

John 2:1-11 – 9.30 am

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts be acceptable to you O Lord or strength and our redeemer Amen.

Chapter 1 of John's gospel deals with John's introduction of Jesus, in those poetic verses declaring that before the world was even created, Jesus, the word of God, already existed.

St. John also tells us of John the Baptist's role of preparing the Jews for the coming of Jesus', and of his introduction of Jesus to the Jews.

Chapter 1, also deals with Jesus' preparations for his earthly mission by his selection of his twelve disciples who he would prepare to continue his work when he had gone.

Chapter 2 of John's gospel launches straight into Jesus' public ministry of portraying the true nature of God and of his infinite love for the entire human race, which is the theme throughout John's gospel, climaxing with Jesus' death, his rising from death and his ascension into heaven.

Indeed it was on the third day after Jesus had selected Nathanael, the last of his twelve disciples, that he performed his first miracle, which John calls 'signs', at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Right at the beginning, Jesus was very determined and focused; he did not start his ministry with a private conference with just his disciples, explaining the job for which they had just been selected.

No! Jesus went straight in with an amazing miraculous sign in front of hundreds of people, including his mother, turning something like 180 gallons of water into the best wine they had ever tasted.

Now of course most weddings are memorable, but none would have been more memorable than the one where Jesus performed his first sign, which is why we have such a detailed account of it in the Bible.

John calls Jesus' miracles, “signs” and an old definition of a sign is, “A wonder with a meaning in it, or a spiritual truth,” and this one, changing water into wine, is the first of Jesus' signs.

John has no problem writing about the supernatural, in this case about Jesus' signs, which he sees slightly differently to the writers of the other three gospels.

Whereas Matthew Mark and Luke see Jesus' miracles as acts of the power of God, which of course they are, and so too are John's signs, but John is concerned to see beyond the miracles to their significance or purpose.

John sees them as signposts pointing, in this case to the glory of God. John also, very helpfully, reveals the purpose of the sign at the end of our reading.

John wrote in the last verse of our reading, “Jesus did this, the first of his signs in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory”; and of course in so doing revealed the glory of God.

And as I've said before, that's why John calls them signs rather than miracles, because they point towards something, in this case, as I've said, towards the glory of God.

The wedding wine occurrence was also the time when the disciples, who may have been thinking to themselves, why did we agree to follow this man, that they realised that they had done the right thing, because we are told in verse 11, “And his disciples believed in him”.

That statement also defines the overall purpose of Jesus' signs, which can be found in John chapter 20 verse 31 where John wrote, “These, that is the signs, are written down that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name”

Clearly Jesus' sign of turning water into wine had revealed, to the relatively new disciples, a great truth, that when you have Jesus in your life, you will begin to notice the difference that he makes.

Good things that you thought previously to be impossible start happening; it may not be as dramatic as turning water into wine, but having Christ in our lives does make a huge difference.

I have certainly experienced the difference that Jesus has made in my life and I'm sure you have experienced the same in your lives as well.

Now since in verse 3, Mary was concerned about the wine running out, it may well have been that the wedding may have been of a relation, and that Mary had some responsibility in its organisation.

The absence of Joseph in the story, who could have already died, and consequently Jesus, being the eldest son, would have made him the main wage earner of the family, working as a carpenter in Nazareth.

And Mary sharing her dilemma with Jesus by saying, "They have no wine", was possibly because Mary had come to rely on Jesus in the absence of her husband.

Jesus addressing Mary as 'woman' and his hesitation in responding to her dilemma by saying, "what concern is that to you or to me" seems harsh.

Jesus loved his mother, and even when dying on the cross thought of her welfare before his own by giving her to John to love and look after as his own.

Jesus' note of correction of Mary; "What concern is that to you and to me" is significant. This rebuke marks a change in their relationship.

Although Jesus will always be her son, and she will love him only as a mother can, nevertheless their relationship must be revised in the light of Jesus' ministry.

The same sort of revision takes place when a son or daughter gets married, because now their new families must come first.

I've also noticed that my relationship with my three daughters has changed in other ways as well, I am now more reliant on them than they are of me, our relationship has changed.

In the same way Jesus' mother must now take second place in her son's life; Mary must now leave Jesus in the hands of God who now has first claim on Jesus' affections.

It's only when Mary was prepared to adjust to this new relationship that her plea for Jesus to help her in her dilemma was accepted.

Mary approached Jesus as his mother, and Jesus corrects her by saying, "What concern is that to you and to me".

But when Mary responds in faith, when she says, "Do what ever he tells you", knowing that Jesus would always do his best for her, her faith in him is honoured by his miraculous sign.

The same applies to us; when we respond to Jesus in faith he will also honour us.

Now John, in recording the wedding in Cana, was writing to the Jews and non-Jews alike.

To the Jews it was to introduce himself as the Messiah and to a new understanding of the true nature of God.

Now according to Jewish custom, seven is the complete and perfect number and six is unfinished and therefore imperfect.

Therefore the six stone water pots stand for all the imperfections of the Jewish law.

Jesus came to do away with the imperfections of the law, that is, righteousness through works represented by the six water jars; and to put in their place the perfect new wine of righteousness through faith, the gospel of Christ.

But John was also writing to Greek Gentiles, because the Christian message is for everyone, and to the Greeks he is saying; You have many gods, which indeed they did, but how many of your god's have managed to turn water into wine.

But you may say, but yes, that's fine for the Greeks, because they needed to know that there is only one God, but we all know there is only one God so how does this aspect of the story speak to us today.

For us the issue isn't how many gods we think there are, but what we worship, and what we think the things we worship will do for us.

There's no doubt at all that a great number of people worship money. Why else do some people who are paid exceedingly high salaries still insist on millions of pounds in bonuses?

It's because they believe that large sums of money is going to give them everything they desire from this life.

Why is our society so materialistic, it's because we believe that ownership of material things will bring us the happiness that nothing else can bring, but Jesus is saying no, these things won't ultimately bring you happiness?

Indeed, Jesus is going further than just telling us that we are wasting our time worshipping money or material things which in the end will let us down.

Because when everything of this world is stripped away including human dignity, there is still one thing that remains that cannot be destroyed, nor let us down, and that is God's love.

Jesus is telling us that God alone is the source of all love, love that will never let us down.

He is saying that through love, we will experience the ultimate gift, the infinite grace of God, as demonstrated by the vast amount of water turned into wine, much more than could possibly be desired.

In the last verse of our reading John writes, Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Why did they believe in him, because having Jesus in their lives was making a difference, and they recognised the difference, because now their lives were exciting, meaningful and full of purpose, and this is only the very beginning of their relationship.

As we sit let us pray,

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, increase in us a true and lively faith to your praise and glory.

Amen

We are now going to have a period of reflection and to help us we were all given a slip of paper with some questions

Some questions for reflection.

What does Jesus' sign of turning water into wine tell us about Jesus?

What effect has the change in your relationship with your parents or children had on you?

How do/have material things let us down?

How has having Jesus in your life made a difference to you?