

Second Sunday after Epiphany, 17th January 2021

Haddington West with Garvald and Morham

Grace be with you and peace from God, our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ

“Arise, shine, for you light has come; and over you the glory of the Lord has dawned.” Is.60,1

Prayer -

Lord God, we come before you with praise and adoration. By Name you are the mysterious One, always and everywhere present. You make yourself known to us, yet shield us from the realization of your full splendour for we would be overwhelmed by your glory. We are sometimes able to trace your influence on our lives by looking back, but we cannot presume to know the ways in which your love will bless us for you are free to act as you will.

By nature you are gracious and compassionate. You know us all by name and your personal love has been declared to us and promised to us in baptism. We have become part of your distinctive people, the Church, and we enjoy your undeserved favour.

May your heavenly glory touch and transform our human nature so that we may be changed from glory into glory and enter that realm of wonder, love and praise which is without end; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen

We confess to you, almighty God, that we have run after passing pleasures and forfeited the gift of real joy. At times we have withdrawn from participation in the common family life of the Church, without realizing that such life is shared with you. We have not always heard or obeyed Christ implicitly, preferring our own inclinations to his promptings through the Holy Spirit. And so our lives have become tasteless.

We long for the royal wine of the kingdom, enjoyed in fellowship and obedience together. As we worship, may we know that we are forgiven; assure us of your continuing presence and patience with us: and grant us joy and peace within; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord, you were rich

1. Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
yet, for love's sake, became so poor;
leaving your throne in glad surrender,
sapphire-paved courts for stable floor:
Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
yet, for love's sake, became so poor.

2. You are our God beyond all praising,
yet, for love's sake, became a man;
stooping so low, but sinners raising
heavenwards, by your eternal plan:
you are our God, beyond all praising,
yet, for love's sake, became a man.

3. Lord, you are love beyond all telling,
Saviour and King, we worship you:
Emmanuel, within us dwelling,
make us and keep us pure and true:
Lord, you are love beyond all telling,
Saviour and King, we worship you.

Frank Houghton (1894-1972)

Jn.2,1-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'

'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from eighty to a hundred and twenty litres. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.' They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.'

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Dear friends

The miracles of Jesus were moments of unveiling – where it was unveiled that Jesus was 'Immanuel', God with us. Without such unveiling one could not believe and would not know that God was in Jesus, because all one would see would be a man. And one would not expect God in that man in a veiled way.

Such a faith – for faith it is – has, of course, always had its detractors, people who dismissed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Word made flesh. That was, as John tells us in the prologue to his gospel, the case with "his own". It carried on through the centuries. A well-known case of this in our own time, for instance, is the musical 'Jesus Christ Superstar', in which Mary Magdalene sings of an utterly exhausted Jesus who is unable any longer to cope with the need of the people coming to him: "He's a man, he's just a man." The message to those who look at this scene of Mary's protecting love for Jesus is: "Jesus is unique; but one can ask too much of him. And to believe that he is the Son of God who saves any who come to him, is not just to ask too much of him, it is also asking too much of ourselves. He's a man, he's just a man."

But is he? The events at the wedding in Cana unveil something that led those who could see to put their trust in him. So John says: "*What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*"

What did this unveiling present? Let us not overlook the relevance this has for us. Jesus' invitation to the wedding, far from being merely incidental, is meant to signal an invitation to you and me (to the reader) – an invitation to the unveiling of the Saviour, God in Christ.

Every unveiling encounters expectations. So the question must be, What do we expect here? Is it more of the same? More of the usual? Perhaps we do. And perhaps that is because we don't want anything other than the usual, it's where we are at home and what we are familiar with, it suits us; we like variety but only of the usual. And we want the same, just more of it and better. What we expect, then, is Jesus the good person, the high-minded moral teacher, a lovely and endearing character perhaps even a little divine, but a Saviour who reinforces the *usual*, namely that we can save ourselves (and do!), that it's up to us, that we are not lost to God and heaven and are not by nature – without redemption - deserving of wrath (Eph.2,3), that there are many ways by which one is saved; and if Jesus is to be accepted he is to be the kind of Saviour who lets us be the same, just better, and lets us have the same, just more of it.

But perhaps the reason we expect the unveiling of Jesus to be more of the same as what is already out there, is that we have given up desiring something better, something other, something new. And we think that Jesus will take his place among the usual suspects of religious systems and leaders that cannot effect deep change (like one of water turned into wine!).

But what is unveiled to us here, dear friends, is that if there is something that Jesus is not – it is more of the usual, more of the same! This is beautifully captured in the words of the master of the banquet to the bridegroom after tasting the new wine: *"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."* In other words, it was un-usual, and it was not at all what he expected.

Here is not more of the same, which it would be if Jesus was 'just a man'. Here, in this man, is God come to make things new and make them well, to deliver his people – all who believe – as he said he would - from the burden of evil, sin and death. For this is what water into new wine symbolises: Man's redemption, as a result not of his own striving but of God's saving act and power, so that God would have a people that are truly his own, a people that would know him and delight in him and through serving him would deliver the joy of love.

What 'Cana' unveils is that Jesus is God's saving act – not one for more of the same and not one for more of the usual, but the one who changes water into wine: Who receives sinners and justifies them, and does it not on condition but does it for them so that it be a thing of grace; who leaves no one unchanged who comes to him, because through forgiving them their sins on account of bearing them on the cross, he makes God's love known to their hearts and they have life, begin to trust and obey and have life eternal. Water into wine: Jesus God's saving act.

Dear friends, at the end of this unveiling in Cana the disciples, it is said, *believed in him*. This is important, because it tells us something of the way in which one comes under God's saving work, – by faith in him. Salvation, rescue, redemption through Jesus Christ, appropriating all he is and has done for you – it is by faith; change, from water to wine, is by faith.

An example of faith and what it does the disciples had there in Mary. She believed that Jesus could and would help, that it was right to bring the burden to him, and she also believed that Jesus 'word was then to be followed: 'Do whatever he tells you.' AMEN

We turn to Christ alone

1 We turn to Christ alone,
the Son of God divine,
to bow the knee before His throne,

to bear His name and sign;
to bear His name and sign
and walk the narrow way,
to make His love and glory known,
His word and will obey.

2 We turn from self and sin
in penitence and shame;
we trust, to make us clean within,
the power of Jesus' name;
the power of Jesus' name,
whose cross is strong to save,
who gave His life our life to win
from sin and death and grave.

3 We turn from every wrong,
from every evil way,

who in the Spirit's strength are strong,
as children of the day;
as children of the day
from dark to light we turn,
disciples who to Christ belong,
His way of life to learn.

4 We turn to Christ as Lord
who died and rose again,
as those whose hearts receive His word,
as subjects of His reign;
as subjects of His reign,
who calls His servants friends,
our King of love to life restored,
whose kingdom never ends.

Words by Timothy Dudley-Smith

Lord God, we give you thanks for the gift of Christ's cross and resurrection. Like the disciples who believed in Jesus when they saw his work in Cana, so give us grace to see that he is your saving work whereby you change us, like water into wine, from sinners to becoming your righteousness. Grant us to know the burden of our sin and that your Son our Saviour, has made it his own and taken it from us on the cross, so that in the knowledge of your mercy and the living hope we have in your Son whom you raised, we may praise you in trust and obedience.

- time of prayer / intercession –

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

May the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shine in your hearts, transform your lives, and brighten the world.

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you.

AMEN