

EPIPHANY 2

16/1/21

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

Sign of wonder at a wedding...

The gifts of Jesus go joyfully to work.

Sign of celebration at a wedding...

**Jesus brings all that is necessary
to those whose resources have failed.**

Sign of commitment at a wedding...

**talents of Jesus, influence of Jesus, Jesus resources and
displays his best talents with a compassionate and generous act.**

Sign of God's glory at a wedding...

**The influence of Jesus for good is seen and recognized.
It will be recognized in our church and in our community.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you, O God, that we can join together as church members of the faith community,

**Celebrating the presence of persons from so many different
backgrounds in the family of Jesus Christ.**

We thank you, O God, that we can join with Christians of all the ages,

**Celebrating the trusted tradition of prayer, praise, and joyful
worship.**

We thank you, O God, that we can join with those who study the Word of scripture,

**Celebrating the inspiration of scripture, inspiration of, alert for the
prophetic message, and challenged by the Way of Jesus**

We thank you, O God, that we can join with those who put faith into practice,

**Celebrating the influence of Christian values, Christian values
at home, at school, in the workplace,
and wherever poverty and powerlessness are confronted. Amen.**

HYMN 411 Filled with the Spirit's power

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyBNuAeqaM4&t=40s>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Speak to all people, to every nation and every clan of God's steadfast love.

Tell them how God's goodness extends from the lands to the heavens, it flows around the earth with the clouds.

God's good judgement is as solid as the mountains and as deep as the ocean,

God is set on saving all creation, everything that dwells on the earth.

God, you gather us up and provide refuge to us, you open your house to us and lay out an abundant feast before us, food to sustain us and a river to quench our thirst.

You are the fountain of our life and in you we see light.

Those who know you, who seek to be people of upright hearts, know that you will continue to love us

and be will always be on hand to offer us salvation and blessing.

God of generosity, you set an example of warmth and open-heartedness that we are called to emulate.

Forgive us when we are lousy hosts, when we resent giving, when we buy into attitudes that frame those in need as undeserving and ask those requiring assistance and welfare to jump through unreasonable hoops.

Forgive us when we are stingy, holding back not only financially but in warmth, concern, and companionship to those who don't look like us or don't share our cultural background.

Forgive us when we create illusions of kindness, when we enter into relationships with others that might look impressive on the outside but carry no depth, so that when true friendship is called for, we go missing.

Forgive us when we are demanding guests, who assume that all that is on offer in the commonwealth of the earth is meant purely for us and not to be shared, when we take beyond our needs and without considering the needs of all who live alongside us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The steadfast love of God extends far and wide, God's mercy and forgiveness are unbounded, when we fail to live with generous hearts we are not condemned and set apart, God remains generous, holding out a welcoming hand to us, we need only grasp it.

READINGS

- **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

- **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.

HYMN 224 All hail the power of Jesus' name

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WVSyGBBfi8>

SERMON

The Lectionary this year follows Luke's Gospel. For some reason this week we get a passage from John's Gospel thrown in. The story this week is about Jesus and His mother attending a wedding in Cana.

The very nature of John's Gospel is such that there are layers upon layers in the text which take time to tease out. So rather than just glossing over it I thought that we might dig into the passage a bit.

Here we have a very simple and innocent sounding surface story about a celebration. We are not told why Mary had such an important role in the wedding celebration such that she would be called on when the wine ran out.

In Palestine at that time a wedding was a very significant celebration. It would have had to be a fairly wealthy family to afford such a celebration. According to custom it could only take place on a Wednesday and looking back at the previous passages we can deduce that it was the Sabbath when Jesus first met up with Andrew and John and it appears that they accompanied Him to the wedding feast.

A wedding in this tradition would last for more than a day. The actual betrothal ceremony would take place late in the evening after which the couple would be escorted to their new home with a canopy over their heads and people holding flaming torches to light the way. This was not a straight forward journey as the couple would be taken by a route so that they could be greeted by the maximum number of people on the way.

After such a busy evening the new couple were not allowed to rest quietly at home for the next few days. For a week they had to keep an open house for well-wishers to come and visit them. They were adorned with crowns and sat in their bridal finery to greet the visitors like a king and queen. In a land of poverty this was indeed a very spectacular event.

It is in such a situation that we find Jesus with His first five disciples. It is during the celebration that the problem with the wine comes out. Wine was essential in Jewish festivals as it was said by some Rabbis that: "Without wine there is no joy." However drunkenness was not acceptable and most wine was diluted by at least a third with water.

Hospitality was important in that culture and the failure of the wine supply was in fact very embarrassing for the hosts, let alone the bride and groom. There was some interaction between Mary and Jesus. This led to Jesus reluctantly helping out as he wished to keep a low profile.

Jesus instructs the servants to fill some large jars at the front door with water. We are told that there were six jars and they each held over 100 litres. The water was there for two main reasons.

1. Firstly to wash the dust and muck from the feet of visitors before they entered the house.

2. Secondly Jewish custom dictated that their hands should be ritually washed between courses while eating. These jars were in constant use.

When the servants drew the liquid out of the jars and took it to the person overseeing the celebration it turned out to be better wine that had been previously available during the wedding.

It was at this simple wedding celebration that Jesus is claimed to have performed His first miracle, according to John's Gospel.

Now let's look at another level.

Being John's Gospel, this is not the end of the message that the writer is conveying. Commentators draw several themes coming out of the undercurrents in this story.

Firstly, this happened at a normal social gathering. It is not like Jesus avoided all that went on in the everyday lives of the people where he lived and traveled. He was a part of the community and included His followers in the everyday life events which He came across. It was not like Jesus and His disciples were some exclusive sect. He was a man of the people.

Secondly, this event took place in a small and insignificant village, it was not some grand show of His powers in front of vast crowds. In fact it was just the servants who saw these events unfold. Jesus performed His miracle to support someone in an embarrassing situation. This miracle was generous and without fanfare. Jesus remained humble throughout the whole episode.

Thirdly, hospitality in that culture was almost a 'sacred duty' which was expected of everyone in those communities. To have something as ordinary as the wine running out would have brought shame and embarrassment on the whole family. Here the family was not left to suffer but was quietly helped in their hour of greatest need. In fact they were helped beyond their wildest expectations. This approach of helping people in their hour of need is also expected of all of us.

On another level we can see even now how Mary had complete faith in Jesus and did not need to check if He had given her the support she asked for. She knew that her Son could help others in their times of need even though He was trying to keep a low profile. Jesus helped even though He knew that the time for the full revelation of His message was some time off.

Now let's look at this passage on a third level. At this stage we are moving beyond the cultural and the interpersonal dynamics and coming more into the theological undercurrent in John's works.

John, who was a Jew, was writing to other Jews but at the same time he was seeking to also be understood by a Greek audience. Everything in John's works carries significant undercurrents.

There were six water pots at the front door of this home. This might seem insignificant to us, however in Jewish tradition the number seven was considered

complete and perfect. Therefore six was just short of perfect. This stood for the imperfections of the Jewish Laws. Jesus came to show up those imperfections and replace them with His perfect grace.

As we heard earlier each water pot held over 100 litres of liquid. When converted to wine there was more than enough for the celebration to continue. Here John is emphasising that when Jesus exercised His grace there was more than enough for everyone with plenty to spare. There was never any doubt that the grace of Christ was beyond limit.

Additionally we are being told that in the imperfections Jesus creates perfect grace that extends to be sufficient for every need.

Now let's look at this from a more Greek perspective.

- Greek mythology does have at least one story with similar lines. Pausanias wrote about the community of Elis where there was an ancient ceremony. Between the market place and an old theatre they held a yearly ceremony to the god Thyia. Three empty kettles were put into the temple by the priests with everyone watching. The doors were then sealed overnight, with visitors invited to put their own seal on the door as well to confirm that no one had entered overnight. The next day, after inspecting the seals, the doors were opened and there were three kettles of fine wine filled to the brim.

John was equally addressing these stories with the need to show how much greater Jesus was than their ancient gods. Jesus had come to make dreams come true. In Greek terms John is equally saying that Jesus came to fulfil things that they had only dreamed of with their pantheon of gods.

John is sharing with his audience that Jesus actions were not a 'one off' but were an everlasting promise. John is not so much interested in a few water pots but rather as Jesus enters your life there is a transformation like turning water into fine wine. The everyday becomes reborn.

Without Jesus life can be dull and boring but when He does the smallest thing in life is then overflowing with grace and transformation beyond anyone's dreams.

Simply said this passage tells us that if you want a new and exhilarating life then become a follower of Jesus and it will be like changing water into wine beyond measure.

HYMN 129 Amazing grace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaJhnJwsPNM>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

God take these gifts and turn them into kindnesses, turn each kindness into a community of welcome and generosity, turn these communities into a worldwide

network of care and compassion, a network that disrupts division and segregation and delivers joy and peace. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God in the beginning and the end

You may have been watching a program on ABC television called “the universe with Professor Brian Cox “and been bamboozled with all the technology – the science, physics and the maths BUT awe inspired with the wonder of knowing that God created the heavens and the earth

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth John 1:1-2 In the beginning the Word already existed and the Word was God – God created everything through him – the Word gave life to everything that was created Revelation 1:17 -18 Don’t be afraid – I am the First and the Last– I am the Living One —I died– I am alive for ever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and the grave Revelation 5: 12 -13 Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered and has redeemed us to God by his blood to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and glory and blessing

It is time for us to pray

Our Lord God – Yahweh – the creator of all things in heaven and on earth We are humbled by your greatness and power We know you are all knowing We realise how sinful and selfish we are as we come before you We ask for forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ

We are grateful for all your blessings

For our friends and families –

for our comfortable homes and beautiful surroundings – the beaches , lake and bush
.

We pray for the people in our lives who provide us with medical help .They are trying so hard to keep us all safe throughout the pandemic We pray for patience and peace as people panic because of the pandemic -the illness, the shortages ,inconveniences, restrictions and all the unknowns

We pray for guidance for our federal, state and local governments

We thank you for giving our church folk the energies to do their tasks in the church – we pray for Mark and Jan, the Church Council, for Iris the organist, Jean and others in the kitchen, for Thorin and the technology team, for Wendy our journalist ,for Len our accountant & those involved with our finances, for those involved in cleaning and preparing our church for worship each week and all others who attend ,serve and give generously their money and time to our Church’s projects

We pray for our church members who are ill ,lonely ,are grieving, and those finding life difficult due to ageing.....for those unable to be with us this morning for various reasons

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 233 I will sing the wonderous story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv8wo-t6C1I>

BENEDICTION

As you go from here, be of generous heart and spirit, offer kindness to all you encounter, celebrate and delight in the goodness of God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzDdN-5gmuU&t=17s>