

The Methodist Church

Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit

Worship at Home
Sunday January 16th 2022

Welcome

Welcome to our Service at Home this week. Today we will be looking at Jesus' first sign. Turning the water into wine. May God speak to each of us today.

Opening Prayer

Lord God, open our hearts today and every day to hear your voice and learn your ways

Hymn StF 608

<https://youtu.be/u2Qhk8zl7Jo>

1 All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

2 He bids us build each other up;
and gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope,
we hand in hand go on.

3 The gift which he on one bestows
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

4 Even now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;
concentred all, through Jesus' name,
in perfect harmony.

5 We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

6 And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
What height of rapture shall we know
When round his throne we meet.

Prayers

Father, as we come before you today in the name of Jesus, we declare that you are God and it is our desire to see you and to know your power and your glory. Father, your love is greater than life and we will glorify you. We will praise you as long as we live and in your name we will lift up our hands. you have given us all we need and we will give you praise.

You are the king of heaven and earth. All of heaven sings of your glory. You do wonders on earth and in heaven and we see the work of your hands in all that is

Forgive us Lord if we have stumbled as we us as we strive to live our lives in honour of you and strengthen us to walk your ways more closely.

We have gathered in fellowship in your presence. As we continue today's service, wherever we are and in whatever way we are meeting, alone or in a group, on the internet or in our homes, we desire to feel your great power and light. Let us encounter you in a new way and bless us in our lives. May we find everlasting joy through you.

Amen

Reading

John Ch.2 vs. 1 - 11

The First Sign: Turning Water into Wine

On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding as well. When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother told Him, "They don't have any wine."

"What has this concern of yours to do with Me, woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come."

"Do whatever He tells you," His mother told the servants.

Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained 20 or 30 gallons.

"Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. Then He

said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant." And they did.

When the chief servant tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from — though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom and told him, "Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now."

Jesus performed this first sign in Cana of Galilee. He displayed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

Reflection

The passage for today is a bit of a challenge and has come in for much critique from both believer and non-believer.

This action of Jesus only occurs in John's gospel and is not mentioned in any other of the Gospels, even though they cover the same time of Jesus life.

It seems on the face of it that Jesus was pushed into this miracle by his mother, Mary, and this miracle can seem to be a bit flamboyant, compared to the Healings and the other miracles Jesus did during his life on Earth, perhaps even a bit frivolous.

So how do we look at today's reading through the lens of God's teaching for us?

No doubt it is a happy story and it has a happy ending. But of course, it must be much more than that. John thought so. So much, that he wanted it to be in his telling of Jesus life, and we need to remember that when John wrote he wanted to show us the divinity of Jesus. Emphasising both the 'signs' of Jesus fulfilling Old Testament prophesy and how Jesus is the promise of God for all mankind. So John included this for a reason. To show us something of Jesus.

If we just scratch the surface of this story, then we have a simple family occasion. One familiar to many readers.

Mary had been invited to a wedding at Cana of Galilee, it is even possible that Mary had been asked to do some of the organising, because it was she who

noticed the lack of wine. If she was a guest, she would probably have not been aware of the problem at all, even the head waiter didn't seem to know that there was a problem.

Jesus is also invited, which suggest this was an intimate family affair, especially if we accept that Mary was part of the organising group too, and not just Jesus, but Jesus brings five disciples with him. Now, these disciples have only been around for a few days, three if we read John's timeline of chapter 1 right. So another 5 mouths to feed, another 5 cups of wine to find.

Of course, for such a happy occasion it was so vital that everything went like clockwork.

And then Mary realised that the wine had run out. Perhaps the last of the goblets had been filled for a toast and returning to the area for food preparation it was seen that there was no more to take into the party.

It was such an important part of the festivities. "Without wine," said the Rabbis, "there is no joy!" To run out of such an important element of the feast was, to say the least, embarrassing for the couple and their families.

And so, Mary turns to her Son and tells him simply that. They have no wine.

So that's the context for the miracle.

Now we need to understand a few things, and perhaps turn some of our thinking on its head to get to the blessings of the message here.

First, look at the words Mary uses. "They have no wine" or "The wine has gone" There is no direct request made here. Of course, to our western way of thinking — why would you tell me this if you don't want me to do something about it? But we need to put ourselves in the middle east of that time.

Mary was simply stating a fact — there's no wine. If Jesus chooses to act, he could do, but it would not be an issue if he didn't either.

Secondly when Jesus uses "Woman" it sounds a bit harsh and formal to our ears, but he is not scolding, but lovingly

recognising her, no longer as his mother, but as a woman in her own right. He uses the same words as he hung on the cross when he pointed her to John. So this is not a scalding statement

Thirdly, there is a way to translate Jesus words as “We are on different paths now” perhaps a gentle, but firm reproach. A reminder that Jesus’ life is now targeted at the Cross. Then he says “My time has not yet come” acknowledging as he did many times, that his death, although soon was not yet.

And so, Jesus chose to act, he was not pushed into this, but he made the choice to perform a miracle.

Remember I said that there was a potential for embarrassment by running out of wine at a wedding?

I believe that Jesus, knowing this, was filled with compassion, as he so often was, and with that love for those whose day was about to be ruined he chose to bless this wedding with a miracle by providing for them a gift as rich and as significant for that couple as any healing or catch of fish or feeding a crowd.

We see Jesus more than simply doing a miracle, but here we see Jesus showing compassion, kindness, sympathy and understanding to ordinary, everyday people on a special day. And showing at the same time both his Divinity and this Humanity.

And in this understanding of what seemingly is a simple story we can take real hope.

Jesus knows the dilemmas we get ourselves into, He knows how important things are to us and how they can affect us in the short and the long term.

He has compassion on those that welcome Him, as did the families at the party at Cana. In His humanity He knows and feels for us the same that we feel, and in His Divinity he will act for our good.

Mary knew this, and simply tells the folk serving at table to just do whatever Jesus tells them to do. She had confidence in Jesus, confidence to know that whatever he would do, it was going to be the right thing and so should we.

But we do have to be honest enough to go to Him and admit that maybe we've miscalculated, made mistakes, whatever the problem might be - and hand it over to him totally and completely just like Mary was able to do.

That's often the hardest part, the handing over. Natural inclinations are to hang in there, to hope it turns out all right and people may not notice that things are not as they should be.

But we must hand these things over, offer them to Jesus, as Mary did.

Only then can he take our waterpots and turn water into wine.

Amen

A Prayer of response

Lord I come to you and offer up my situation. Not expecting you to act on my behalf but hoping that you might look kindly on my situation and turn water into wine once again.

Amen.

Hymn StF156

<https://youtu.be/WKeaL2kM7Jk>

From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun,
I will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
Words of power, strong to save, that will never pass away,
I will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
For Your covenant is sure,
And on this I am secure—
I can stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

When I stumble and I sin, condemnation pressing in,
I will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
You are faithful to forgive that in freedom I might live,
So I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
Guilt to innocence restored,
You remember sins no more—
So I'll stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

When I'm faced with anguished choice, I will listen for Your voice,
And I'll stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
Through this dark and troubled land
You will guide me with Your hand

As I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
And You've promised to complete
Ev'ry work begun in me—
So I'll stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

Hope that lifts me from despair, love that
casts out ev'ry fear,
As I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
Not forsaken, not alone, for the Comforter
has come,
And I stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.
Grace sufficient, grace for me,
Grace for all who will believe—
We will stand on ev'ry promise of Your Word.

Stuart Townsend

Prayers of intercession

*In the times where you Pause listen for
the Spirit of God to guide your focus.*

Loving, caring and compassionate Lord.
You ask us to bring our prayers to you and
we do this now as we remember those
that are less fortunate and more needy
than ourselves.

We pray for those in areas of our world
where you are less known and even less
accepted.

Pause

We think about those who know you and
are working to bring about healing, relief
from suffering, company for the lonely and
food to the hungry.

Pause

We offer to you the people who represent
the less well off, the underrepresented
and put down as they campaign to those
in authority and seek to change minds to
bring about a fairer and more Godly world.

Pause

And we pray for ourselves, for our part in
the prayers that we have just made. Lord
may we have the courage, strength and
desire to take action when called by you.

Amen.

The Lords Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your
name.
Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on
earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us
from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours.
Now and for ever.

Amen.

Hymn StF 2

<https://youtu.be/UNp5zEmBSos>

Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Father of life,
Whose light fills the earth like the sun;
Come, tell of the wonders he's done
Great is the world He has made
Are the mysteries until
Is His measureless power of old
Come, come let us sing to our God

*To our God who is able
To strengthen us in His grace
Beyond all we imagine
Be all glory and praise
Be all praise*

Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Saviour of life,
Find the fullness of God in the Son;
Come, tell of the wonders He's done.
Wild is the mercy of Christ,
Is the richness of grace,
Is the unending life we embrace;
Come, come let us sing to our God.

Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Spirit of life,
Leading us in the way of the Son;
Come, tell of the wonders He's done.
Strong is the Spirit within,
Is the boldness to speak,
Is the power to run when we're weak;
Come, come let us sing to our God.

K&K Getty

Blessing

May you know that our God, who knows
you more than any other, walks with you
each and every day as you go into this
week.