

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 142

Sunday 16th January 2022

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

Welcome to this edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passages

Isaiah 62: 1-5

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.

² The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³ You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

⁴ You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land Married;
for the LORD delights in you,
and your land shall be married.

⁵ For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your builder marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.

John 2: 1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”

⁴ And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”

⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.

⁸ He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it.

⁹ When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Reflection

Almost two years ago when the gravity of the pandemic first became apparent we seemed to live in an age of heroes. At a local level there were volunteer groups offering their services to the elderly and vulnerable, those advised to shield. And at a national level there were people like Captain Tom to admire and the weekly clap for the NHS that took place on our doorsteps.

And yet that heroic period is now long since over. As we face the uncertainties and suffering created by yet another strain of the virus, the Omicron variant, this public mood seems to have been replaced by exhaustion and fatigue and even anger.

How much more can we take we might ask?

As we read the well known account of the turning of water into wine this morning it may strike us as being particularly relevant to our current circumstances.

The narrative begins in a spare and stark fashion giving the minimum of details, *'On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.'*

What we wonder is this building up to? The answer comes with shocking clarity in the next verse, *'When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."*

Running out of wine at a wedding in our day would most likely be a source of embarrassment to the hosts. However, in those days, it is likely that this response would have been even greater. For wine was considered to be indispensable to any properly conducted public celebration and a host should never allow the supplies of wine to come anywhere near the point where they could be exhausted. So this family was facing a potential social disgrace which could have lasted for a long time to come.

This indeed is a moment of crisis and it is one for which unaided natural resources clearly will not suffice.

At such moments our choices become very simple. Do we just give up in despair or do we turn to God?

Mary's words too are very simple, '*They have no wine.*' At one level this seems like just a straightforward statement of fact. But at another these are words addressed to Jesus. In that sense they have the nature of a prayer which is made in the faith that somehow Jesus will be able to save this family from social disgrace.

However, at first it seems that Jesus is simply not going to listen to his mother. Indeed, His words '*Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?*' may strike us as being somewhat abrupt. On the other hand, Jesus' overriding concern is about fulfilling God's purposes and doing so with the right sense of timing. For this reason He goes on to say, '*My hour has not yet come.*'

Mary, however, is also a person of faith. She is not put off by the initially unpromising nature of Jesus' response. Perhaps this serves as a lesson to us to persist in prayer even when to begin with we may not be sure whether or not God is listening.

So she then says to the servants simply '*Do whatever he tells you.*' Again this demonstrates the depth of Mary's faith. She has complete trust in Jesus and is willing to surrender any element of control over how events will play out. She trusts that Jesus will do something powerful and effective but she has no idea what this might be. Again we may take this as a lesson in prayer to be able to leave our requests totally in the hands of God who may choose to fulfil them in a wholly unexpected way.

And, yes, the way that God answers Mary's prayer is indeed unexpected. And yet at the same time there is something comfortingly down to earth in the way that this happens.

For the miracle occurs not simply through God's supernatural power but also through the use of ordinary, everyday objects which are in common use.

We are told first of all that there are six stone water jars standing by each holding twenty or thirty gallons. What part, we wonder, will these insignificant looking objects play in the events which are to unfold?

The suspense of the narrative continues as Jesus orders the jars to be filled to the brim to the water. As we think of the water we may think that this perhaps represents our own ordinary, everyday experience. For it is this rather than anything extraordinary which we need to bring to God so that it can be transformed. What water might we bring to God? Could it be some of the troubles and difficulties, fears and sorrows that we are experiencing at this moment?

And then when the water is brought to Him Jesus is able to begin working this miracle. But He has to begin by working with something. We may look at the current circumstances of our lives and wonder how God could possibly make a difference in them. But as we faithfully bring these to God in prayer then the transformation can begin.

As I reflected on this I remembered some of the weddings that I have officiated at in the last two years when restrictions have been at their height. Much of the normal 'wine' of such celebrations was simply not available. And yet without minimising the distress felt by close family members who were not able to attend, many of these occasions seemed to take on a new meaning in which the Holy Spirit was present in a very powerful and personal way.

But when we reflect on the miracle of turning water into wine we are of course talking about something greater and more lasting than the need to facilitate the celebrations at any human wedding, important though these may be.

For, in the Bible, weddings are also a metaphor for God's relationship with His people and of the messianic age which is to come.

It is to these realities that our Old Testament reading from Isaiah draws our attention. A solitary voice prays for the future of Jerusalem and then expresses joy at its forthcoming transformation.

God's people are to be beautiful and of royal worth. And in order to express the joy and delight of the relationship between God and His people it is fitting to use the metaphor of marriage. So Jerusalem *'shall be called My Delight Is in Her... for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.'*

This describes the delight of God in His people and also the joy of our final destiny with God where we will be with Him for ever.

So how does this well known miracle of the turning of water into wine speak to us today? Surely first of all as it always has done to remind and summon us to a renewal of our faith in Christ which so often is brought about by times of crisis. Water was turned into wine not to serve as a spectacle but as a sign of God's kingdom and of Christ's identity as Messiah. For this was the first of Jesus' signs performed in Cana of Galilee. It revealed His glory and provoked faith in His disciples.

And then again it encourages us to look again at our own circumstances, the water of our everyday experience. Do we see the potential for God to transform them as like Mary we come to God in prayer and are willing to trust Jesus to do whatever He chooses with what we bring to Him?

Tristram

Masks are still back

Just a reminder to everyone that under the government's Plan B covid restrictions masks are once more mandatory in churches.

Points for Prayers

- Bringing our everyday experience before God in prayer to enable Jesus to transform this
- Continuing concerns about the rise in cases of the Omicron variant and the pressures that this places on everyone
- Continued thanksgiving for the care, skill and courage of NHS workers and that they will not be overwhelmed by the demands on them in the winter period
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- Our curate Anna and her family as they prepare for their move to Cornwall
- Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Diocesan staff as they take on additional responsibility in this vacancy in See
- For the choice of a new Bishop, someone who shares God's heart for this Diocese
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton now reopened and for its first residents
- For North Cadbury Church School and other local schools as their new term proceeds
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Hymn

One of the hymns set for this Sunday is 'Rejoice ! The Lord is King.'

Services for the rest of January

Sunday 16 th January	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 16 th January	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 16 th January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 16 th January	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 23 rd January	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 23 rd January	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd January	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 23 rd January	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 23 rd January	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd January	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 23 rd January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 23 rd January	4.00 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 30 th January	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 30 th January	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 30 th January	11.00 am Matins, Maperton
Sunday 30 th January	4.00 pm Evensong, Galhampton

Excalibur

Excalibur is back in paper form. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes. The December and January editions of Excalibur

have now been published online at camelotparishes.co.uk and on each parish's A Church Near You webpage.

The Parish Office

If Rob is not in the Office during normal office hours please contact him via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5:2)