

Morning Praise @ Home 23rd January 2022



Opening prayer

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Confession Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

cf Psalm 51

Absolution May the Father of all mercies cleanse *us* from *our* sins, and restore *us* in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible Readings **Psalm 19: 1 – 6** **John 2: 1 – 11**

Reflection from Alan

We all love a wedding don't we? I have heard it said, usually by other clergy, that Weddings are accidents waiting to happen. I have certainly experienced one or two situations where accidents were narrowly avoided. And one where it wasn't as the nervous page boy dropped a ring from its cushion so it fell almost into the grating for the heating pipe in front of the dais. Awkward moments.

If you think our weddings can be elaborate affairs it's nothing compared with the lengthy wedding celebrations in Jesus' time that could go on for a week or more. And in the reading from John as the story unfolds the wedding celebration in Cana seems to match what often happens.

Something goes wrong. Not even half way into the wedding feast and the wine runs out. As is often the case with wedding situations Mother steps in. Mary knows exactly who to go to to save the day. The exchange between mother and son here is remarkable, even off-putting, and is rich with theological significance. Here, at the onset of Jesus' ministry recorded in John, Jesus is insistent that his time has yet to come. The lack of wine is no more his business than any other guest at the wedding.

Jesus is at first reluctant to go public in this moment with his first miraculous sign. When his mother alerts Jesus to the wine shortage, Jesus says, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come" (2:4). Commentators point out that calling his mother "woman" here is not as offensive sounding in the original Greek, but Jesus is still not thrilled to be thrust into action.

And yet, his mother's instructions to the stewards, "Do whatever he tells you," seem to indicate a trust that something is going to happen. And indeed something does.

"Do whatever he tells you" v 5. This is the part of the story I want to focus on. In many ways, these words sum up what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We simply need to do what Jesus tells us.

"Doing whatever Jesus tells you" might seem a good motto for any Christian disciple in any situation.

Unlike the popular “What would Jesus do?” question, “Do whatever Jesus tells you” recognises that we are not Jesus, that we can’t always know – let alone do – what Jesus would have done, and that we are followers of Jesus, not Jesus himself.

I may not be able to turn water into wine, but I can fill some empty jars with water if told to do so. I leave it to Jesus to do the rest. “Doing whatever Jesus tells you” leaves the difficult decisions and miracle working to Jesus and leaves you and me only with the need to cultivate that crucial and much neglected Christian virtue of obedience.

To those of you of a younger generation obedience is not a very cool word to use perhaps but nevertheless it is what we are expected to be in our path of discipleship. In many ways, these words sum up what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We simply need to do what Jesus tells us.

To summarise: In today’s gospel reading there is a crisis at a wedding where the bride and bridegroom are threatened with embarrassment at not having enough wine for their guests. Mary has faith that obedience to her son is the best course of action and issues instructions that the servants should do whatever Jesus tells them. The servants are obedient and become witnesses to a miracle. Water is turned into wine. The crisis is averted. The disciples believe in Jesus.

All four gospels provide evidence that Jesus seems to have had a habit of issuing even more difficult instructions. Here are just some of them.

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Lk. 9:23)

If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me. (Matt. 19:21)

If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also (Matt. 5:39)

Committing yourself to doing whatever Jesus tells you is a risky business. Filling water jars is one thing. Selling everything is quite another. Of course, Jesus didn’t ask everyone to sell everything and we need to distinguish between what Jesus asks all of his disciples to do and what applies only to some. But this leads us on to the second problem. How do I know what Jesus wants me to do?

Some things are quite clear.

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Matt. 22:37-39)

The call of Jesus to discipleship appears time and time again in his ministry. A ministry that is first publicly revealed at a wedding in Cana.

Whatever it is, that desire deep within us, shaped and formed by the presence of God within us, is worth paying attention to. We need to listen to it critically and carefully. We easily fool ourselves about what we want – about what God wants. But, the better we get to know ourselves and God, the clearer our vocation becomes – the more doing whatever Jesus tells us becomes less about mere obedience to instructions and more about being who we most truly are.

The transformation from water to wine is of course meant by John to signify the effect that Jesus can have, can still have today on people’s lives. He came, as he says later, that we might have life in all its fullness. You might want to pray through this story with your own failures and disappointments in mind – remembering that transformation only came when someone took Mary’s words seriously. “Do whatever he tells you”. **Amen.**

Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world? **We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of intercession led by Philip

Father we pray for this church as we continue to discuss the vacancy with the Diocese and as we begin the process of looking for a new vicar.

It is easy to be disheartened by the length of time the Diocese approval and recruitment process seems to take, but help us Lord to recognise that all things are subject to your control and timing.

You know who will ultimately replace Cathy as our vicar so we pray Father that you will be with them as they consider the potential role. Give them the confidence & the knowledge that they are being led by your Spirit. Prepare them for the role and the challenges that might lie ahead for so many small rural parishes.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Lord we ask for your continued support as we navigate the period of vacancy. Help all who give their time, their energy and their enthusiasm to ensure that this church continues to function as a testament to your love in our community. Lord, in the absence of an ordained minister of our own at this time, we thank all who continue to serve you as part of the laity – we recognise that the word laity means ‘of the people’ and whilst not ordained, many here do feel they have a ministry to serve you in the church and in the wider community.

Father we thank you for all who serve you in their own way, we acknowledge that theirs is also a ministry. We ask that you use this period of vacancy to encourage us all to join together and unite in a sense of service to you. That we might also ask ourselves what more we can do & how we can do it in your name.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the situation in Ukraine. We ask for peace and the rule of law.

We continue to pray for those suffering from famine in Afghanistan and in East Africa.

We pray for those affected by the volcanic eruption off Tonga and the associated Tsunami.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Lord we bring to you any we may know who are sick, or who are suffering loneliness, or bereavement, or depression.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are scared of the prospect of rising food and energy bills, who may have to decide between heating their home and spending on other basic items.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

The Lord's Prayer As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Closing prayer

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**