Reflection for family@church January 2021 John 2:1-11

I wonder what makes you feel embarrassed. Do you care what people think of you? What would you **not** like people to know about you?

Well, when Jesus told this story, a wedding usually lasted a week. Some people would have contributed to it, but the family would be judged on the feast. To run out of food or wine, would have been very embarrassing for the family.

Before we get into the story, there are a couple of things to think about: 1] the story is only found in the gospel of John. John’s gospel is quite different to the others; the other 3. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are called the synoptic gospels because many of the passages can be found in all of them.

John’s gospel is different, it uses language that is rich in symbolism, and irony and paradox are common in it, which in some ways opens up new levels of meaning. So, it is helpful to think about it in 2 ways – accepting the story as it unfolds and also looking for any symbolism that might lead us to other understanding.

For example, the first words; ‘on the third day’, could be referring just to the 3rd day into the wedding feast, or could it be a reference to the resurrection? –it was on the 3ed day that Jesus rose from the dead! In which case we need to look for other symbols in the story, I will point some of them out as we go.

2] When Mary says to Jesus, they have no wine he replies, Woman, what concern is that to you and me? to our ears addressing his mother as woman sounds disrespectful, but it was not at that time. And John in his gospel never refers to Mary by name….

So, my first question about this story is, did Mary forget who she was talking too? Not just her son but at the very least a teacher, but also the Messiah…

Did she overstep the mark??

It seems she didn’t because although Jesus said it was of no concern, once Mary told the servants to do what he asked, he did do something about it.

There is another word that could be taken in a different way, Jesus said to her, my hour has not yet come. On first look we understand it as, it is not time for him to perform a miracle or to show his power. But as the gospel goes on, it becomes clear, that Jesus could be referring to his death. Which means he knew at the very beginning of his ministry what lay ahead.

The story goes on to tell us that the water held in the stone jars for ceremonial washing, were changed into wine. And not just any wine but very good wine according to the master of ceremonies, so good in fact that he calls the bridegroom over and says, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept **the good wine until now.”**

Notice that Jesus didn’t touch the water, he didn’t even pray over it, he didn’t need too. Which begs the question did he ever need to hold something in hands and lift it up before the Father giving thanks…. This Lord whom even the wind and waves obeyed was so much more powerful than we often give him credit for.

**So, what can we learn from this story.**

1]There is nothing wrong with feasting and having a good time. In fact, we are encouraged to do so. Remember when the woman poured that expensive perfume on Jesus and one of the disciples said, very disparagingly, we could have spent that on the poor. Jesus replied, you will always have the poor with you.

There is a time to celebrate and times to hold back. I don’t know about you, but sometimes I am in danger of feeling overwhelmed by inequality, injustice and poverty, which does not help because we can become paralysed into not doing anything, because the problem seems so big.

**When I feel like that, I find comfort in Jesus’ words, he is saying you can’t fix it all.**

2] It is often not until we get to the end of ourselves, when we can’t do anything else, that God often steps in.

 I have known times when I have done everything I can to make a difference either for myself or my family, or someone I have been praying for. I get to the end of my trying because I cannot see a way forward, and that is when I usually see or experience God’s grace pouring down – it may not resolve the issue but somehow peace reigns and we have the wherewithal to carry on.

3] Jesus could have turned just enough water into wine, but instead he chose to give them far more than they needed. This reminds us that we have a generous God.

No where else is that seen better than in his forgiveness of us, and his encouragement – no, his command, for us to forgive like he does:

Luke 6 – Jesus said

***37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”***

**God is a generous God, and he expects us to be generous too.**

Which brings me to my final point 4] God gives us the best he can – so surely, we should follow him in giving the best we can, to him and others.

One of the things I cannot bear about harvest festivals is that some people take a look in their cupboards, find something they don’t want, and bring it as an offering**. I would not dare; the measure we give will be the measure we receive….**

I said I would point out the symbolism as we go along, and I have just one more thing to say about that.

In using the water set aside for ceremonial washing and turning that into wine could symbolise, says theologian Andrew Knowles, *‘the long years of Jewish legalism that is trying to be right with God by careful washing – are now to give way to the joyful wine of the gospel.’*

I get that because it seems to me that by sending Jesus, God was saying, there is nothing you can do that will make me love you more. There are no rules you can follow to the letter, that will get you to heaven. You can’t even win a place in heaven by helping to bring others into the kingdom. Your place is already set aside for you. You are invited to the wedding, more than that, you are invited to the greatest feast of all time – all you need to do is accept it!!

Let us pray…

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the bible,

and how it helps us to understand more about you and your love for us.

Forgive us Lord when we deny your power in our lives and the lives of others.

Help us, as your children, to live in your love always. Amen.