

Water-wine

20 1 13

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is John chapter 2 and verse 11:

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

Let me begin this morning by asking you a simple question about our patron saint. Where did Bartholomew aka Nathaniel come from? According to John 21 v2, in the account of Peter and six other disciples after the resurrection of Jesus going fishing on the Sea of Galilee, **Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee** was one of them. So I conclude that if Nathaniel Bartholomew came from Cana then not only is he bound to have been present at the wedding because as neighbours he knew the family but he would also have been present as one of the disciples unnamed but mentioned in John 2 v2 as being there at the wedding with Jesus.

And why was Jesus there as a guest at the wedding in the first place? I think the clue lies in the fact of what his mother Mary does and says. Mary is clearly in-

the-know – she knows the wine’s run out – and clearly she enjoys a position of status and respect in the eyes of the servants – she tells them what to do and they do it. I conclude, therefore, that Mary and must be a known and accepted member of the family.

Changing water into wine is a wonderful first miracle at the hands of Jesus. It’s a huge volume of wine to make: somewhere between 120 and 180 gallons – at least enough for 960 bottles, 160 cases of wine ! I love it and here his first miracle points to the transformational power of Jesus: the power to change water into wine; the power to change people’s lives; the power to renew Judaism as a vital way to come to a real relationship with the living God.

But the question I’d like to ask this morning, the question that is at the heart of my sermon is who exactly is the audience for this wonderfully transformational miracle ?

Well the one person who has no idea what is going on is the steward of the feast, the man responsible for making sure everything runs smoothly. He tastes the wine that the servants bring him and he recognises it is exceptionally good. It’s so good that he actually asks the bridegroom why he’s kept so good a wine till now since the normal practice is to drink the best wine first then when the guests’ palates have lost their edge, you can serve the plonk !

Mary must know because she knew the wine had run out and then she knows there is now plenty of wine to drink. In the first place, Mary has the confidence to

tell her son, Jesus, what the situation is and then she has sufficient confidence in who and what Jesus is, confidence that he could and would solve the problem, that she can tell the servants to do whatever he tells them to do. Even though he says, 'My hour has not yet come', Mary knows in one sense that it has.

The servants clearly know what's happened because they filled the water jars with water and they are the ones drawing off jugs of the stuff to serve it. They know this so-called excellent wine was half an hour ago simply water from the well!

And the disciples must know what's happened: John at least records it in his gospel and I'd like to think our Bartholomew was an eye-witness to this astonishing process.

But though Mary, the servants and his disciples were present and witnesses of the miracle, I don't think any of them is the real, intended audience – I believe the real audience is us. We, who have heard the miracle, are struck by the evidence that Jesus is special, that Jesus is different. Nathaniel Bartholomew recognises as much when his friend, Philip, brings him to meet Jesus for the first time and he says 'Rabbi you are the Son of God ! You are the King of Israel !' (John 1v49) – just three verses before this miracle. All miracles are not casual acts but are done as signs that Jesus is who we have come to believe him to be – none other than the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour.

So when we learn that Jesus is capable of transforming water into wine, we are challenged by his potential to transform us into Children of God, ready to serve

him in newness of life to the best of our ability. We are like that water transformed into new wine because Jesus is capable of producing a remarkable transformation in our lives through the transformational power of his love.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermon 27 : re Water-wine

