

John 2 :1 to 11

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

⁴ "Woman,[Ⓜ] why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

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

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

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

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

They did so,⁹ 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 aside¹⁰ 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."

¹¹ 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.

Weddings, Actually

We do like a good love story, and a happy ending, and a wedding. Shakespeare knew what side his bread was buttered on — his comedies all end in weddings, usually lots of them. *Much ado about nothing*, *A midsummer night's dream*, and *Twelfth night* are just three that illustrate that we so like the story of people getting over their obstacles and getting together and living happily ever after. Jane Austen knew this too, of course, and manages multiple weddings at the end of most of her novels.

God knows this as well, of course, and in our readings we have two weddings, one on earth and one in heaven.

The one on earth was in Cana in Galilee. It was just a wedding, of no one particularly important, but Jesus and his mother and his friends were invited (you can't have too many people at these sorts of things). So many came, there was such fun, so much pleasure that the wine ran out. And with relatively little prompting Jesus fixed the situation, transforming six stone jars of water into wine. Something like another thousand bottles of wine. And of course, the best yet.

On the worldly level, Jesus saved the day — the groom and the bride and dad all saved face (or never knew there was a problem) and it was just a fantastic day. I think this in itself is an important point. So much can be made, at times, of Jesus the man of sorrows who bore the weight of our sin, that we can make too little of his being a man of joy, a real rejoicer in the joy and happiness of others. Please remember that Jesus delights in your happiness, and the happiness of people coming together in love.

On the spiritual level, of course, we know that this was not merely a miracle, but a sign — an indicator that all the riches of God's grace *so far* had nothing on what was coming through Jesus. You thought a covenant relationship with the living God was great? The new relationship formed through Jesus is *the best* of wines compared with the water of what has gone before!

Some people note that the water that was transformed was collected in jars that were used for ritual purification, a part of keeping Old Testament Law. So, out of the requirements of the Old Law comes something so much better. Make of that what you will.

If we leap into Revelation, we have skipped fourteen chapters, and all the worst of the weal and woe, trial and tribulation since last week's reading. The seven seals have been broken, the four horsemen come and gone, Babylon has been defeated, and what is left is — the Lamb, and the church. Time for a wedding!

And this is such an important point to make. The grand story arc of the Bible is that God makes humankind with freewill and continues to love us all so much that he exercises a grand plan — that we, collectively, might be so transformed that in the end we still have our freewill, but freely choose only love, only goodness, only God's way — that we choose to fall in love with God, who always loved us. The only

worthy image or symbol for this is a grand wedding, between God and the church. God and his beloved truly united at last — together, and with one heart and mind.

Julian of Norwich says that God's intention was always that we should become part of the Trinity. Perhaps you can see what she's getting at in this image — if we, through Jesus, are perfected, then we will end up loving as God loves, wanting what God wants and acting as God would act. We become united in heart and mind and will with God, who, by the Holy Spirit is already in us.

We do like a wedding, and a happy ever after. God does too. His happy ever after is us loving him as he loves us.

Last week, in another church, but also in my written stuff, if you picked that up, I reflected that Revelation is a book of hope. It assures us, from the beginning that Jesus, the Lamb, has already won the victory. This later passage in Revelation 19 simply reassures us that after this victory the story does really play out to a majestic joyful ending — the obstacles of sin and wilfulness (on our part) have been dispensed with, and nothing stands between God and his church. Heaven and earth are renewed, all creation is saved. All is well, and there is a very big party — probably with excessive amounts of wine, too. Isn't that something for us to look forward to, and pray and work towards?

Amen. SDG.

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Next Sunday 28th We begin Worship at 9.30am with croissants and coffee after the service