

St. John the Divine
Epiphany 2 January 16th 2022

Isaiah 62.1-5; John 2.1-11

Now this, the very first miracle – or sign, as the miracles are always referred to in John's Gospel – this very first sign of God's glory was quite different from any other sign or miracle that followed. It's one of the events which, I think, is always observed every year at the beginning of Epiphany. It actually has much more coverage than some of the healing miracles, where we're simply told that "Jesus healed a few people". And yet, in this first of Jesus' signs, He didn't actually heal anybody. You might go to Hamleys toy store in Regent Street just before Christmas, and see similar actions happening.

I remember watching a young Curate giving a sermon on the Wedding in Cana. She had a row of children in front of her, and she had two vessels. One was a clear glass jug of plain water; the other was an earthenware container, supposedly empty. She poured the water into the earthenware container, and then poured the contents back into the glass jug. Hey presto! Diluted Ribena! The children were impressed – the adults smirked. This miracle – sign – was different because Jesus was doing some good with it. Those in charge of the wedding would have been totally embarrassed if the wine had run out completely. Clearly, they weren't flush with riches, otherwise they wouldn't have had to stretch the wine to breaking point. And that perhaps gives us some idea of the circles in which Jesus' family moved. They weren't wealthy, and this reflected through Jesus' life and ministry.

There are also some very human touches. Jesus attended the wedding with His Mother. His father, Joseph, had probably died, and Jesus was in a role of responsibility towards His Mother. The disciples were also invited. So they were an established and accepted part of Jesus' life. The wine runs out, and Mary is privy to this information, which it seems most people aren't. So the Holy family was probably quite intimate guests of the wedding couple. And then, when the wine runs out, Mary appeals to Jesus. His response is one of frustration. He hadn't come to this wedding to perform a trick. "My hour has not yet come," He said.

Had He not yet received instruction from the Father?

And surely the Father wouldn't expect Him to get involved in something like this! But even though Jesus objected in the presence of His Mother, she knew He would – and could – do something to put the situation right. Jesus did so, and those guests who were still sober enough to tell the

difference, tasted better wine at the end of the celebration than they did at the beginning. It's an unusual account when we think of the other events in Jesus' life. And what message does it give us today? Well, I think it brings us into Christ' ministry in a much more relevant way than we might first imagine.

When I was ten or eleven years old, I was asked to take a part in a school play. Now, I have to admit, I wasn't a popular child. There are certain criteria you have to meet to be popular among Junior School classmates, and I have to say, I didn't meet any of them. On this occasion, I was to be a lady sitting at an easel painting a picture. The curtain opened on the first scene – my only scene – and there I was, paintbrush in hand, ready to say my few lines. And the whole School – possibly without exception – groaned because I was sitting before them! I didn't take a lot of notice. I was used to being unpopular. It would probably have put me off my stroke if they had cheered. And so, I ploughed into my few lines in a fairly "ham" fashion. The play continued; I had done my bit. And I was walking upstairs when a boy of seven or eight came towards me. "Were you the one saying those lines as the curtain opened on the first scene?" he asked. "Ye - es," I replied, expecting a venomous response. "I thought you were really good!" he said.

And **that's** what I think we can take away from Christ's miracle of the wedding in Cana! Of course, we can't change water into wine. But what Jesus was doing was a kindness to that wedding couple and their families. His healing miracles weren't so much a kindness. They were turning people's lives around – redressing the balance: changing poverty in the crippled beggar to life and respectability; and all of it to the glory of God! We can't do things like that in our normal, everyday lives ... with our normal, everyday skills. But we can change people's lives in our attitude towards them ... by spreading a little love, acceptance and generosity.

The first reading, the Old Testament Lesson, is a very appropriate match for the wedding in Cana, because we hear – figuratively speaking – of "a young man" marrying "a young woman", and "the bridegroom" rejoicing "over the bride". But the Lord is very much there in the mix, because it also says: "so shall your builder marry you" – your builder being the Lord, And also, "the Lord delights in you." These words aren't just for a young couple to be married, although we would certainly wish blessings to be showered upon them. But these words of blessing are for all of us – all of

us out there doing the Lord's work; and spreading His love, kindness and generosity as far as our presence can take it.

The last words in our Gospel passage tell us that "Jesus did this, the first of His signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed His glory". Christ's work had begun with a more unusual sign – or miracle – than we were yet to hear of. But that just makes room for the many Christian acts that **we** might perform that seem unusual – even unexceptional – and yet, we know – and Christ knows – it's the Lord's work we're doing!

Amen