

CAMEL-ALLEN BENEFICE
WORSHIP AT HOME -SUNDAY 24 JANUARY 2021

EPIPHANY 3

Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to this service where we gather together spiritually, but physically separately in our own homes, to worship and listen to the voice of God

A bud, a flower, a little child - these are the voices that speak to us of God: all that is glad, all that is beautiful, all that is trustful and loving, all that tells of tenderness and constant care - these are Christ's chosen emblems of the Most High.



Hymn:

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow Thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.

We Seek Forgiveness From God

Human sin disfigures the whole creation, which groans with eager longing for God's redemption.

In a dark and disfigured world, we have not held out the light of life
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy

In a hungry and despairing world
we have failed to share our bread
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy

In a cold and loveless world
we have kept the love of God to ourselves
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy

May the God of love bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.



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.*

*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;
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.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Our readings today have marriage as the common link. The Gospel reading is the well known story of the wedding at Cana when Jesus turns water into wine. The reading from Revelation is of John's vision of Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as his bride: and the angel said, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Spare a thought for those who were planning to be married and who have had to revise their plans because of the Covid pandemic. Whilst weddings are permitted in Church, the pared down numbers allowed to congregate in celebration mean that any reception would fall a long way short of the wedding feast at Cana. Celebrations of that kind would often last for days. No wonder they ran out of wine.

For those who are sceptical of miracle stories, this is a particularly difficult one to swallow, for it has something of the magic trick about it. It falls into a rather different category from the healing miracles, which portray the compassion of Jesus for those who are suffering, and the only miracle which truly matters ~ his resurrection from the dead. This seems a rather trivial sort of miracle for Jesus, who had only recently refused the temptation to turn stones into bread. Why refuse to turn stones into bread to satisfy real hunger but accede to a request to provide the wedding guests with more wine to party with?

Understood in context, the event is not quite so trivial as it may appear to us. Hospitality was taken very seriously in the culture of the day and not providing enough wine for the guests would be, to say the least, a real social embarrassment for the newly married couple and their parents. But more than mere embarrassment may have been involved. Marriage was a serious business and the provision of dowries and wedding gifts by the couple's parents

acquired the status of a legally binding commercial transaction. It was possible to take legal action against someone who failed to provide the appropriate wedding gift. Jesus may well, therefore, have been doing a good deal more than the equivalent of popping round to the off licence to get more booze for the party.

We may also conclude that the families involved in the wedding were well known to the family of Jesus. The story begins by explaining that Mary was there. Whilst the invitation to Jesus and his disciples might possibly be explained on other grounds if Jesus was beginning to gain a reputation as a religious leader, that would hardly explain an invitation to his mother unless she was already known to those involved. There are clear indications in the story that it is the plea from his mother, probably concerned for the effect on the families involved if the reception ran out of wine and had to be ended prematurely, which persuades Jesus reluctantly to act in what John describes as the first sign of his Messiahship.

The story signals a turning point. Jesus has been baptized by John and recognized by him as the Lamb of God. He has spent time alone coming to terms with who he is in the wilderness, but has now begun collecting his disciples together. They are here as guests at the wedding and, whilst the miracle appears to be known only to a few, Mary, the disciples and the servants who know that the water has been miraculously turned into wine, it is not without significance that this causes the new disciples to believe firmly in Jesus.

Only John tells this story: the other gospel writers say nothing about it. Some question the historicity of this event and say that it should be understood allegorically. John made the story up, they say, in order to make a theological point. They pray in aid that the stone water jars would be those used in the Jewish ritual cleansing which would take place before a meal; and Jesus transforms this empty ritual into the new wine of the Gospel. Perhaps: but, whilst

the Gospel of John is, indeed, the one which embodies the most symbolism, if we believe that Jesus is, as John himself tells us at the beginning of his Gospel, the pre-existent Christ who was with God in the very beginning and through whom the whole of creation was brought into being, the possibility of a miracle having taken place becomes unacceptable only to those who have no such belief and assert that miracles simply never happen. What Jesus does, whilst miraculous, is to work within the parameters of his own creation. Wine, after all, is only the juice of the grape ~ and this is formed out of water which the vine sucks up through its roots and transforms into the juice of its fruit. The process by which water becomes wine is part of the natural order of God's creation - of Christ's creation. Is it so surprising, then, that he who brought that natural order into being, he who is the true vine, should be able to do the same, simply short circuiting the natural processes which he had made possible in the first place? Turning stones into bread, on the other hand, would not be working with the created order, but overturning it - completely rewriting the rules.

Moreover, by acceding to the temptation to turn stones into bread when alone in the wilderness, Jesus would have benefitted only himself, not others: and that is not his way. What this miracle story has in common with the healing miracles is that Jesus acts out of concern not for himself but for others. His compassion is unable to resist the pleas made to him to cure this leper or that blind person or, in this case, to avoid the social disgrace of the hosts at the wedding party.

And we cannot rule out that Jesus did actually want the wedding guests to have a good time. Just as he wants us to have a good time as some of those invited to the wedding party of the marriage supper of the Lamb. We are all invited to that party and, as the angel said in John's vision, we are, therefore, blessed. Blessed, not only, we may be sure, with enough wine to last to the end of the party.



Hymn:

At Cana's wedding, long ago,
they knew his presence by this sign,
a virtue none but Christ could show,
to turn their water into wine:
And still on us his blessing be
as in the days of Galilee.

What if the way be far to go
and life at times a weary load?
Yet may our hearts within us glow
as theirs on that Emmaus road:
The risen Christ become our guest,
with him to walk, in him to rest.

O Lord of all our life below,
O risen Lord of realms above,
eternal joy be theirs to know,
united in the bond of love:
One in the faith, with one accord,
one with each other and the Lord.

We affirm our faith:



**Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come.**

We believe in God the Father,
who created all things:
**for by his will they were created
and have their being.**

We believe in God the Son,
who was slain:
**for with his blood,
he purchased us for God,
from every tribe and language,
from every people and nation.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:
**the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"
Even so come, Lord Jesus !
Amen.**

We pray together:

In a moment of quiet, we each bring our own prayers before God.

Silence

Drawing our prayers together in the words of the Collect for the day,
we pray:

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 forever.

Amen.

We are invited today to pray with the whole world church for the
preservation of creation. So let's pray:

Loving God,
The Earth and all its beauty are yours.
Help us, whom you have made stewards of the Earth,
to care for it and treat it with love. **Amen.**

Let us also pray for our own needs and for the needs of others,
following the pattern which Jesus gave when he taught us to pray to
God our Father.



Through our love of the countryside,
of the mountains, lakes and oceans,
through our care for creatures of all kinds,
through our respect for each other:

Father, hallowed be your name.

On our farms and in our homes,
in our colleges and schools,
in our factories and workplaces,
and in all places where policy is planned:

Father, your kingdom come.

By our seeking your guidance,
by our keeping your commandments,
by our living true to our consciences
by our being willing to help each other in times of need:

Father, your will be done.

For the millions who live in poverty and hunger,
for our own needs, and the requirements of our neighbours,
especially those needing help in this pandemic,
for all those reliant on our food banks in these difficult days,
by cooperation, sympathy and generosity:
give us today our daily bread.

Because we have broken your commandments,
doing what we ought not to do and neglecting what we ought to do:
forgive us our sins.

If any have injured us by inadvertence, injustice, double dealing,
exploitation or wickedness of any kind:
we forgive those who sin against us.

When success makes us boastful,
or failure makes us bitter,
when good times lull us to a sense of false security,
or hard times, like this lockdown, prompt us to despair:
**lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

In the assurance of faith,
in the confidence of hope,
in the will to serve,
help us to love Christ as Lord,
and our neighbour as ourselves.
**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever.**
Amen.

Hymn:

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive Thy church with life and power;
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit Thy church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in Thy tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore, for this we plead.

O Breath of love, come breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive Thy church in every part.

O Heart of Christ, once broken for us,
'Tis there we find our strength and rest;
Our broken, contrite hearts now solace,
And let Thy waiting church be blest.

Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive, us Lord, the world is waiting,
Equip Thy church to spread the light.



We bring our service to a close

We pray:

Jesus, lord of time,

hold us in your eternity.

Jesus, image of God,

travel with us the life of faith.

Jesus, friend of sinners,

heal the brokenness of our world.

Jesus, lord of tomorrow,

draw us into your future.

Amen.

May God who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds of the sky,
who leads the lambs to pasture and the deer to water, who
multiplied loaves and fishes and changed water into wine, lead
us, feed us, and change us to reflect the glory of our Creator
now and through all eternity.

And the blessing of God Almighty,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

be among us and remain with us,

always.

Amen.

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.