

Morning Worship Service
Sunday 24th January 2021
Epiphany 3

Introduction

We have come to the city of the living God,
to the heavenly Jerusalem,
with thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

Alleluia

We have come to God the judge of all,
to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

Alleluia

SONG

Together we pray:

Lord, direct our thoughts,
teach us to pray,
lift up our hearts to worship you
in Spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Confession

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.
Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our sins in penitence
and faith.

Together we confess our sins to Almighty God:

God our Father, we come to you in sorrow for our sins:
For turning away from you and ignoring your will for our lives:
For behaving just as we wish, without thinking of you:
For failing you by what we do, think and say:
For letting ourselves be drawn away from you by temptations in the world around us:
For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son:
Father, forgive us, save us and help us. Amen.

Absolution

May God who is both power and love,
Forgive us and free us from our sins,
Heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
And raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect

Reading

John 2: 1-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

"Woman,^[a] why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.^[b]

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Sermon

The 3 W's (24.01.21.)

Jesus turns Water into Wine at a Wedding

I don't know if you're anything like me and sometimes use familiar abbreviations but don't know exactly what each letter stands for: although I guess we all know what NHS stands for.

But text messages can be littered with all sorts of letter combinations to convey different meanings. I always thought LOL was lots of love, but apparently, it's 'laugh out loud'!

For those of us who use the web, their addresses always start with 'www.'.....I think! No doubt most of you know what the w's stand for but, although I use them a lot, I didn't know for sure. Fortunately, John was able to immediately sort me out – 'world wide web'!

3 w's.....and we have 3 w's in our Gospel reading for today – water, wine, and wedding: but what have they got to do with world wide web?

Well, I'd like to suggest that God's plan for his world is that water, wine and a wedding are available world wide, for everyone.....just like the web is meant to be world wide.....although it isn't because human structures aren't perfect.....unlike God's which are!

So, first let's think about water.

I guess most of you know that our bodies contain a high percentage of water. On average water makes up 60% of a man and 55% of a woman – that's because women carry more fat than men!! A fact which I don't like at all!

If we break that down further to parts of the body: heart 79% water; brain 75%; kidneys 83%; lymph 94%; muscles 75%; lungs 80%; liver 72%; bones 22%; and blood 85%.

Those facts highlight just how important water is to us, as well as underlining why we should drink lots of it.

When God created the world (and he definitely did!) he said it was good. To me that suggests that everything was in the right place, in the right order and in the right amount for everyone to access: but we know that things didn't stay that way after humans became disobedient and sinned.

And today we are even more aware with global warming and climate change, quite possibly due largely because of the greed and selfishness of the human race, that things are nowhere near in tune with God's original plan.

Many people around the world don't have the luxury of clean, fresh, 'on-tap' water in the way we do here and in other affluent countries.

Water, by God's design for everyone, is a basic commodity for life - but Jesus himself digs deeper into that well when he speaks to the Samaritan woman in John 4: 13-14. Here he tells the woman that he has spiritual water which, if a person drinks it, will 'become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life'.

I feel certain that God's desire is for living, pure, physical water and living, pure, spiritual water to be available to all people on the world wide web.

So, what about wine?

Now, I know not everyone likes wine but whether you do or not, think of it as representing good things: because believe it or not our God wants to give us good things. The mere fact that Jesus changed the water into wine at the wedding is a strong indication that; while the basic drink was available to everyone, he wanted to provide more than just the basic.....and we know that his wine provision was far superior to the wine made by human hands.

The Psalms tell us repeatedly that, if we honour God, he will give us over and above the basic.

Psalm 37: 4 'Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart'.

Psalm 103: 5 talks of God 'who satisfies your desires with good things'.

And in Luke 11: 11-13 Jesus says that if we sinners 'know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him'.....the most precious 'good thing' we could ever receive!

Our God isn't a stingy old man dolling out a few pittances here and there to his favourites. He's an overwhelmingly generous God who wants to lavish good things – whether it's in the form of wine or something else – to all people on the world wide web.

And lastly, the wedding.

While I know that not all of us have our own personal wedding and may be some people have never even been to a wedding, I think that when we hear the word 'wedding' we usually think of celebration; something to be happy about and rejoice in; an event where we hope people will have a good time.

Jesus himself never married during his earthly life but this account in John tells us that he went to at least one wedding.....and I like to think that he had a good time and shared in lots of laughter. After all, if he was a 'party pooper' he probably wouldn't have gone in the first place and he certainly wouldn't have helped out with the wine!

But, one day, Jesus is going to have his own wedding when he returns in glory. The other reading from today is from Revelation 19 and it tells us in verses 6 and 7 'Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready'.

The Lamb is Jesus and the bride are all those who chose Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

From that we immediately know that not everyone who's ever lived will be at this wedding because many people throughout history haven't wanted anything to do with Jesus and have rejected him. They will not have an invitation.

In our world of inclusiveness for everyone that appears very harsh and unfair.

Not so!

In 1 Timothy 2: 4 we are told that 'God wants ALL people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' – the truth that Jesus is the Saviour for everyone.

This wedding to end all weddings is for all people on the world wide web. Anyone who isn't there has ignored their invitation.

Water, wine, wedding – world wide web. Let's ensure that, as ambassadors of Christ, we play our part in ensuring that everyone has access to the basics in life, enjoys some good things along the way, and receives an invitation from us to come to the greatest wedding that will ever happen.

Creed

**We believe and trust in God the Father,
who made all things.**

**We believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ,
who redeemed the world.**

**We believe and trust in his Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God.**

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Intercessions

Intercessions for Epiphany 3 (2021)

God Most High, we ask that you appear afresh in your glory to your Church throughout the world, bringing surprise and vigour to its, sometimes dulled, expectations.

Remind us continually that you are indeed a God of miracles who desires to breathe new life into our traditions and familiar practices; and longs to transform us into extraordinary people working in your kingdom.

We pray for all in church leadership in its variety of forms. May these men and women, despite the draining effects of the pandemic, find that they are greatly anointed with energy, love, and compassion to lead their fellowships into new growth.

God Most High, as the world continues to reel from the effects of Covid 19, we ask that you give co-operation and unity within individual governments as well as between different governments. As they face ongoing criticism from many sources, give them wisdom and insight as to how best to cope with the far-reaching difficulties of the pandemic.

Pour your energy and well-being into all who work tirelessly, and at great cost to themselves, in health authorities around the world

We pray particularly for Joe Biden and his team as they seek to bring unity to a divided and broken country while dealing with many other major issues. Through him bring peace to America.

God Most High, thank you for our community: and although, sadly, so many things which happen here are either cancelled or reduced, we ask that, when the pandemic is over, groups will start up again and flourish more than they did before. Thank you for all those who have adapted to on-line meetings and all the hard work involved in delivering that.

We ask you to bless the hard work of the staff at our school who continue to battle with changing guidelines and expectations imposed upon them.

We ask you to look with favour upon those living here and bless them with calm, peace, and hope. May many come out of this time seeking you within this fellowship.

God Most High, you take our anxiety and rescue us from the pit of despondency. We ask you to give hope to all those weighed down by concerns, fear, and physical or mental illness. Grateful that you hear our cries, we name them silently before you now.....Bring to all troubled hearts the light and refreshment of your peace and the healing grace of your hand.

Let us continue in prayer saying together the words our Saviour taught us:

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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

SONG

Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.