

29th January 2023 The wedding at Cana....Part 3!!

I feel very fortunate to get to look at this scripture for the 3rd time!!

Jesus' first miracle

You may find it quite mystifying to ask to do a 3rd talk on the same passage but I love that no matter how well we think we know a passage there is always more to discover. And, as my daughter has taken to calling me, I am a curious little woman!

Lets recap..

In 2021 you may remember my talk starting with pictures of some of us, and our blessed leaders, sipping wine or, in my case clutching a whole bottle!

We realised that God wants us to be filled with joy. He delights in our joy.

He is there in the times of celebration as well as the difficult times.

We talked about how a wedding those days was not a one day affair but a week long celebration. And that the whole town would have been invited.

We thought about the shame of running out of wine.

That Jesus was not as rude as he sounds in our translations. In Greek, 'woman' was a term of respect.

In the Passion translation He says, 'my dear one, don't you understand?'

And we considered that Mary brought her concern, worry, to Jesus straightaway.

And what a great example that is for us.

Last year, we focused on the transformation of water, the ordinary, into wine, the extraordinary. The very best wine.

We looked at characters in scripture who were transformed and able to do things they didn't expect because God was changing them. Guiding them. Loving them.

He loves us too much to leave us as we are.

And although it's scary to think about change and doing stuff out of our comfort zone God is weaving us into a beautiful tapestry, even though it looks a bit of a mess from the back!

He is maturing us into the finest of wines if we let him. If we trust him.

We can offer up our lives to God and ask for His guidance, or we can be in control and think we know best...And we all know how that goes!

Quite a lot to be thinking about, again..

What can I add this year?

After I spoke last year I came away thinking of those servants and their obedience.

As many of you know, some of us were fortunate enough to pilgrimage to Israel last year. And we visited Cana

As is the case throughout Israel, any site of significance from the bible stories has had a church built on the spot - or wherever they think the spot might be.

It's no different at Cana - a church has been built where many couples, each day, renew their vows and some of course get married.

In the basement there was an example of a stone jar.

Which was interesting as even though I know this scripture well, I always imagined clay jars..

Probably because classic painters have painted them like this

**** *pic by Bartoleme*

These depictions are incorrect

***pic from our trip*

The stone jars were big.. Holding 75 -115 litres of fluid.
Great big, immoveable jars.
Filled by hand, by servants, in the energy sapping heat and dust.
We don't know how far they had to go to collect the water.
But it must have taken some considerable time.

They were obedient. Doing as they were asked!!
It must have been utterly mystifying for them.
Traipsing back and forth to refill the ceremonial stone jars.

And then take a sample of the content they had just poured, to the master of ceremonies.
They must have been shaking in their sandals.
Those poor servants had no idea what Jesus had done.
For all they knew, they were taking water to the master of the banquet who would be expecting wine!!!
They could have been publically humiliated and fired!

But, they did as Jesus told them. Even though it made no sense.

This happened other times, when we think about it..
The feeding of the 5 thousand, for instance...
In Luke 9v10-17 we are told of the disciples showing concern over a crowd of people who had been listening to Jesus teach all day and it was getting late. When the disciples suggest to Jesus that he send the crowd to surrounding villages for food and lodging;
He says, quite bluntly to them ..'**you feed them!**'
We all remember that they only had 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. But under Jesus instructions, which they obeyed, even though it seemed utterly ridiculous, they fed a crowd of 5 thousand. Collecting 12 baskets full of scraps at the end.

Earlier in Luke's gospel he reports of a miraculous catch of fish. Luke 5
Again, it is after he has been teaching.
The professional fishermen had caught nothing the night before. Which they report to Jesus when he tells them to go out deep and throw the nets in.
Simon says, '**because you have told us we will let down the nets**'
And the resulting catch is so abundant it fills 2 boats, nearly sinking them.

Last week, Jon talked of Jesus' invitation to follow Him in the ordinariness of every day.
And here in this passage we see Christ's power and awesomeness during a normal celebration carried out since time began.
With no fuss or extravagant ceremony.

But quietly, and involving servants, ordinary people. In their usual place.
Just like the disciples in their usual work, fishing, and meeting basic needs of sustenance.

We too, are called to be involved with God and His plan. He calls us to follow His prompting.
To hear it. To be obedient. To act. From where we are and what we are doing.

Obedience is hard especially if we do not know the person who is calling the shots!

Growing in our relationship with our Saviour means we get to be familiar with his ways. His character.

And we also grow in our trust of Him and His leading and prompts.

Trust is huge. And we **can** trust our God. He loves us and wants the best for us.

He has promised to never leave us or forsake us. He is faithful and true.

Whilst discussing this with our venerable leader, Jon came up with the example of our lovely Terry!

His suggestion of a hardship fund.

During covid, a recession looming and rising energy prices, where was the money coming from?

It was a prompt from the Lord and it was followed!

As the funds go, they are replenished.

This fund is blessing many people.

And that is because of obedience to a prompt.

Thank you for listening and acting on that prompt Tez!

God is 'speaking' to us.

Calling us to phone someone.

Message that person who has just popped into our head.

Talk to a stranger in the supermarket.

Ask a particular question .

Say a particular word.

Sometimes it makes no sense.

Sometimes it seems too simple or easy. Or maybe too hard and difficult.

But this isn't about us this is about Gods call to follow.

To trust and obey like that old chorus I remember singing as a child..

'Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.'

When we do we are in partnership with what God is doing.

That is the best place to be.

We are closer to our King.

We are bringing Glory to His name.

And we are demonstrating our love, honour and trust.

Prayer

Father, Thank you that you want us to be in harmony with you and your will.

Help us to recognise your calling.

Give us the courage to trust and obey.

Amen

Gilly Robinson