

## John 2 1-11

### Water, Wine and Witness

It's usually about the end of the third week in January when most people begin to give up on their New Years resolutions – to be better / slimmer / fitter / less stressed / more sober. So, I did have a wry smile when I learnt that today's Gospel was Jesus turning water into wine – thinking that I could congratulate those of you still holding to your resolutions and remind us that our God is a God of abundance, who turns water into wine at weddings and suggest you go forth and enjoy yourselves. But of course, you know that God loves you without constraint, that He longs for us to step into the abundance of His love and live well. So, I'm not going to dwell on that today. Instead, I'm going to invite us to consider three questions:

1. Why does John include this miracle as the first of 7 miracles?
2. What's going on between Jesus and Mary?
3. Who sees what?

#### **Why does John include this miracle as the first of 7 miracles?**

In the penultimate chapter of John's gospel - Chapter 20 v30-31 - lies a bold statement which explains why John wrote his Gospel:

#### **The Purpose of John's Gospel**

<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe <sup>[b]</sup> that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John has written this Gospel - **his eyewitness account – so that we, two thousand years later may see what he saw and believe that Jesus is the Messiah and may live in that truth.** And, John only recorded a fraction of the 'signs' – Jesus performed. Signs for John means miracles that have a purpose beyond themselves – they tell us something about Jesus – they point to his divinity – and his Gospel is a combination of Jesus's teaching and these signs – curated so that we may see what John saw and believe like he did.

So, of all the signs that Jesus gave that He was the son of God – the turning of water into wine at this wedding in Cana, makes it into John's top 7. Why? Not just, I think because it was the first, **but also because of the truth and challenge within it.**

#### **What's going on between Jesus and Mary?**

So, Mary, Jesus, his brothers and his disciples are at a wedding. John doesn't tell us, but many scholars think the wedding involved member of Mary's family. Disaster strikes – the wine runs dry. Humiliation will follow – as the hosts have failed in their hospitality duties – and all anyone will talk about would be the wedding where the wine ran out. Mary, tells Jesus of the problem – and His answer - 'why are you involving me? – it's not yet my time' tells us a number of things:

1. If she thought the problem could be easily solved by sending a runner to get more wine from somewhere else Mary could have asked one of her other sons or one of Jesus' disciples. She didn't, she said to Jesus – they have run out of wine.
2. His answer – 'it's not yet my time' suggests a **shared understanding between mother and Son that He could intervene**, that He could prevent the forthcoming humiliation.
3. Running out of wine, particularly at a wedding is a shame. But it's a shame not a sin – it's not like some of the other miracles where sins are forgiven and healing is given.
4. **Mary ignored her son's answer** and simply told the servants to do whatever Jesus told them. And, so, Jesus talks to the servants.

### Who sees what?

Near to where this conversation between Jesus and Mary took place stood six earthen wear jugs used for ceremonial cleaning. I don't have time today to explore the significance of using ceremonial cleaning jugs for Jesus' first miracle, but you might like to reflect on it this coming week.

Jesus tells the servants to fill the jugs up to the brim, and once done to take some of the liquid to the master of the banquet. They did so, and verse 9

"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."

Jesus's first recorded miracle - it's about grace, it's about abundance, it's about making a joyful occasion even better – and the people who witness this life affirming gift, **first? Servants**. Not Kings and Queens, not the bride and groom, not the religious leaders. The servants. **Those at the bottom of the social hierarchy who do the jobs that no one else wants to do – they see first and they know.**

### What does this mean for us?

Whether you are drinking water or wine today remember to bear witness to the God that loves you so extravagantly that he wants only the best for you -and remember He is often found with the servants. The servants saw and they knew. Why?

Because Jesus is bringing in a new world order where the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, the orphans and widows cared for and strangers to our shores welcomed. Our job, our calling is to serve those people – those who need us most and amongst whom Jesus is often to be found. How we serve them will differ – all of us can pray and pray again. Some will give time and talent, some will give money, some will fight for social justice. And in this year where over 60 countries across the world have elections including some of the largest democracies, we should think about how our faith informs our politics and our social action. There's nothing in the rest of the Gospels or elsewhere in Scripture to suggest that Jesus ever lost His preference for the poor, the marginalised, those on the edge.

That's not a bad place for us to be, and to that end I'm keen to explore whether some of us might gather monthly to **reflect, pray and act** on some of the social issues of our time. I

don't have a fully formed plan, **just an invitation to come and explore** what might be possible. Some of our most astute commentators on issues are our young people, so I'd love for this to be a really inter-generation gathering. I don't have all the answers, but I do think we are called to be with the people Jesus chose to hang out with. If you want to be involved please talk to me or Hannah who is working on this with me after the service or email me in the week. We should, in this, as in all things, listen to Mary – and do what He tells us.  
Amen