

Cooma Anglican Sunday 19 January 2025 HC 2.1

TIS 585 I heard the voice of Jesus say

I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto Me and rest
Lay down, O weary one, Lay down, your head upon My breast
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad
I found in Him a resting place, and He has made me glad

I heard the voice of Jesus say, Behold I freely give
The living water thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live
I came to Jesus and I drank of that life giving stream
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him

I heard the voice of Jesus say I am this dark worlds Light
Look unto Me thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright
I looked to Jesus and I found in Him my Star my Sun
And in that light of life I'll walk till travelling days are done

The Grace

of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.
And also with you.

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Lord have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit.

Sentence of the Day

Jesus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. John 2:11

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Bountiful God, whose Son revealed his glory at Cana of Galilee; help us to believe and obey, so that, as our Saviour promised, we may be filled with the wine of new life, and show forth his joy and love; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.
Amen.

Isaiah 62:1-5

¹ For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. ² The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. ³ You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be

married. ⁵ As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalms 36:5

⁵ Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

⁶ **Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, LORD, preserve both people and animals.**

⁷ How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ **They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.**

⁹ For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

¹⁰ **Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart**

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

¹ Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

John 2:1-11

¹ On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." ⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." ¹¹ What Jesus did here in

Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - The Wedding at Cana

Question Time

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: Christ Jesus, intercede for us, and in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

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.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Scripture Sentence

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

The Confession

The Spirit of truth comes to convict us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. Let us open our hearts and confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn - TIS 457 - The Church's one foundation

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord

She is His new creation, By water and the Word

From heav'n He came and sought her, To be His holy bride

With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died

Elect from every nation, Yet one o'er all the earth

Her charter of salvation, One Lord one faith one birth

One holy name she blesses, Partakes one holy food

And to one hope she presses, With every grace endued

'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war

She waits the consummation of peace forevermore

Till with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are blest

And the great Church victorious, shall be the Church at rest

Yet she on earth hath union, with God the Three in One

And mystic sweet communion, with those whose rest is won

O happy ones and holy, Lord give us grace that we

Like them the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The Holy Communion

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread: so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

After Communion

Gracious God, we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen

Notices

Hymn - TIS 595- O Jesus I have promised

**O Jesus, I have promised, To serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou for ever near me, My Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle if Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my Guide.**

**O let me feel Thee near me: The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me, Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin.**

**O Jesus, Thou hast promised to all who follow Thee,
That where Thou art in glory, there shall Thy servant be;
And Jesus, I have promised, to serve Thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.**

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Sermon – St Paul’s Anglican Church, Cooma
Second Sunday after the Epiphany – 19 January 2025

Introduction

What a difference four feet make! Martin spoke last week about the importance of context, and I can assure you that the view from here feels very different than the view from the chair to my left! I only hope that I can do this pulpit justice in this, my first, sermon. In fact, I’d be lying if I didn’t admit to being a little nervous. To combat these nerves, I have spent the last two weeks researching how to give an effective sermon and came across the story of the vicar who gave a very long and boring address. At the end of the service, the faithful filed out of the church, barely making eye contact with the preacher, except for one member of the congregation, who was the parish’s eternal optimist. “Well done vicar” he said. “I thought your sermon was filled with the peace and love of God!”. Taken aback, the vicar said that he had never had such positive feedback and asked what made the parishioner say so. “Well” replied the optimist, “it reminded me of the peace of God because it passed all understanding and the love of God because it endured forever”! So, with that in mind, I will try and keep this concise and to the point.

John 2:1-11 The Marriage at Cana

And yet that may be quite a challenge, for what a fascinating Gospel reading it was today. A reading that raises so many questions. Why did Jesus - who could heal the sick, calm stormy seas, and even raise the dead - choose to announce his earthly ministry by turning water into wine? Why did he choose to perform this miracle, even though he stated to Mary that his hour had not yet come? And, perhaps most importantly, what does this mean for us living here on the Monaro almost two thousand years later?

Well, as you can imagine, this short passage has been analysed, interpreted and reinterpreted countless times by theologians across the centuries. The meaning of almost every word has been examined in the greatest detail. There is the obvious parallelism of water turning into wine through purification jars and the different forms of baptism Martin spoke about last Sunday. Many scholars have also written extensively on how this story is an analogy of Christ’s relationship with believers, where Jesus is the bridegroom, and the church is his bride. In truth we could explore the deep veins of theology that run through this short passage for hours. However, with the warning of our vicar friend ringing in my ears, I think it might be useful for us to explore this Gospel reading through the prism of ‘transformation’.

Physical Transformation

The first side of this prism is the physical transformation of water into wine. Now, we can be sure that this happened because Mary exclaims that “They have no more wine”. This was not a plea to make the remaining wine go further. None of the disciples were asked to nip out to Cana’s equivalent of Dan Murphy’s and pick up whatever they had on the shelf. No, Jesus had the servants pour water into the purification jars and what came out was wine so good that the person in charge of the banquet exclaims that “the best wine has been kept to last”. So, we can be assured that this truly was a supernatural feat. It was, in all sense of the word, a miracle.

But why did Christ do this and what is the significance of this physical transformation of water into wine? Well, throughout the Old Testament water is often used as a motif to symbolise both God's judgement as well as his blessings for people on earth. The story of Noah and the flood is well known, as is the destruction of Pharaoh's Army in the Red Sea. We also know that the Israelites associated dark, chaotic waters as characteristics of Sheol, or the Abode of the Dead.

Yet water also signifies redemption. Isaiah Chapter 35 versus 6-7 tells of how God, with divine retribution, will come to save us. "Then shall the lame leap like a deer and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes". The chapter concludes with everlasting joy crowning the heads of those the Lord has rescued. And of course, there is the use of water as an outward sign of baptism, God's ultimate blessing. So, water is used in the bible to signify our journey on earth as mortal humans, and the blessings and judgement of God which accompanies that journey.

Wine, on the other hand, is used throughout the Old Testament as a symbol of the Messianic Kingdom. Joel, chapter 3, versus 17-18, says "Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my Holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy: never again will foreigners invade her. In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk". The prophet Isaiah, who we heard from earlier, says in chapter 25, verse 6: "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines".

The finest of wines. This Old Testament prophesy by Isaiah is fulfilled with the words that we heard in John's Gospel that "the best wine has been kept to last". And this is the second side of our prism – the transformation from the Old Testament to the New.

Covenantal Transformation

The miracle performed by Jesus during the Wedding at Cana not only signified the start of Christ's earthly ministry, but the transition to a new relationship between God and His people. It could be easy for us to overlook today, but it is most likely that those hearing or reading John's Gospel in the first century would have immediately grasped the comparison between Christ's first miracle at Cana and the story of Israel's greatest prophet, Moses. For in Exodus, after Aaron's staff was turned into a snake, we read that "The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt – over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs – and they will turn to blood' Blood will be everywhere in in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone". And so it was.

Yet at Cana, instead of water being turned into blood, which in Exodus is associated with death and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Christ turned the water into wine, associated with the messianic kingdom. Moreover, most scholars - including many Jewish rabbis - believe that the assertion that "the best wine has been kept to last" was a metaphor used by John to contrast Jesus was Moses, who up until now had been God's greatest servant and prophetic leader in the history of Israel. John was telling the reader that as great as Moses was, Jesus was greater. The greatest of all the prophets. The greatest of all the wines.

This motif of wine representing the transition to the new covenant is repeated throughout the Gospels. In John Chapter 15, verse 1 Jesus says – “I am the real vine”. This fulfills Zechariah’s prophesy in Chapter 8 versus 11-12, that God will not deal with his people as He did in the past, but that “The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people”. Additionally, all three Synoptic Gospels use the analogy of new wine in new wineskins to illustrate the beginning of this new covenant. And, of course, this motif reaches its inevitable climax at Christ’s Last Supper with the disciples. We all know those famous words from Matthew chapter 26, versus 27-28: “Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them saying “Drink from it all of you, for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.” Less familiar is the next verse. “I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom”. The wine of salvation. The wine of the messianic kingdom to come.

Transformation of the Disciples

This rather neatly brings us on to the third side of the prism – the transformation of Christ’s followers from students into disciples. At the time of Jesus, students often spent all their time with a teacher, sleeping outside their house, sharing meals, just so that they wouldn’t miss a ‘pearl of wisdom’ that their teacher might utter at any moment. This was not just a Jewish tradition but was common throughout the Hellenic world. At the time of the wedding at Cana, according to John, Jesus had four followers – Andrew, Peter, Phillip and Nathaniel (who most scholars identify as the apostle Bartholomew). Although John writes that these four had already recognised Jesus as the Messiah, it is revealing that John writes in verse 11 of our passage, “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory, *and his disciples believed in him*”. It was seeing this first miracle which gave them unshakable faith in Christ, that allowed them to believe in him, that prepared them for the challenges ahead, and strengthened them so that they could preach the Gospel to the world after Christ’s death, resurrection and accession into heaven.

Transformation of Us

So, with all that in mind, where does that leave us, sitting here in St Paul’s Cooma in 2025? Well, I put it to you that this question forms the final side of the prism – the transformation of *us* into disciples of Christ. Christ turned water into wine not only to fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament, but also to show us that He is the vine from which the wine of the messianic kingdom will come. He did it to reveal His glory and so that His disciples would believe. John recorded this act, and he was the only Gospel writer to do so, so that we too can believe, even though we were not there to physically see it. This seemingly innocuous, almost frivolous miracle challenges us not only to accept that Christ is the Son of Man, but to become disciples too, just as those that saw it for themselves did. Later in John, in Chapter 15, Christ says “I am the true vine, and my father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine and you are the branches”.

“I am the vine and you are the branches.”

Modern disciples

Brothers and sisters, Christ is calling on us to be the branches to His vine, to transform ourselves into His disciples. And that means staying with Him, sleeping outside His door, inviting Him to eat with us, listening for His wisdom, walking where He walked and loving as He loved. We heard in our New Testament reading that we have all been blessed with gifts by the Spirit. Paul wrote in that passage that “There are a variety of gifts but the same Lord, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities but the same Lord”. Our challenge as disciples is to use these gifts that we have each been given to live as Christ did, not to be served but to serve. To bring the joy of Christ to those in sorrow, to bring hope to those in darkness.

We heard last week that in the Great Commission, Christ told His disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. But Jesus immediately continues “and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you”. And what had he commanded them? He had commanded them to heal the sick, cast out demons, to carry the cross and to love one another as Christ had loved them: he had commanded them to make Christ’s Kingdom known on earth. Let us remember that most famous of prayers which Jesus 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”. The disciples were not told to simply wait for salvation, but to continue Christ’s work in this world. He encouraged them to serve the poor, the marginalised, the outcast; in short, to bear witness to his word with those members of society who felt forgotten. As the great 16th century Christian reformer William Tyndale argued, “let every man... serve his brethren as he would do Christ himself”. Now, it is true that good works do not bring salvation. That is the preserve of faith alone. But while good works may not be the root of faith, they may be considered its flower.

The power of prayer

And if we struggle to transform ourselves into disciples, then we can look to Mary’s example at Cana – we can ask Christ for help. We can pray, not just for God to change the world around us, but for Christ to transform us into the disciples he longs us to be, even though the hour of his second coming may not yet be here. We can pray for the strength, the wisdom, the knowledge and the commitment to actively transform ourselves, our region, and our community, so that the Monaro better reflects the coming kingdom of Christ. We can choose discomfort and engage with those members of *our* community who feel marginalised and forgotten.

Beloved friends, I put it to you that it is this transformation of all believers into true disciples that is at the heart of this biblical passage. Our current mortal world is but water, and like water left under a hot sun, it will eventually disappear. But Christ’s messianic kingdom will last forever.

So, are we willing to heed the lesson from Cana and transform into true disciples?

Are we steadfast in faith?

Are we prepared to be the branches of Christ’s vine that will prepare the people of this mortal world for salvation?

Are we ready to serve our community as we would Christ?