



The Second Sunday of Epiphany 19th January 2025

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

HYMN

1. Bethlehem, of noblest cities
None can once with thee compare;
Thou alone the Lord from heaven
Didst for us Incarnate bear.

2. Fairer than the sun at morning
Was the star that told his birth;
To the lands their God announcing,
Hid beneath a form of earth.

3. By its lambent beauty guided,
See, the Eastern Kings appear;
See them bend, their gifts to offer,—
Gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh.

4. Solemn things of mystic meaning!—
Incense doth the God disclose;
Gold a Royal child proclaimeth;
Myrrh a future tomb foreshows.

5. Holy Jesu! in thy brightness
To the Gentile world displayed!
With the Father, and the Spirit,
Endless praise to Thee be paid.

Introduction to confession

By the mercies of God,
let us confess our sins and present our bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to him,
which is our spiritual worship.

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:
Lord, have mercy.
You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:
Christ, have mercy.
You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:
Lord, have mercy.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw you to himself and cleanse you from all your sins, +
that you may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Absolution

The Collect for the second Sunday of Epiphany

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;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

A Reading from The Old Testament Isaiah 62. 1-5

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
2 The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will give.
3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land Married;
for the Lord delights in you,
and your land shall be married.
For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your sons marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Psalm 36. 5-10

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
6 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.
7 How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your
wings.
8 They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your
delights.
9 For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.



10 O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!

The Epistle
1 Corinthians. 12. 1-11

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

1. The race that long in darkness pined
have seen a glorious light;
The people dwell in day who dwelt
in Death's surrounding night.

2. To hail thy rise, thou better Sun!
the gathering nations come,
Joyous, as when the reapers bear
the harvest-treasures home.

3. To us a Child of hope is born;
to us a Son is given;
Him shall the tribes of earth obey,
him, all the hosts of heaven.

4. His name shall be the Prince of Peace,
for evermore adored,
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
the great and mighty Lord

5. His power increasing still shall spread;
his reign no end shall know;
Justice shall guard his throne above,
and peace abound below.

The Gospel
John 2. 1-11

Alleluia, alleluia.
Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations
and believed in throughout the world. Alleluia

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory be to thee O Lord

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty

gallons. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 9 When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "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." 11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to thee, O Christ

Reflection

The changing of water into wine is a remarkable but simple story that anyone can understand. Of course, there is a deeper meaning if we have the 'eagerness to search and the eye to see and the mind to understand.'

John's gospel has no parables, unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke. Rather, John writes about seven miracles which he calls 'signs' which alert us to probe more deeply than at face value. This water into wine was the 'first sign' which caused his disciples to believe in him and in which the 'glory', the splendour of Jesus, is 'seen'.

In Revelation, we read about the 'marriage of the lamb'. Figurative language in which the church is described as the 'bride' of Christ who is the Lamb of God. This idea is also in the Old Testament; God is described as the husband of Israel, wedded to them and the land. Both are images we understand, they embody deep commitment and love. But God's love, unlike our love which is so fickle, is strong, generous, unmerited love which seeks our response. As the hymn has it...

....From heaven he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

Note how the water jars are filled to overflowing, no more can be added and there is no lack, it is the best wine. Every time we take bread and wine and give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we celebrate a foretaste of the 'heavenly banquet' which is really a picture of the total joy and fulfilment found in the presence of God, '...at thy right hand are pleasures for ever more.' (Ps 16)

It is suggested that the wedding Jesus attended was for a relative of Mary. She certainly appears to have been involved in the arrangements as she has some authority with the caterers. I can imagine her keeping a watchful eye, making sure everything is going to plan. To run out of wine would be a social *faux pas*, a catering catastrophe, which could even be the cause of a lawsuit if a disgruntled guest did not receive hospitality appropriate to the value of his wedding gift. Having told Jesus the problem she simply tells the caterers to "Do what he tells you".

The servants had to change their usual practice and do something different. To fill such large jars to the brim was hard work and no doubt they thought it madness. As the wine is drawn, the chief steward at the feast makes the rather bemused comment to the bridegroom that unusually, and perhaps stupidly, he has saved the best wine until the end.

I think it rather special that this 'sign' was performed at a wedding. A simple occasion of human happiness where there was good food, good company, much love and wine '...to make glad the heart of man'. It places Jesus's 'first sign' firmly embedded in human joy. We do not have a God far off and

distant, or too 'spiritual' to be involved with a birthday party, a pleasant walk, or simple pleasures with others.

Is it not sometimes true of us that only after we have tasted much of the 'cheap wine' of life that we are able to appreciate the best? God only offers the best all the time.

Jesus said "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10.10

Two levels of hearing. We can listen lightly so that we are not challenged or have anything demanded from us. We don't need or want to hear anything new because we already know. We already have our mind made up. That feels 'safe'; we have made the world 'manageable'. We can filter what we hear and avoid what is too disturbing or painful. We can change the channel, defriend, switch off. Our level of hearing keeps our world superficial and small. It is difficult to recognise that in ourselves and hard to change.

To listen deeply is to risk being open and vulnerable – but it is also dynamic. It requires us to hold less tightly to 'my truth'. To come and fill our cup with new wine and drink. It is like opening a window in a stuffy room and feeling fresh air on our face. We can take a risk and pray and ask to see what we don't yet know, and go where we have never been, think new thoughts imagine possibilities never considered.

How might we begin to do this? Practically, Bible study with a commentary alongside is a good way to expand our knowledge. It is even better if we find a friend or a group to think through and discuss what we read. It helps increase awareness of the human condition and inform our political and societal understanding.

All the readings in Epiphany contain a revelation and require a response from us. To change, to go, to reach out, to love, to give, to forgive, to heal, to reconcile. It is an invitation not simply to believe a truth but to do the truth.

The Apostle John writes as an old man looking back over a lifetime of faith in Jesus Christ. He was at the wedding at Cana, at the foot of the cross, and a witness to the resurrection. In old age he writes letters to the young churches to teach and encourage them. They had never known Jesus in the flesh. John will tell them about the One whom he has seen and heard, touched and gazed upon and who has been present to him all his life. He will tell them:

That wherever Jesus went and whenever he came into a life,

it is like water turning into wine.

Not cheap wine, but rich and warming. This is the message of Jesus - that we are profoundly loved and welcomed into a joyous celebration of life that is greater than our circumstances.

Wine is to be drunk not stored in closed jars or bottles – this is its real and ultimate purpose. But drinking is something only we can do for ourselves.

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Intercessions

We pray for the coming of God's kingdom.

We pray that Christ may be seen in the life of the Church.
You have called us into the family
of those who are the children of God.
May our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ
be strengthened by your grace.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a temple
where the Holy Spirit can dwell.
Give us clean hands and pure hearts
so that our lives will reflect your holiness.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world,
so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine as a witness
to the saving grace you have given for all.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body,
so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power
to bring hope to those in distress.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be the Bride,
where you, Lord, are the Bridegroom.
Prepare us for the wedding feast,
where we will be united with you for ever.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
you have called us into fellowship with all your saints.
We unite our prayers with theirs
and ask for grace to serve you with joy
where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for all eternity.
Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we 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.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

Eternal Lord,
our beginning and our end:
bring us with the whole creation
to your glory, hidden through past ages
and made known
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

May God the Father,
who led the wise men by the shining of a star
to find the Christ, the Light from light,
lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord.
Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit,
who came upon the beloved Son
at his baptism in the river Jordan,
pour out his gifts on you
who have come to the waters of new birth.
Amen.

May God the Son,
who turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana,
transform your lives and make glad your hearts.
Amen.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Be with us all.
Amen.

HYMN

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end:
be thou 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 hear thee speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
thou guardian of my soul.

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.

O let me see thy footmarks,
and in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
is in thy strength alone.
O guide me, call me, draw me,
uphold me to the end;
and then in heaven receive me,
my Saviour and my Friend.