

Sermon for 20th January 2019. The wedding at Cana.

Since the celebration at Christmas of Jesus birth, we have journeyed via the gospel readings with the wise men from the east to Bethlehem, then on to the Jordan River where Jesus was baptised by John. And today we are at Cana at the wedding celebration where we witness the first of 7 miracles in John's gospel.

I'm sure we all know the story well. As we have just heard, Jesus was attending a wedding with his mother when the host ran out of wine. At Mary's prodding Jesus "did something" and changed water into wine, so that their hosts could avoid the embarrassment of not being able to serve wine to their guests.

Now when we look closely at John's gospel we see that the miracle stories are a central focus of the narrative. The gospel writer uses each miraculous event as an effective teaching tool that reveals Jesus power to establish the impossible in practical everyday life experience and also to reveal deeper spiritual truths.

For example the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, in a very practical way fills many stomachs - And it also reveals the deeper meaning that Christ has the means, to feed the hungry souls of needy people regardless of the number.

The raising of Lazarus in the physical sense speaks about Lazarus' returning to life again to be with his sisters and his community, and it also speaks about Christ's voice of power that can reach those long dead to the ways of God in liberating ways and startle them into newness of spiritual life and being.

This method of revelatory teaching makes the power of Christ visible, in practical ways and transforming ways. Now with this in mind, we return to the Wedding at Cana, where in a practical sense Jesus saves the host from the embarrassment of running out of wine and in a deeper sense the story describes how Jesus enters people's troubles; how he suffices in every difficulty; how he enriches things for us, how he saves us from our insufficiency and how he celebrates love.

The union of marriage, abundance of wine, celebration and rejoicing are interwoven in this gospel reading and throughout the old and new testaments. Abundance of wine In the Old Testament was a sign that the Messianic time had arrived.

The prophet Amos uses the image of the mountains "dripping with sweet wine and the hills flowing with it "as a time that will herald the coming of the great Day of the lord.

In the reading from Isaiah today God breaks the silence of many years and Zions vindication bursts forth. Israel is restored to that joyful innocent age of long ago and the theme of Yahweh as spouse is repeated in this passage.

In the New Testament, in Luke's gospel Jesus uses the image of a wedding banquet for the kingdom of heaven in the parable of a marriage feast. In Mark's gospel Jesus likens himself to the bridegroom, and the church understands itself as his bride.

The vision and symbolism of the wedding at Cana in John's Gospel brings all of these images together and describes a celebration of life in love in him.

Now In the custom of the day the wedding feast was such an occasion that it could take up to 7 days to celebrate. Jesus, his mother, and the disciples were part of the joy where there was no doubt singing, laughter and wine.

I believe this imagery is a reminder that the religious life in a practical sense is not just "serious" business, doing good, learning theology, carrying out our duty, separating ourselves in a pious way. The heart of the way of Jesus is relationship, celebration and communion in the joy of love.

What we witness in the narrative of the wedding at Cana is the revelation of the Glory and love of God in Jesus through the first of the signs.

This is the whole point of the story – it is not so much about what was done as about who did it. The story points to Jesus – it reveals his Glory and his disciples believed in him. Through their belief they move on from their call in the first chapter, to a deeper way of faith that will ultimately transform them into the new wine of divine love.

So, as Jesus brings life to the wedding party when the wine runs out, so he comes to us with the superabundance of his grace to make all things new.

And today at All Saints we are to baptise Benjamin into this newness. Baptism is the gift of new birth into a life in Jesus Christ and a welcoming into the community of the faithful.

Today Benjamin will enter God's realm where, with Jesus, there is eternal hope in which all things, both practical and spiritual come together in oneness and are made possible.

The Lord be with you.