

Reflections for 24th January 2021

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

A sign of generous love

This week I have been talking with a couple about the plans for their wedding later this year, and trying to think about what they may or may not be able to do, in our current circumstances. And I am sure that most of us can think of weddings, birthdays and other celebrations that we have had to miss over the last year.

This week's gospel reading from John offers us a story of a wedding celebration, at which Jesus turned water into wine, and it may seem to us that this is the worst time to hear this story, and be reminded of things that we cannot enjoy and share together at the moment. But perhaps that makes it a good time to hear this story, and to take to heart the message of hope that it offers us.

So why would Jesus turn water into wine? What was the purpose of this miracle, this 'sign', as the gospel describes it? Firstly, he was providing for a real practical need. In the culture of those days, hospitality was very important, and to fail to provide more than enough for all your guests, to run out of food or drink, would have been an embarrassment, even a disgrace, that the host family might never live down. And, secondly, what Jesus did was indeed a 'sign', a demonstration, of the message he had to share, of the lavish generosity of God's love for us.

The good news for us today, from Jesus' 'sign' of turning water into wine – very large amounts of wine – is that we can receive the free gift of God's love for us, that generous love that we see above all in Jesus, in his life, in his death, and in his rising again to new life.

And the challenge for us today is that we are called to live open and generous lives, with our hearts and hands open, ready to give to others as we have received.

Revd John Waller

Father God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your generous love:
renew us and all your people
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings: Genesis 14. 17-20; Revelation 19. 6-10; John 2. 1-11

Story: 'From Water to Wine' (based on the gospel passage)