

'On the third day a wedding took place' and Jesus was there. The gospel writer uses marriage as a symbol of a new world order of Love. A bride and a groom, two separate people who over time and not without hard work, become one. Neither will be submerged, neither dominates, but learning to trust one another they are transformed to become one. Marriage is the symbol of the new world order established in Jesus and the principle 'love one another'.

In the story the old order is represented by the water jars which were used for purification. They were significant, What happens to them shows us that Jesus does not dismiss tradition. He does not have the old jars smashed up. He demonstrates what we with the benefit of the scriptures know - that Jesus came to fulfil the Law not destroy it. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus is recorded saying:

"Do not think I have come to get rid of what is written in **the Law** or in **the Prophets**. I have not come to do this. Instead, I have come to **fulfil** what is written." so he uses the jars. Out of those old jars pours a new understanding of the relationship between God and his people.

The raw material – water – is to be transformed, not by crushing it, not by removing it, not by replacing it, not by adding something to it but by exposing it to the blessing of love.

Illustrate adding colour to water

We too are the raw material that is to be transformed – after all water makes up 60% of our bodies. For us it is the quality of life that changes.

And it is this quality of life – kingdom life, - that is threatened in our present situation.

To begin with, in the first lockdown, when we could not meet people we thought that online communication was brilliant but we now realize that our relationships are not what they were, as one Christian journalist said they have become digitised, dare I say that relationships are becoming de-humanized. I believe that this is why God is calling us, as Carolyn said last week, to a greater level of generosity. Generosity of time, attention, a phone call, a card or letter. But also generosity in prayer – there is an expression 'we pray as we live because we live as we pray'. Living in lockdown we find it hard to keep relationships going and there is a danger of finding it hard to stay related to God, hard to really engage in prayer, we may even worry that we are becoming indifferent to the plight of others. Perhaps we feel we have lost our compassion – forgetting that compassion is the movement of the Holy Spirit. God is longing to generously pour the Holy Spirit into our hearts in order to transform us and increase our generosity. This will not only counteract the detachment that reflects our de-humanized lockdown world but also cause us to overflow with love so that we are a blessing for others. we are the means by which others experience the heart and love of God.

You see the world won't change until we change – the world/ people discover and experience the heart of God **mainly** through us! Creation will be restored through us – Paul in Romans 8 says:

'For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God...and will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.' (Romans 8:19 & 21)

God calls us to demonstrate his love and goodness on the earth through our generosity, an outpouring of love which expects nothing in return. Not only is this outpouring of love necessary for the restoration of creation but it is necessary if God is to give us more love. If we hold on to what we have there is no room for any more. If we offer what we have to God he blesses and magnifies it and us, just as Jesus blessed and magnified the water at the wedding in Cana. The water is poured into the jars, the jars are filled, blessed, transformed and given out. The wine is given away. Just as the water is transformed and given away as wine, so we are to be transformed and given away – or rather the love we have received must be given away - overflowing so that it is passed on / given away.

We have to give Jesus away, give him to others – in our story we saw that Mary had to let Jesus go. He had reached the age of maturity. Mary had to acknowledge that whilst he was still her son she had no authority over him. She had to release him into his Father's work. I too must let him go, acknowledging that yes he is my Saviour but he is love and by its very nature love cannot be held onto, love cannot be confined. If it is not given away love dies. When it is given away love increases, grows, in giver and receiver.

The quality of the water was transformed into wine. In our case it is the quality of life that changes. We no longer focus on self, worrying about the future, limited by circumstances but focus on who we are in Christ, living life to the full in the present moment generously and spontaneously to the glory of God Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Let us pray

Almighty God,

your Son Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor,

release to the captives,

and freedom to the oppressed:

anoint us with your Holy Spirit that we may continue his work

and set all your people free to praise you in Christ our Lord. Amen.