

Reflection for 24th January 2020 - 3rd Sunday of Epiphany by Katy Carter

Genesis 14:17-20 Revelation 19:6-10 **John 2:1-11**

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.

Jesus, his mother, Mary, and the disciples have been invited to a wedding at Cana, a few miles from Nazareth. John tells us that it is here, at this wedding celebration, that Jesus performs the first of his miracles. John refers to these miracles as 'signs' since they point to something deeper than just the miraculous. They tell us something about the nature of Jesus - who he is and the purpose of his mission.

In John's gospel, Jesus' mother, whose name John never actually tells us, is mentioned only twice. Her first appearance is here at the wedding feast, where she realises that the wine has run out and makes that stark statement, 'They have no wine.' We don't hear about her again until almost the end of John's gospel, where in chapter 19 she stands near the cross and Jesus entrusts her to the care of the disciple whom he loved.

It has been suggested that John's reason for mentioning Mary's presence on these two very different occasions is in order to link Jesus' first sign with his death; to link the giving of wine at the wedding feast with the giving of his life on the cross. This provides a connection between the first glimpse of Christ's glory at the wedding at Cana and the full revelation of his glory in his death and resurrection.

Jesus first chose to reveal his glory not in healing a blind man, or in feeding the five thousand, or in raising his friend Lazarus from the dead, but in changing water into wine at a wedding - at a great celebration, at a party. For me, one important message of the story of the wedding at Cana is simply that Jesus chose to be there. It was an occasion worth his time and attention. He was there joining in the celebration, presumably having a good time like all the other guests. And simply being part of people's lives. So may we remember to allow Jesus to be part of every moment of our lives – part of the good times, as well as part of those times in our lives when, like at that wedding in Cana, our resources run out. When, like now, amidst the ravages of the pandemic, in the midst of yet another lockdown, we may struggle to find hope for the future.

Jesus made a difference at that wedding celebration and he can make a difference in all our lives, if we are willing to walk with him and to trust him.



Almighty God,
whose Son revealed the wonder of your presence
at the marriage feast in Cana,
fill us with a sense of your presence,
fill us with the touch of your spirit,
fill us with trust and faith,
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

HYMN REFLECTION

There were three 19th-century Bishop Wordsworths: (1) Christopher of Lincoln, nephew of William Wordsworth, Great-Grandfather of Jane Pelly and her sister Juliet, and author of today's hymn (2) John of Salisbury, son of the above; from 1888 he built BWS at his own expense, three primary schools and an infants extension to St. Thomas's. He was a scholar, but was not known for writing hymns (3) Charles of St. Andrew's, younger brother of John. John and Charles were very good athletes. Christopher's epitaph was *VERITAS IN CARITATE*, *truth through caring*, which is the motto of BWS.

This is one of those grown-up hymns which appealed to me from a very young age; it seemed to amount to juggling with words, which is fun. If you know what "manifest" means, the rest of it is easy. "Epiphany" means revelation, or being shown; this is clearly reflected in "manifest", defined as "may be easily seen by the eye or perceived by the mind". All sorts of stories from the Bible, from King David onwards, fall into place, right up to the last trumpet and heaven.

Our Reverend and revered Editor does not like negative comments in these reflections, but I cannot forbear from stating my opinion that the Bishop's carefully crafted words are normally paired with one of the worst tunes in the book. Tedious is one word; every note the same length; the most basic of harmonies. (It's just not worth turning out to sing the tenor line - 50 of the 59 notes are G or F sharp). Most of Charles Steggall's compositions are virtually forgotten, and a good thing too (he did do some good work; he helped set up the Royal College of Organists and championed the recently-rediscovered choral works of J. S. Bach). There are not a lot of alternatives to *St Edmund* in the 7777D metre. One possibility might be *St. George (Come, ye thankful people, come)*, or the great Welsh tune *Calon Lan*, though neither is ideal.

Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesu, Lord, to thee we raise,
Manifested by a star
To the sages from afar;
Branch of royal David's stem
In thy birth at Bethlehem:
Anthems be to thee address
God in man made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan's stream, [see Reflection for Jan. 10th]
Prophet, Priest and King supreme;
And at Cana wedding guest
In thy Godhead manifest;
Manifest in power divine,
Changing water into wine:
Anthems be to thee address
God in man made manifest.

Manifest in making whole
Palsied limbs and fainting soul; [see Reflection for Jan 31st]
Manifest in valiant fight
Quelling all the devil's might;
Manifest in gracious will
Ever bringing good from ill;
Anthems be to thee address
God in man made manifest.

There are modern versions of this hymn which use a different repetitive phrase at the end of each verse .

Instead of *God in man made manifest* the following is used-
"You are Christ," by us confessed,
God in flesh made manifest."

Although some people see 'man' as inclusive of the whole of humanity many see this terminology as exclusive. Modern academic writing always uses the phrase 'humankind' instead. Even law has changed from the word 'he' to 'he or she'.

I find the newer version helpful in its the use of the word 'flesh.'

We often shy away from talking about more earthy things such as flesh and this is precisely what our Gospel tells us that God's glory is revealed in the earthy grittiness such as that of a stable, a raucous wedding feast, the washing of feet, indeed in Jesus' day to day earthly life as well as in the glorious mountain top experiences.

Revd Becky.