 2020-2021**

Collects for The Baptism of Christ

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.

or

God of all mercy,
your Son proclaimed good news to the poor,
release to the captives,
and freedom to the oppressed:
anoint us with your Holy Spirit
and set all your people free
to praise you in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings

Genesis 14:17-20

Abram Blessed by Melchizedek

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said,
'Blessed be Abram by God Most High,

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maker of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!
And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.

John 2:1-11

The Wedding at Cana

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Reflection

John 2:1-11 Change

The Wedding at Cana

Interestingly John is the only gospel writer to include this miracle, the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. The 'wine miracle' as it is sometimes called is a crucial account for understanding the rest of Jesus' ministry that follows.

Weddings in Jesus' time were week-long festivals; banquets would be prepared for many guests, often the whole town would be invited. But

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to run out of wine was more than embarrassing, it broke the unwritten laws of hospitality. But as we shall see Jesus responded to a heartfelt need.

It's possible that Mary had been asked to do some of the organizing, because it was she who started panicking about the lack of wine. According to one of the apocryphal gospels Mary was actually a sister of the bridegroom's mother. Mary found Jesus and said, "they have no more wine."

What did Mary think Jesus would do? Or was she simply turning in desperation to her son for any suggestions he might have. Did Mary think the miracle would reveal him clearly as the Messiah?

What should Jesus do? Should he do nothing and watch the party dissolve into disappointment and humiliation, or should he reveal something of his true nature.

"My time has not yet come" he said to his mother, but that didn't stop him from acting. It didn't stop Jesus from showing compassion, kindness, sympathy and understanding to ordinary people on an extraordinary day. It didn't stop him from making a public demonstration of his power through the first of what would be many miraculous signs.

Mary turns to Jesus, and somehow knows that if he wants to, Jesus could do something. She tells the folk serving at table to just do whatever he tells them to do. She had confidence in Jesus, confidence that whatever he would do it was going to be the right thing.

There's symbolism within this story that wouldn't be lost on the early readers.

There were six stone water jars. According to the Jews seven is the complete and perfect number, six is the number which is incomplete and imperfect. In John's symbolism it seems likely that those 6 water jars stood for all the imperfections of the Jewish Law. Jesus came to do away with all the imperfections and instead put in place the new wine of the gospel of Grace. There is a contrast between Jesus and the

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Torah, an old empty symbol of ritual, changed with an abundant sense of a new age and new life. Miracles/signs have a deeper significance than just the action itself. Especially here in John's gospel, the old flat water of Judaism is turned into the sparkling new wine of the gospel. Water jars, ones set aside for a special purpose, their contents transformed from ordinary to extraordinary.

One commentator says the central issue of this narrative is not the miracle changing water into wine but rather the amazing thing that happens when he who is the bridegroom (the real genuine) bridegroom attends the wedding and transforms it. John tells his readers from the start who the real bridegroom is. Christ comes as the heavenly bridegroom and points us to the marriage feast in the kingdom of God. The purpose to bring people to faith in Him, those who have eyes to see.

John was writing this story down some 70 years after Jesus was crucified. He'd had a lot of time to meditate on the life of Jesus and the effect that it had had on the people around him.

On this day the disciples were changed v 11 "This the first miraculous sign Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed His glory and the disciples put their faith in him." A real demonstration of God's power. A significant moment, a day when the disciple saw Jesus' ministry and mission was only just beginning.

What we have here is not an account of something that Jesus did in a small village in Galilee one day at the start of his ministry on earth but a vivid picture of something that he continues to do today. Without the presence of Jesus in our lives they are stale, flat, uninteresting. With Jesus life becomes different and exciting. Jesus continues to turn water into wine, but the water jars he transforms are bodies and souls. For lives that were incomplete he brings wholeness.

It's a reminder about change and transformation, when the everyday cares and worries of life seem to get on top of us and so easily distract our thoughts. Those are the moments that we need to remember Mary

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confidently and instinctively knew who to turn to, into whose hands to place that burden.

As we come to him with open hands and open hearts, we have to be honest enough to go to him, and hand it over to him totally and completely just like Mary was able to do. Only then can he take those water jars and turn water into wine. Make the changes. Transform the mundane into something richer.

This wine miracle reminds us of our mundane lives, ordinary situations and how they can become extraordinary. The new is always better than the old. John clearly wants us to see that Jesus not only turned 6 water jars of water into the finest wine but with Jesus he can turn the imperfect to perfect. Bringing a new quality into our lives. Jesus can and does change and transform lives and situations. What is it you would like Christ to change? Make it your prayer this week, with open hands and hearts. Jesus will respond to your heart felt need just as he did at the wedding in Cana.

Cathy Watts

I, the Lord of sea and sky

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

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Refrain

Here I am, Lord.

Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord,

if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Daniel Schutte

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Be Still for the presence of the Lord

1. Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy One is here
Come bow before Him now
With reverence and fear
In Him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy One is here

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2. Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire
With splendour He is crowned
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant King of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around

3. Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal
To minister His grace
No work too hard for Him
In faith receive from Him
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place

David J Evans
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The Lord's my Shepherd (Psalm 23)

1. The Lord's my Shepherd I'll not want
He makes me lie in pastures green
He leads me by the still still waters
His goodness restores my soul

Refrain

*And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in You alone
For Your endless mercy follows me
Your goodness will lead me home*

2. He guides my ways in righteousness
And He anoints my head with oil
And my cup it overflows with joy
I feast on His pure delights

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3. And though I walk the darkest path
I will not fear the evil one
For You are with me
And Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know

Stuart Townend

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Closing Prayer

Almighty Father,
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world:
may your people,
illumined by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed
to the ends of the earth;
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.