

Scripture, Reflection, Church news and up-to-date info

19th January 2025

Epiphany 2

The third week of January in the Christian calendar.

This week

St Barnabas -
Eucharist
9:30 am

Holy Trinity -
Eucharist
11 am

Bible Study (St
Barnabas)
Wednesday
10 am

Worship on
Wednesday

Holy Trinity
(WOW)

7 pm



Collect

The grace of God has dawned upon the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own. Let us confess our sins. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth

Old Testament 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.
The 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.
You will be a crown of splendour in the Lord's
hand,
a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
No 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.
As 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.

Epistle - 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

The Gospel - John 2: 1-11

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

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

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

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

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

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

They did so, 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 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."

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.

Reflection

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 God's 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 extraordinary. 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 God's glory, signs of the extraordinary gift of God's 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.

Notices

5/03/2025 **Ash Wednesday** 7pm Holy trinity Waterhead

Useful Contacts

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