

John 2:1-11

Isn't the wedding at Cana a great story? It shows Jesus fully enjoying his humanity. He is with family and friends enjoying a party, food and wine, dancing. This first miracle is truly amazing. Even though Jesus knows his public ministry hasn't begun he responds to his mothers' faith in Him with compassion and incredible generosity making sure their friends won't be shamed. (Miraculously turning about 120 gallons of water into superb quality wine). This miracle shows us from the very beginning that Jesus's love and power for good has no limits.

For the last 3 years Gilly has helpfully focused on different aspects of this story. Today I'm expanding the last sentence. Verse 11 says this was the first sign by which Jesus revealed He was the Son of God and his disciples believed in Him! We believe that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. This means that what He did then He does now! I'm not suggesting if we fill up jugs and pray water will turn into wine today (Terry says he can turn wine into water but not the other way round!) But Jesus still gives us signs, maybe not always so dramatic but if we can but notice them Jesus will show us that He is working on our behalf in our personal circumstances.

I know I will have missed so many signs that Jesus has given me over the years but today I'd like take a risk and share with you a time when I believe I did notice the signs Jesus gave me. I'll share with you what I experienced with the hope it will help you watch out for signs in your own life. We are going back to a time when I was suffering great emotional pain. I was desperate to hear from God, to feel His touch. It was the summer of 2008 I was a real mess leading up to Roz's and my annual visit to new wine in Somerset. I was utterly heartbroken, my 32 year marriage had ended earlier that year and I had no idea what the future held. I was alone, facing divorce , full of shame and only just holding it together on a day to day basis. I tried praying, reading the bible but I just couldn't concentrate. I was eating a lot of apple crumble and custard not the best way to ease pain! I've shared in the past how my sister , children, friends and members of this church supported me, especially dear Moya, but I knew I needed to hear from God.

So to New Wine 2008. Firstly the main morning Bible teaching was a series entitled "Jesus Wept" every day David Parker told of more stories of suffering and the different ways Jesus suffered with His people and came through for them. It was such a relief to know that I wasn't alone in my pain. One evening the worship leader broke into spontaneous prophecy half way through a song " to the broken hearted the Lord will give you a new song. The end of the night is coming for you so hold on..." This felt like it was just for me. The encouragement to wait.

Then at a seminar today's gospel reading was mentioned and I heard these words in a new way " you have saved the best til now" It was as if the words were highlighted. I realised that I was thinking the past had been the best and the future seemed foreboding and empty. It was as if Jesus was saying the best could be now in my life too. I needed to trust there would be better days ahead even though I still felt dreadful and close to tears most of the time.

And there is more. I was drawn to the worship of Trent Vineyard who were playing in Venue 2. One song, which we will hear during communion , is called Perfect Sacrifice. The refrain includes "all my hope is in you, my treasure and my truth, my hope is in you". I claimed that truth with every fibre of my being. My hope is in Jesus. I had no idea what the future might hold but if I hung on hoping in Him it would be ok, more than ok, the best.

I was desperate and chose to believe these signs. All that God said to me during July 2008 did indeed come to pass. There were still plenty of rocky times ahead but I clung on to the hope that God was with me and willing to help me. Of course I had no idea at that time that 3 years later I would marry Terry. We had no idea that he would become a priest. God has blessed me abundantly and I'm so grateful.

In the 4 signs I've shared with you we notice that it wasn't dramatic there was no booming voice from heaven saying "don't worry Jane I've got this"! Just touches of God's grace from 4 different sources that each spoke to me about my situation and resulted in a major change in me. I went home to the same circumstances but for the first time I had hope that the future would be good.

I'm not pretending any of this is easy. Whether we feel we are able to hear from God or not I believe He is constantly loving us and sustaining our lives. I wish I could give you a formula, "do this and you'll hear from God". Sharing with each other is one of the things that is so great about small groups, a safe place to voice, "was what I sensed from God or was it wishful thinking?". There are however 2 guidelines I can give you. We always have a choice to believe or not and anything we sense and think might be from God will always be in line with God's word in the bible. When we pray and read the Bible we are demonstrating our belief and somehow this opens the door for potentially miraculous gifts from God to be realised in our lives.

So please be encouraged, if you need a sign from Jesus, He will give you one but it probably won't be what or when you expect it.

And where am I today? So grateful and still hoping in Jesus!

Amen