

Second Sunday after Epiphany 17 Jan 2016

Isaiah 62: 1-5

Psalm 36: 5-10

1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

John 2:1-11

[Epiphany 2C January 17, 2016 Textweek](#)

In the first reading Isaiah speaks of marriage and of rejoicing as "*as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride*".

In the psalm, we have an abundance of water, not common tap water, but rather a "*drink from the river of your delights*" and mention also of the "*well of life*".

Next in the reading from Corinthians we hear of the activation of spiritual gifts and of the "*working of miracles*".

John, in today's gospel reading, has managed to weave all of these threads into the tapestry of the "*wedding in Cana of Galilee*".

Only when we fully appreciate that John is not documenting an actual event in the life of Jesus can we more fully enquire and explore what this complex tapestry reveals. In chapter 20 of John's gospel we are told that "*these [signs] are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*"

John is illustrating his understanding and appreciation of what Christ reveals to us all; and we can therefore approach the narrative not as we would a news bulletin, but more like we would unpack a dream, or perhaps as we might questioningly look at the announcement of a new scientific breakthrough.

We look into the gospel both for meaning, and for a reflection of our truest nature.

So let's stay with the picture, the tapestry that John has woven, looking closely at what has been included in the picture and wondering what significance the various components might represent.

"*On the third day*"; tells us that we looking at a narrative of resurrection, we are given an orientation to a new creation, and to seeing the world through the eyes of eternity and not through the blinkers of our ego-centric mortality.

We are then drawn into the scene of a wedding, "*a wedding in Cana of Galilee*" and here John weaves Isaiah into the picture. The bride and groom are not named, so like the early listeners we are left to wonder whose wedding is this?

And in that wondering, Isaiah brings us into the scene; "*For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you*".

And so we find ourselves in the dream, the marriage of humanity and divinity, creator and creature, the Word became flesh; "*and the two will become one flesh.*' So they are no longer two, but one flesh." [Mark 10:8]

What an amazing dream!

Next John tells us; "*and the mother of Jesus was there*"; this can only be fully appreciated when heard within the context of the continuing patriarchal Jewish tradition. When John asserts "*and the mother of Jesus was there*"; he offers a new and challenging perspective on the orthodox expectation that emphasises the 'God and Father' of all.

Significantly also, this is John's introducing us to Mary, here is her first mention in the gospel; and as we find in the narrative, she is given the first speaking part, and she has authority over Jesus.

Here we see a new, perhaps more true, balance in the Divine Word; male and female, Mary and Jesus, Bride and Groom; a new view of creation that is represented in the equality of oneness and a wholeness.

And now to the water: "*standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons*"; we are now looking at 681 litres of water, that's 908 bottles of wine, so we can forget the simplistic idea of helping out the wedding steward.

John is illustrating the movement from the old tradition of Jewish purification, life limited by legalistic faith, into an abundance of living that Christ has revealed.

Wine is the symbol we associated with Christ and John weaves into this picture the abundance that is found in drinking from "*the river of your delights*" and drawing from the "*well of life*".

Here John demonstrates an understanding of an enlightened and new worldview that Jesus has revealed; a movement beyond the traditions of the past and into a fullness that is our Christ-like life.

So with John's tapestry before us, what can we see for ourselves in "a wedding in Cana of Galilee"? How does this picture give insight and practical teaching to our lives here today?

"Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

Perhaps we need to start with believing in ourselves, for Christ reveals who we truly are.

In the second reading Paul speaks of the "working of miracles" as one of the "spiritual gifts" and together, as the Church, we have "varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit".

Here at St Paul's we have a variety that includes; "the utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge, faith, healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues."

And so it follows that together we are able to work miracles.

There is one stunningly important aspect to our giftedness; these gifts are not about you or me; and they are not for one or another; rather, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

And that is where we find John has woven Paul's enlightened insight into his tapestry.

There is no gain, no desire, no posturing by the Jesus in the narrative, rather the words of a mother asking a son, a Divine dialogue in which one encourages the working of miracles through another.

What does this tell us?

It says that if we use our gifts for the common good; if we look beyond the confines and expectations of past traditions; if we embrace and feel the embrace of Divine love; then we will work miracles.

Peter Humphris