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May our feet walk in your way Lord; may our hands do your work Lord, may our minds think of you Lord; may our hearts be filled with your love Lord and may my mouth speak your words Lord. Amen

I have many fond memories from my wedding day and not all of them are prompted by photos; but what about the preparations for the wedding day? Traditionally, the bride's parents take responsibility and I do remember talking with my parents about the catering: not a big sit-down affair, as it would be for many today, but a heavily laden buffet table in the church hall. I also remember discussions about guests. I don't remember numbers, but looking at the photos there were many friends as well as family. What I learnt was that there was a feud in my family and both parties needed to be invited and it was hoped that they would behave; fortunately they did. I also remember a discussion about the wine: how many bottles would be needed and I can still see those bottles of Black Tower Riesling. Not that I had any as I was driving immediately after the reception and it was my father's car! Importantly, it didn't run out as there were bottles left over, but I also suspect that the guests were quite abstemious in their consumption!

The wedding that we have heard about in our Gospel reading today is a much larger affair. The customs of weddings at this time are not fully known but it is likely that the whole of the village or small town would have been invited and that the celebration would have continued for up to a week. The wedding is taking place in Cana three days after the calling of Nathanael, as spoken about in last week's service. Cana was also Nathanael's home town. Mary, Jesus' mother, is there as a guest, as are Jesus and the four disciples that he has called so far. At this time Jesus is not well known and he is there as an ordinary person amongst ordinary people with no special position and no expectations placed on him.

It is His mother who alerts Jesus to the fact that the wine has run out. This would be a serious issue for the host as hospitality to your guests was very important. Jesus sounds abrupt when he addresses His mother as 'woman'. This may not be acceptable in our culture, but at that time it was the correct term of address with no insult attached to it. He also asks why involve him and states that His time has not yet come. This probably means that he is not ready to reveal to everyone that he is God's Son or to start His public ministry. Mary doesn't actually ask Jesus to do anything about the lack of wine; she just tells him the situation. Nevertheless, Mary then tells the servants to follow His instructions. She knows him better than anyone.

The stone water jars were to provide the water for purification and between them they held between 120 and 180 gallons. Jewish law states (in Leviticus 11 - 15) that various items need to be purified. Fire and water are the two acceptable methods of purification; if a substance could pass through fire that was how it should be purified and whatever couldn't should be purified with water. This includes people and they would need to purify themselves before they could eat. The volume of water suggests there were a lot of guests.

Jesus simply tells the servants to fill the water jars with water and then tells them to draw water from the jar and take it to the master of the banquet. Jesus does not say any special words or make any signs. The change between water and wine just happens. Jesus knows God's power to transform things. Only Jesus and the servants know what has happened and no one else is told. In a way, this shows Jesus as a man for all people as he identifies as easily with the servants as he does with His friends.

The servants take the wine to the master of the banquet and he is impressed by the wine's quality but, of course, has no idea where it has come from. Then he speaks with the bridegroom and talks about how most people serve the best wine first and a poorer quality wine later, but that this groom has saved the best until now. What does this say about God? This wine has come from God and it shows God's abundance and generosity; He pours out His blessings on those who ask. Just as His power changed the water into wine, so His power can change our lives for the better. Ephesians 1 v 6 - 8 talks about how God is so generous to us; generous enough to give His Son so that our sins can be forgiven. His generosity is born out of love and wanting us to have the best.

Today's Gospel reading concludes by saying that this is the first of Jesus' miraculous signs. John includes seven miracles in his Gospel but always calls them signs. This is because they point beyond themselves, both to confirm Jesus' identity as the Son of God and to reveal the invisible actions of the Father through the Son. John sees the signs as pointing to something specific: Jesus' death and resurrection and what His followers will gain through them. We can see the symbolism here in the stone water jars for the purification rites which represent the old agreement with God, the old agreement as followed by the Jews of the Old Testament; and then the superior wine the water jars yield after Jesus' intervention representing the new relationship people can have with God through Jesus.

The passage from Revelation talks of the wedding of the Lamb. The imagery here expresses the relationship between God and His people, which is rooted in the prophetic teachings of the Old Testament. God clearly loves His people and wants the best for them. There is much rejoicing at the thought of this marriage, the bride is ready. Here the bride stands for humankind; as His people, are we personally ready for God? Those who are invited to the marriage feast are blessed. The feast after the wedding is the most joyous and eagerly awaited occasion, just as the prospect of God transforming our lives is for us. This morning's Psalm, written about 1000 years before Jesus is all about the blessedness of the godly man, how those who are with God are well rewarded.

The title of the sermon is the transforming power of God and the changing of the water into wine shows exactly what this transforming power of God is. This transforming power can affect individuals, communities and whole societies. I believe we have to start with ourselves and be sure that our lives are God driven and that we allow God to work in our lives bringing about changes. Allowing God to change us and for us to know His grace means we become more loving, compassionate and forgiving towards others, which in turn spills into our community and then to society as a whole. It is a simplistic view, but all change has to start somewhere. It is only through God, through our following His teachings in the Bible and trying to act on the thought 'what would Jesus do?' that our spirit, soul and body can be transformed. When our hearts and minds are transformed by the Holy Spirit and we show God's power in all that we do, others will see it and want some of our transformed life. The truly amazing thing is that it is in our weakness that God's power flourishes, the wedding host

fell short and ran out of wine; Jesus used the host's weakness to provide a superior product, a better wine. Jesus can work through our weaknesses too to help us show God's glory.

The transforming power of God is available to all of us if we open our hearts to God and let Him work through us. I know that life is so much better with God, do you?

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Let's spend a few moments thinking quietly about

Where could I let God work in my life so that I can experience His transforming power?

Is there someone I can reach out to and share God's transforming power?

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Lord you showed us through Jesus turning the water into wine that sometimes it is the quiet and unobtrusive actions that bring about the best results. Help us to allow you to work in our lives that we may share God's transforming power with those around us. Amen