

## Transform

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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.

My text for today's sermon is essentially today's collect: 'in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace . . .'

Last week, we remembered the baptism of Jesus. Today, we look again at his first miracle – the changing of water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. So what do you think links the two passages? What's the connection between them?

Well, beginnings I guess. Baptism marked the moment when Jesus stopped being a carpenter of Nazareth and started out on his public ministry of teaching and healing – first with a time in the Wilderness, then by calling the twelve to join him. Changing water into wine was his first miracle – a sign that he had come not only to transform water in wine but also to renew, to enliven our lives.

But there is another connection – the Jewish ritual of purification – the mikvah. Baptism is a form of mikvah, a ritual cleansing of and from impurity,

imperfections, wrong-doing; and the stone jars, that the servants filled with water that Jesus transformed into wine, were intended to store the water drawn from the well for the purpose of such ritual bath.

At the start of John's account of the miracle, he mentions the fact that Mary, Jesus and the disciples were present. Given that Mary seems to be au fait with what is going on – that she knows the wine has run out – and given that she has status with the servants, that she's in a position to tell them what to do, it seems reasonable that this is a family wedding and Mary is a senior member of the family. That would explain why not only she but also her son, Jesus, and 12 of his friends should be invited. But since Nathaniel also comes from Cana too (we know as much from John 21 v2), then it might be that he had an invitation in his own right as the son of a local family of standing.

Well, you are all undoubtedly familiar with the account of the miracle: the fact the wine has all be drunk; Mary's confidence in Jesus' ability to save the family embarrassment; Jesus' initial reluctance to act, then doing something quietly spectacular; the excellence of the water now wine confirmed by the master of ceremonies !

Fine, but what struck me when I was preparing this sermon is the thought of transformation, implied in the today's gospel and reiterated in the collect which is our text today: **'transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace.'** There is no doubt in my mind as to the value of such a miracle – not just the

physical but also the spiritual fact. Ordinary water, perfectly fit to drink, becomes wine of the best quality. Why ?

Why . . . because God in the person of his Son has the power to transform our lives, renew our lives, by the miraculous power of his presence. But why should God want to do so ? Why go to the trouble of doing so ? And the answer I find in today's readings one from Isaiah 62 and one from Psalms. Both passages clearly tell us that God loves us. In Isaiah, there is the image of marriage of bride and bride groom – that the people and the land are beloved of God, that **'the Lord delights'** (v4) in his people. In Psalm 36, we hear the exclamation **'How priceless is your love, O God'** (v7)

So God can transform our lives because he has the power to do so and he can transform our lives because he wants to do so. But it is a sad fact that if love is truly love then that love does not force itself on anyone – there's always the space for choice, the chance to say no, the possibility to refuse to let oneself be loved. For love to take root, to grow, to blossom and bear fruit, then the beloved has to want to be loved.

Okay, clearly the water didn't ask to be transformed into wine but Mary, who loved her son, asked Jesus to do something and he did. So my question to you this morning must be are you willing to let yourself be loved by God who loves us as a parent loves their child ?

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

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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