

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 239

Sunday 21st January 2024

‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passages

Revelation 19: 6-10

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out,

“Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready;

⁸ to her it has been granted to be clothed

with fine linen, bright and pure” –

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”

¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

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

Will I still be worrying about this in a year’s time? Or a month’s time? Or even in a week’s time? We put these kinds of questions to ourselves when we are trying to calm our immediate anxieties and to put them into perspective.

Sometimes this technique works but sometimes not. We all tend to fret over our immediate difficulties and problems even though we know this can do

no good and quite possibly can bring us harm. 'Do not fret' advises the beginning of Psalm 37, following this up with the encouragement to 'Commit your way to the LORD' (see Psalm 37: 1,5).

But for those who had invited Mary, Jesus and the disciples to a wedding at Cana in Galilee it must have been almost impossible not to fret. They were expected as hosts to have sufficient wine to put before their guests. When this wine ran out, they were facing social disgrace.

And yet Jesus when presented with this problem by his mother Mary refuses to get caught up in this kind of anxiety. What to me and to you, runs the original Greek, words that are difficult to translate into English. Our translation has to supply some missing words in its rendering of this phrase as 'What concern is that to me and to you?'

That might come across as a rather abrupt remark although we do not know the verbal tone which Jesus used. However, Jesus' question helps to focus us on His 'big picture', the heart of His mission and what it was all about.

For His next words are 'My hour has not yet come'. Here again, we might find these words slightly mysterious. However, in John's gospel the word 'hour' refers to Jesus' crucifixion, the culmination of His mission in which He died to save us from our sins. Compared with this, the immediate concerns of a family who have run out of wine with which to serve their wedding guests are put into perspective. Jesus sets His sight firmly on God's central purposes for His life.

Nevertheless, however, the needs of this wedding family are still important and they become the occasion for God through Jesus to demonstrate both compassion and miraculous power.

Recognising this, Mary is quietly persistent. She turns to the servants and tells them to do whatever Jesus tells them to do.

In this, Mary demonstrates that the alternative to fretting and anxiety is complete trust in Jesus. She does not know at this stage what Jesus will do nor even whether He is interested in doing anything at all. But what she does know is that she can have complete trust that whatever Jesus will say and do will be right.

So often in our prayers we try to place conditions on what God will do. We ask God to act in accordance with what we want. But this of course is not how true prayer works at all. We need rather to be willing to be surprised by and ready for God to work in unexpected ways which we ourselves would never have thought of.

And Mary has this depth of trust in Jesus and she is not disappointed in her faith.

For, as this account of the changing of water into wine demonstrates, God can take the very ordinary, mundane details of our lives and turn them into something quite extraordinary as these are offered up to Him.

God does not need any new materials to be brought to the wedding in order to work a miracle. Rather, just as with the feeding of the 5,000, He works with the very ordinary and everyday materials that are already there. The only requirement is that these are first offered up to Him.

So, Jesus sees six purification stone water jars which are just standing around and gives a very simple command to the servants to fill them to the brim with water. What could be more straightforward than that? But as the servants fulfil Mary's direction just to do whatever Jesus says without asking further questions, so God's miracle occurs. We are not told how or when. All we do know is that the water which was put in has become wine when it is drawn out.

The person in charge of the wedding feast is amazed and calls the bridegroom saying to him that, unlike everyone else, he has kept the best wine until last. For a family that was facing social disgrace through the lack of wine, this is an extraordinary turnaround and it has all happened through Jesus.

The transformation of water into wine is, of course, more than just a remarkable event at a wedding which helps out a family in need. Miracles in John's gospel are also called signs. The changing of water into wine is called the first of Jesus' signs.

A sign points to a spiritual reality which lies beyond itself. We find something of that spiritual reality depicted in our reading from the book of Revelation.

Its setting again is that of a wedding feast but this time of the marriage feast of the Lamb, who is Jesus Christ. This is a spiritual and heavenly feast. Worship is at the heart of it, there is 'the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.'

But just as in an earthly wedding only the best will do. Everyone invited to this marriage feast is clothed in fine linen which symbolises the good deeds which the guests have performed.

So, this sign that Jesus performs, the changing of water into wine, points us towards a greater spiritual reality. But the invitation to us is not simply to understand this reality, the Kingdom of God, but to open up our lives and be changed by God.

So, John's gospel tells us that as Jesus did this miracle, the first of his signs, it displayed God's glory and led people to faith in Jesus.

They were inspired and no doubt awed by what they had witnessed. Often, we think of inspiration in terms of some remarkable person who inspires us to have a go at some new challenge. Jesus certainly is an inspiration in this sense. But Jesus is more than that. Jesus is not simply some famous person who acts as an inspiring example for us. No, as we come to put our trust in Him, so Jesus' Spirit, the Holy Spirit, comes to live inside us and, in this way, our very ordinary lives can be transformed and become extraordinary in Christ.

We may never have seen anything in our lives quite so spectacular as the changing of water into wine. Nevertheless, many of us in smaller ways will have experienced God touching our lives, perhaps as we find ourselves in a difficult situation and we pray and find God rescuing us. And what has been the lasting impact of such experiences? They are indeed signs of God's presence but have they led us, like those who witnessed the changing of water into wine, to put our complete trust in Jesus and to experience God's Spirit changing us at a deep, inner level?

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Being open to God working in extraordinary ways through our lives
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Yemen, Israel, Gaza and the Ukraine
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents
- For teachers and children of North Cadbury church school

Hymn

One hymn set for this Sunday which celebrates the kingdom of God is
'Rejoice! The Lord is King.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 21 st January	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 21 st January	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 21 st January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 21 st January	4.00 pm Evensong, Yarlinton
Sunday 28 th January	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 28 th January	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 28 th January	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 28 th January	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 28 th January	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 28 th January	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 28 th January	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 28 th January	4.00 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

Excalibur online

The December and January edition of Excalibur has now been published online at camelotparishes.co.uk. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes.

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)