

Third Sunday of Epiphany

24th Jan 2021

Note

This act of worship is presented as it might normally be used by a congregation, with congregational responses in bold. Even though you are reading the service to yourself, there is a similar dynamic of receiving the word then responding in your heart.

Worship is never a private and singular matter and the use of 'us', 'our' and 'we' is maintained. Wherever and whenever we are, we are the whole people of God worshipping together.

An advantage of using this worship at home is the opportunity to take it at your own pace. You can have more space for prayerful reflection before moving forward.

Preparation

Praise the name of the Lord;
ascribe greatness to our God.

Lord, open our lips
and we shall praise your name.

Prayers of Penitence

The grace of God has dawned upon the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own.

Let us confess our sins.

Lord Jesus, illuminate the darkness in our hearts:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to your saving love:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, unstop our ears to hear your living word:
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

God of all healing and forgiveness, draw us into your presence,
that we may behold the glory of your Son,
the Word made flesh, and be cleansed from all our sins
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gloria in Excelsis

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

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**

Gospel Reading

John 2.1-11

¹On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' ⁴And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' ⁵His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' ⁶Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. ⁹When 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, ¹⁰'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.'

¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Reflection

You may think the Gospel reading today is about a wedding or, if not the wedding itself then, the wedding reception. Well, it is of course, which is why it is one of the recommended readings for the sacrament of marriage. Really though, it is more about Jesus being revealed in his glory, the son of God. That is why it is one of the readings for this season of Epiphany. There are three stories about Jesus that we use particularly over these few weeks when we focus on the revealed glory of Christ. The first is the coming of the Magi on the feast of Epiphany, when they presented Jesus with gifts for a King. The second is when Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism and hears God speak, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”. The third is Jesus revealing the new creation by changing water into wine at the wedding feast. He transforms something very ordinary, the water, into something glorious, the finest wine - but not until it’s needed, not until the other wine had run out. There is a pattern here for how God acts in our lives. It’s often when we most need God to do something, when our wine has run out, that we experience his saving help and presence. Maybe it is not until we reach that point that we’re ready to receive the gifts God offers. For many people, they need to be at the point of not having any of their own resources before they turn to God in a desperate cry for help. And it is then that God can come alongside and assure us of his presence and his love. Our difficulties may not suddenly evaporate, but we are given new life, new hope and new strength to deal with whatever has been thrown at us. We

discover new resources, God-given resources, to face up to the cross that we have been forced to bear and to find a way of carrying it.

The cross that the world and each one of us is and has been carrying is the continuing cross of the pandemic. Yet, through the work of scientists and the ministry of all those in the health service, we are being given new life and new hope. Each day as the vaccine programme rolls out, a few more people can breathe more easily and we all find a way of carrying this cross until one day, later this year, we can look forward to whatever the new normal will be.

Jesus, with his mother and the disciples, were invited guests at this wedding. It was only because Jesus was invited that the miracle of transforming water into wine could be performed. He had to be there in the middle of it. God will act to change our lives, but only when we invite God in, when we open the door. Then we will know God among us and alongside us in all the mess and the muddle, in all the hurt and the pain, giving us new wine when ours has run out.

This miracle also shows us that God is concerned with the whole of our lives, not just those times when we are being especially religious. He wants us to know his joy and his love in all the circumstances of our lives, in the ups and the downs, in a wedding as much as a funeral.

Changing water into wine is the first sign in John's gospel that Jesus performed. Miracles are wonderful events that we cannot fully understand and if we could then they would lose their miraculous quality. Someone, a preacher I heard, said that miracles are not there to be explained but to be pondered. The miracles show us God's glory transforming the ordinary things

of life. As we ponder this miracle, we might reflect on how God can use what is ordinary in our lives and transform it in his service. For those who believe, the whole world is full of God's glory and it is often in the ordinary circumstances of life that we see God at work.

God calls us to be open to his power at work among us and in us, using the ordinary gifts that we have in his service and to show his glory in our own lives and the lives of those we touch.

If we are to live fully and to relish the abundance of life Jesus promised, we do well to listen again to Mary's words to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you" and respond by saying "Yes", so that we too, as we prayed in the Collect for today, may be renewed by his heavenly grace and sustained by his presence with us.

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

During this time of intercessory prayer at each, 'We pray for...', bring to God those people, places and situations that are on your own heart and mind.

We pray for God's grace.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

Lord God, through your grace we are your people:

through your Son you have redeemed us;

in your Spirit you have made us as your own.

We pray for ... (*new Christians, the Church*)

Make our hearts respond to your love.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

We pray for ... (*the world, society, the local community*)

Make our lives bear witness to your glory in the world.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

We pray for ... (*people in need, Christian service*)

Make our wills eager to obey, and our hands ready to heal.

Lord, receive our praise

and hear our prayer.

We give thanks for ...

Make our voices one with all your people

in heaven and on earth.

Lord of life,

hear our prayer,

and make us one in heart and mind

to serve you with joy for ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Believing the promises of God,

let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come;

thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Blessing

May God the Father,
who led the wise men by the shining of a star
to find the Christ, the Light from light,
lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord.
Amen.

May God the Son,
who turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana,
transform your lives and make glad your hearts.
Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit,
who came upon the beloved Son
at his baptism in the river Jordan,
pour out his gifts on you
who have come to the waters of new birth.
Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

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