

Notices

Good morning and a very warm welcome to you all, whether you are here with us or watching from home, you are all very welcome as we worship here together at Tyndale.

This morning our service is being conducted by Rachel Haig our Community Minister. Rachel, as always, we thank you for taking our service today and we look forward to sharing this time together.

The notices for this week include, our Tuesday Coffee Shop, which as we now know is held in person, here in the sanctuary, from 10am until 12noon. Do come along and enjoy refreshments and conversation as we open our doors to the local community.

On Tuesday evening we have our monthly online Church Members meeting. All church members are invited to join us on zoom, and the details will be sent out to you soon.

On Wednesday evening at Time@Tyndale, we have our monthly communion service, which is being led by Rachel Haig. The evening starts with refreshments at 7.30pm, with Communion starting at 8pm. Again, do join us, for what is always a very special time together here in the sanctuary.

On Thursday morning at 11 am we have our new online coffee shop time. The details are on the church website for those of you who are free and able to join in this time of conversation.

Thank you

Welcome

As we begin our service today, we give thanks to all those who have participated together in providing all we need, from the stewards to the techies to the musicians and singers, not forgetting the posty so that whether here in person, online at home, or reading through the script at home alone, we travel together in our worship today. Let us quieten our minds and open our hearts to the living God who has called us each by name.

Song LP295 Here in this place (Gather us in) Mike Garnier

Call to worship

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ, be with you

See what love the Father has given us,

ALL: that we should be called the children of God.

BPW 40 Fill your hearts with Joy and gladness

Opening Prayer

O God our maker, who is with us when the journey of life begins and knows us as we learn to know ourselves, today we thank you for making yourself known to us through Jesus Christ.

Through all the ups and downs of life you have promised to be with us and walk alongside us. So we turn to you again in this time of worship and offer you both our thanks and our profound gratitude for your loving presence with us here now, and in every moment we look for you. You celebrate our triumphs and hold us in our despair and challenge us in our prejudices and failures. So you help us to grow in character and spirit.

We thank you now for Jesus example of life and death and resurrection. For all we learn about sharing life with others, for all we learn about caring and reaching out to others, for all we learn about love for self and others. And for the knowledge of new life and hope in even the most challenging places. For all that has been revealed to us of the wonder of the kingdom of God which we long to see grow and flourish around us.

As we turn to you this morning, bring your forgiveness and peace into our lives, teach us more about your hope, your faithfulness and deepen our understanding of eternity. Draw near to us, and help us to be open to your Spirit. Teach us new things that we've never thought about before, just as you demonstrated your upside down way of looking at the world to all who would listen to you.

Jesus, fill us with joy and peace in believing. Saviour, Redeemer, Friend, Teacher, our all in all. We offer you our love. Amen

Song As the deer pants for the water

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead

us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Song

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility;
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity.
Cause our faith to rise; cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of pow'r that can never fail—
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us—
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend © 2005 Thankyou Music

Reading Psalm 23

Song Love of God revealed in wonder

Stuart Townend

Reading John 2: 1-11

Sermon The extravagant kingdom

The vigilant amongst you may have noticed that this is the second story of Jesus that we're thinking about together from John's gospel. We are particularly listening in on conversations or encounters that a variety of people had with Jesus on his travels with his band of disciples. We're going to follow them through towards Advent. So if you want to read ahead and familiarise yourself again with John's gospel I'd encourage you to do so. John is different from the other gospel writers.

Apart from a very few stories about birth and childhood, the gospel writers seem to regard 'Jesus – the early years' as a largely unknown record, or perhaps irrelevant, unnecessary information. Perhaps that says something about the status of children in those days. These days we would no doubt record a whole lot more because we understand more about how those early years shape a person. But the strange thing is not the dearth of information. It's where the gospel writers choose to start Jesus life on the road, his ministry and purpose, his significance. Matthew, Mark and Luke really begin with Jesus baptism in the Jordan by cousin, John the Baptist. But John chooses a wedding in Cana. In the others, Jesus seems to be alone, in John's account Jesus is still with his Mum, and he's gathered a number of disciples who go with him everywhere, even to other people's weddings it seems.

All writers must choose how to use their material, and John isn't attempting to be historically systematic in setting out an orderly account of Jesus life. He's telling us about the things Jesus did that reveal who he was and the significance of his life for the world.

So...the story or the sign, as it's the first of the signs that reveal Jesus glory. John begins with a wedding party. The wedding industry has been quite badly hit during the pandemic. And it is an industry every bit as full on as back in the days of Jesus. So much to plan and prepare. From dresses, invitations, to hen and stag do's, to seating plans, to table decorations and favours! When my nephew got married every place setting had a little personalised, and, I thought, somewhat rude, card specific to the person sat there. Who had time to do that? But it was a wonderful talking, and laughing point, on the tables. Then there's the party aspect of music and dancing, and more food, oh and toasts and speeches. Well you know how it goes. Astonishing detail and extravagance. The main idea being that everyone

have a brilliant time...as far as possible...no expense spared. Its a sad thing to go away from a wedding hungry and thirsty...and I have sadly done that too.

The importance of the ceremony too and its meaning with promises and commitments and a choosing of exclusivity and faithfulness. Without these, the rest is mere frippery. Although you wouldn't know it from the amount of preparation and yes, expense, that more often goes into the communal part of a wedding.

Interesting that for some, the importance of having around them those who will celebrate has taken such priority that they have chosen to postpone and wait for rather than get married. I can understand it whilst also wondering about it. The importance of the celebration.

And aren't we all looking forward to some great parties and celebrations again? I know Debbie has been waiting to throw a party for at least 2 years now. It will happen, next year, we hope.

Just pause for a moment and think about the best wedding you've been to. Of course, you may feel under pressure to say your own, especially if you're sitting next to your partner. But just for a moment, what was the best wedding you went to and what made it so special? Anyone want to share?

For Jesus and his friends the wedding party was in full swing, and the wine had run out. Bear in mind that these weddings went on for a week. That's either really bad planning or the guests have drunk an awful lot? Totally embarrassing and shameful. To run out of wine at a wedding party? You'd just never show your face around town again. Ruin the whole event. When I read this I get this comical little picture of a Les Dawson type Mary, hitting Jesus in the ribs and whispering loudly, 'They've no wine left.' And Jesus rolling his eyes, 'Ssh, Mum, don't say it so loud!' Family can be embarrassing when they get it in their heads that you should do something.

Perhaps it was sheer pride that made Mary prompt Jesus. A kind of 'This is my boy' moment. But I like the idea of Mary being the one who gave Jesus the little nudge out of the nest and into the open, of Mary being the one who shooed Jesus into the limelight, who started him on his way with this first miraculous sign that symbolised so much more than the spared blushes of a wedding host. She was there at the beginning of his ministry and would be there alongside John, they stood together, at the end, by the cross.

'My hour has not yet come, Jesus says.' But even at the start we see the ever present shadow of the cross. Indeed as he began his ministry he was walking in the valley of the shadow of death and this sign demonstrated the bigger picture and wider story of God's desire that people would come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and that through believing they would find life in his name. That's John's stated purpose for writing. There's a little clue at the end of the story, in verse 11, 'Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.' An echo of chapter 1 verse 14 – And the word became flesh and lived amongst us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a Father's only son, full of grace and truth. And immediately people believe in him – his disciples believed.

So I believe that this story is one about the possibility of renewed life. And it's about the kingdom of God. Just **before** the story of the wedding is a picture of heaven. Straight **after** we have Jesus clearing the temple, supposedly the place of God's presence and glory, making way for the New by clearing out the old. Something new is beginning as Jesus begins his ministry. And turning water into wine points the way.

Religion had been locked up in temple, and law, rules and regulations. It was kept by the religious authorities, their domain, and they, by and large had power over almost every aspect of life. There was a religious law about most things. Being clean enough to go to the Temple or be present at worship was very costly. Some people simply could never go, were never acceptable. So whilst everything was understood as belonging to God, it felt more like it all belonged to the Priests and Synagogue leaders and God seemed silent and far away. It sometimes feels much the same today if we're honest. Add to that Roman rule and taxes and life was weighed down with an oppressive need to meet the requirements of the empire and the Religion. People were not free. They struggled to survive, they worked hard for what little was left after they had paid the ever increasing needs of the state and there was little relief to be found in the city or in the countryside. So a wedding party was a welcome distraction and great community event.

So here's a story about a feast, a party. Jesus begins his ministry at a party! And what's more he's the one who provides the best wine. He doesn't say, 'right well, you've all had quite enough, drunk far too much already and should go home and sleep it off. Please don't drive your donkeys in this condition.' No the Jesus that we see here likes a party. He turns water, very good for rehydrating after too much alcohol, into wine. What's more he uses the purification jars to make it in.

Now the point of this is not to promote alcohol or drunkenness as necessary for enjoying oneself. Quite the opposite of those things which trap people into destructive patterns of living and diminish their relationships so that they are as weighed down as the people at the party with Jesus. Rather, the point of the story is that the glory being revealed is not oppressive and joy stealing. And the kingdom of God is not a miserable set of rules and laws and being told what to do all the time. No this first sign of the glory of the kingdom is far away from that. It's about generosity, joy, being filled to the brim. It's not a good party if you go away hungry, or thirsty, a good party is when you go away full up.

Here was Jesus at the beginning of his ministry demonstrating that something new was happening and the kingdom of God was the opposite of what people have come to understand of the religion they lived with. There's the reference to the jars used for cleansing, there's the miracle of the wine which reveals both power and glory. Power to create and bring change, glory that reminds us of Jesus as the Son of God.

Jesus reminded them of the ancient, great Jewish image of the kingdom of God as a feast. And the sign was it's coming through and in me. The gift of transformative life is given through Jesus. That's the first sign. And it's free, uncoerced, faithful, committed to completing the task, and no cost, unless you class being thoroughly loved and called to follow as a price too steep.

So there you go, to the contrary, Mother knew best, Jesus hour had come. Not the hour of his death as it usually refers to, that hour had not yet come, but the time when a new Kingdom would break through old barriers that kept people

closed off from God, well... that time had come. This was a sign of life not death. The time for people to be made clean from the things that separated them from God, the time when a new life began with those who believed in Jesus. A time for extravagant love and generous compassion and forgiveness and healing and a cause for celebration. A true levelling up.

And so it continues till the last hour strikes and the ultimate gift of life through Christ is his gift of his own life for the sake of every guest at God's great feast. Elsewhere, there is talk of those who refused to go to the party. It's possible to refuse it. You see, you can offer a glass of the best but unless it is taken and placed to the lips and tasted, it's of no use how good it is. The message of this story and all that will follow in John's gospel, is Jesus Christ brings new life through belief in him. And what's more it's a gift that's offered to everyone and each of us, even today.

Song We're going to shine like the sun in the kingdom of heaven

Prayers of Intercession

As we turn our thoughts outwards to the world beyond us, we ask you to help us to see with your eyes and understanding. You never give up. You never fail in your love. You see through to our hearts and call us to follow you in spite of our weariness, fearfulness and weaknesses. Give us the courage we need to proclaim your kingdom even when it seems impossible to turn the tide of self centredness, injustice, division and hatred.

So we turn again to you and ask for your wisdom to reimagine a world that understands you are for them. You have given all that we need to live fully and yet we go our own way, we are stubborn and foolish and we put our trust in things which lead us towards darkness rather than light. Bring your forgiveness and grace close so that the light of your hope is kindled in hearts across our land.

Today we pray for those who love power and seek it for themselves. In boardrooms and palaces, in political parties and government departments. We pray for humility, generosity, compassion, and love to remind them that the power behind life is not theirs to grasp.

We pray today for those who love selfish ways and seek to promote themselves above all others. For those who gratify their own needs and desires by using and abusing others. We ask for faithfulness in hearts and minds and for relationships that have stood the test of time to be honoured and encouraged. For those who share their lives exclusively and seek to remain true to promises made to each other, we give thanks and ask for your blessing. We pray too for new relationships setting out to build lives of love and faithfulness, give them joy and patience in equal measures.

We pray today for parents with children to nurture and care for. For strength and patience where there is tiredness and worry. We pray for grandparents who watch with care over their children and grandchildren with encouragement and hope amidst a difficult and constantly changing world.

We pray for those who love money and fame too much, who seek an ivory tower from which to shelter from the reality of life and push back the march of time, who cannot recognise true love or the things which make for contentment.

We pray for our communities and for our city and for those who must make budget decisions that affect us all. We pray for the Mayor and his cabinet, asking for clarity of thinking and wisdom. We pray for those who work to alleviate the loneliness and poverty to be found so near us. May they find the resources they need to make a difference.

Help us too to open our eyes and look for you amongst those who seem to struggle in the darkness of our human existence. Help us to bring light, to be light, to shine the light of Christ wherever we go, with whoever we meet. Help us to be your eyes and ears, your hands and feet bringing your hope and peace into our community. For we believe you are for us and for our community! And your love was poured out for us all. So too we pray for one another, as brothers and sisters in Christ at Tyndale that our witness to your saving grace will draw us closer to one another and help others to hear you speak to them too. We lift our prayers in your name, Jesus, Prince of Peace. Amen

Words of Offering

We pause in this moment to recognise the gifts we each bring to our common life, for our money, time and talents offered for the building of God's Kingdom through Tyndale and beyond.

So we share the grace with each other:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Hymn 328 And can it be that I should gain

Blessing

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and remain with you always.