

## **CHURCH@HOME: The Second Sunday of Epiphany – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Readings: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
John 2:1-11

### *Reflection from Anne Edwards*

In John's Gospel there is nothing about the birth of Jesus – nothing about the angel's visit to Mary, nothing about the angel's visit to Joseph, nothing about their need to go to Bethlehem for the census, of Jesus being born in a 'stable', the shepherds, the wise men, Herod's rage and the killings necessitating their fleeing to Egypt as refugees, or Jesus going missing when he was 12 – the age at which a Jewish boy became a man – and being found in the Temple, listening and asking questions of the teachers there and where those who heard him "were amazed at his understanding and answers".

For these stories we have to look to Matthew and Luke.

John's Gospel begins by referring us back to the beginning of time, to the beginning of Genesis, the Word, "and the Word was with God", that everything came into being through him, it was 'life' that came into being, and that 'life' was "the light of all people", which "the darkness did not overcome".

Then John the Baptist arrives on the scene, the forerunner announcing Jesus' arrival. Next Jesus' baptism, and John's announcement "And I myself have seen and have testified this is the Son of God" (ch.1, v.34), and chapter one ends with the arrival on the scene of the first disciples. It is Luke who tells us that at Jesus' baptism those affirming words from heaven "You are my Son, the Beloved, and with you I am well pleased" were heard.

Now from John – a wedding! The wedding of a village girl in a small Galilean village not far from Nazareth, a village called Cana of Galilee. A wedding where they run out of wine! What is so special about this almost every day sort of event for John to mention it? It's not in any of the other gospels. John obviously felt there was something sufficiently special about this event to include it. He doesn't call what happened a 'miracle', just a 'sign'. So what can we make of it?

In his Daily Study Bible on John's Gospel, William Barclay takes three days of readings (that is 10 pages) to cover these 11 verses!

The main characters in this story are Mary (although she is not named) and Jesus. The subsidiary characters are the servants, the chief steward, the bridegroom, Jesus' disciples – and we must not forget the stone water jars and the water.

First of all, John tells us that Jesus, his mother and his disciples had been invited to this wedding and were there. Next we're told "When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him: There is no wine." Just that: 'there is no wine'.

We know so little about Jesus' life before this occasion, but the interaction between Jesus and his mother suggests that these years were not completely ordinary. Why did Mary expect Jesus to be able to do something when the wine ran out? What did she know about him both to tell him, and then to tell the servants: "Do whatever he tells you."

Jesus' response to his mother sounds abrupt to us, but I can imagine him speaking to her, may be with a twinkle in his eye – after all he'd reached an age when he didn't want to be told what do by his mother (I

think most of us would be the same) but from the life she's shared with him for the past thirty years, she obviously knows him well, and, being the caring woman she is, feels for the bridegroom's family also.

This is a social occasion, a wedding and William Barclay points out that to run out of wine at an occasion like this in those days would have been an embarrassing and humiliating situation for the bridegroom's father.

But there is no miracle healing here, just ... well, just more wine. However, it was an extravagant provision for the celebration, not only quantity but also the quality of the wine, signs of our generous God. We see that generosity also in that boy's packed lunch expanding to feed a crowd on a hillside!

William Barclay reminds us that when John wrote this story (I suspect he had told it many times before it was captured on paper) he had some seventy years to think, to remember, to meditate on what he had seen, heard and experienced of the life he and the other disciples had shared with Jesus. This story is not like today's news hitting the headlines within minutes. This story is being related of something that happened way back in the past, the equivalent of when I was 12 years old! So for John, this was really important: Jesus relationship with his mother, his compassion for the wedding party, his generosity, and that life with Jesus brings surprises.

There are two other things of note. First, Jesus' response to his mother, after asking her what's that to do with you, was "My hour has not yet come". This is an expression we hear several times in the Gospels, which in the main seems to relate to his crucifixion and resurrection, and in verse 1 John writes "On the third day", another expression relating to the resurrection. Jesus knew that he had come for a specific purpose with a definite task, and all through his life he walked steadily towards that 'hour'.

Secondly John tells us that this sign "revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." He tells us that this 'sign' at Cana was a revelation and confirmation of faith for the disciples who saw the exuberant and creative power of God at work in bringing uncomplicated human enjoyment to this wedding.

Some times I wonder if we make our lives of faith too complicated – for me, this story tells me that God cares about every aspect of our lives, and may be, just may be we should recognise more often those moments of revealed glory of Jesus Christ, and be ready to thank Him more frequently for those 'little' moments when light shines in the darkness of a moment, like that of a single bright blue lobelia flower in a crack between pavement and brick wall as I was walking down a street, a time of darkness and loneliness, and realized that if that single flower could bloom in such a barren place, then God could help me to flourish in spite of where I felt I was at that time.