

Reflection for pew-sheet: John 2: 1-11

Today's reading from St John's Gospel tells of the wedding at Cana – or, more precisely, Jesus's action there and what it showed about him. John's Gospel only features seven miracles performed by Jesus: turning water into wine in this passage, (remotely) healing a Jewish official's son (4:43-54), healing an invalid on the Sabbath (5:1-15), feeding 5,000 men (plus women; 6:1-15), walking on the water (6:16-21), healing a man born blind (9:1-41) and bringing Lazarus back to life four days after he died (11:1-45). It says that Jesus performed many other miraculous signs, but those seven are mentioned explicitly and in detail so that the readers will believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God, and come to inherit eternal life. Most of those passages state that many of those who witnessed the signs believed in Jesus as a result.

What would these miraculous signs have meant to the people who witnessed them? What would they have told them about who Jesus was, and why he had come? Note that none of the miracles are done "just for show". Three of the signs are healings and demonstrate not just that Jesus has God's power over disease and brokenness but also God's heart to use that power for the good of even the lowliest person, even when doing so broke rules. The raising of Lazarus shows that Jesus has power over death itself, but having that power didn't mean he regarded the death of Lazarus as less of a tragedy than the bereaved sisters did – he can share our pain even as he opens the way to eternal life.

Turning water into wine saved the bridegroom from social embarrassment in the community when the wine ran out, but more importantly it was a symbolic act – it showed his newly-acquired disciples that he was going to bring something entirely new to the relationship between God and man. The water he converted was there for a ceremonial purification rite mandated by the Law, for the ritual washing away of sin – Jesus turned it into something that is associated with joy, celebration and feasting. Real forgiveness of sins, not just ritual washing, means that those who believe and trust in Jesus will have a place forever in God's feast in the Heavenly Kingdom.

But to finish, a couple of questions. What do those seven miraculous signs mean to *you*? And what signs showed *you* the way to faith in Jesus?

Ian Totterdell, Churchwarden

Codes for the Zoom worship at 10.30

These are codes for Sundays from 6 December to the end of January:

Meeting ID: 894 0983 2572

Passcode: 061920

Telephone numbers: 0203 051 2874, 0203 481 5237, 0203 481 5240, 0131 460 1196

NEXT SUNDAY 31.01.2021 Candlemas

SERVICES 10.30 by Zoom, 12 noon in Church



READINGS

OT Malachi 3: 1-5
NT Hebrews 2: 14-18
Gospel Luke 2: 22-40

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St Thomas, Exeter

Sunday 24th January 2021

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

10.30 by Zoom (phone-in available)

12 noon Mass in Church

Thank you for keeping aware of all the restrictions about coming to Church on Sundays, including guidance about **mingling**. It's one of the things which helps us stay open.

18-25th January is traditionally the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, so this Sunday marks the end and high point of that. I've often been to France to preach as part of our exchange programme with the Diocese of Bayeux-Lisieux in Normandy, and awhile back we welcomed Fr Laurent Berthout to St Thomas. Because we can't do these visits at the moment, we've swapped sermons on YouTube instead—you can see them on the website Blog. If you have not got access to this, do please pray for the unity of all Christians, and for this French diocese as they also welcome a new bishop.

The Feast of the Conversion of St Paul is on 25th January : let us pray that God may change us.

Fr David



Collect

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Genesis 14: 17-20

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.

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 thunder-peals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride has made herself ready; 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. 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.' 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. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. 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 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.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Post Communion

Almighty Father, whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world: may your people, illumined by your word and sacraments, shine with the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

NOTICES

Picking up on Christmas lights, and an advance warning for **Candlemas** on 31st January. We are going to do something around a Christingle theme as well. You might want to have the bits and pieces to hand. Alternatively, we will send out a printed picture next week.

Community Larder The Community Larder will be collecting on **Tuesdays only** from 10am-12noon, and is allowed to continue operating during the period of lockdown. The collecting point will now be in the Church Hall. Please continue to be generous.

Knit and Natter *Update for January 2021* We are delighted that so many members of the congregation are knitting blanket squares. This comforting activity is resulting in three more large blankets to add to the five already being enjoyed at Parkland House. Eight inch squares are the best – any wool, any colour, in garter stitch. Nattering is on Thursdays via Zoom from 11.15am to 11.55am, thanks to Vanessa for setting this up for us, whilst we aren't able to meet in person. All information from Jenny on 01392 498725

House Group. Tuesday evenings. Please contact Ian Totterdell for Zoom details.

PCC will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, 27th January at 7.30pm

