

 *St Paul's Anglican Parish of Ipswich*
SUNDAY SERMON

Epiphany - 2nd Sunday

Delivered by Rev'd Stephen Monsiegnur on the 20th January 2019

What is going on?

Paul in his letter to the community in Corinth is talking about spiritual gifts, while in John's Gospel, Jesus is found at a wedding party where following an intercession from his mother he proceeds to perform his first and possibly most remembered miracle, turning water into wine.

What is Paul talking about when referring to spiritual gifts?

Why did Jesus turn water into wine? And

What are we to take from any of this?

Shortly in the thanksgiving, we will declare that we are the body of Christ and we are right to do so. But as we are gathered in this building we also identify as other roles; teachers, administrators, hospitality service providers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, police and many many other roles. Some are materialistically limited while others have an abundance.

Together we are the body of Christ but we are not all the same.

Pauls' message appears clear. Each of us has a distinctive set of gifts.

But why is recognising and respecting this important?

Simply none of us is capable of being all things needed for wellbeing, so, if we are to function as a body, a community we must combine our strengths in a cohesive manner. We must use our God given gifts for more than just our-self. We must work together, such as Mary used her status as Jesus mother to intercede and then as a guest to direct the servants.

Paul tells us: "make a difference with your gift." He is pretty blunt: if your gift is service, don't just talk about it, serve! If you have a gift for teaching, teach. If you have the means to share your goods, then give generously.

Turning to the Gospel; Why did Jesus turn water into wine?

Three reasons.

1. Jesus is compassionate.
2. The wine signifies God's new age.
3. Jesus wanted to develop faith'

In many Australian towns and cities, the 'Pub' is often an icon, a key feature of many main streets. Pub's reflected the financial and cultural vitality of a community, they are also as marketing and legend go, a sure place for a refreshing cold beer or other beverage that one may prefer after a hard day. Now imagine after a long hot day you arrive at the pub to be told there is no beer. You will as the late Slim Dusty did in his song 'A Pub with No Beer' recall that pub for the wrong reasons.

Honour was integral to the social fabric of first century Judaism just as ritual associated with the Law. This young couple were about to make a “faux pas” that would likely impact the rest of their married and possibly broader lives and Jesus being made aware felt compassion for them.

The quantity and quality of wine at a wedding was a statement of prosperity for the future and respect to the guests. To run out of wine at a wedding was a social disgrace and major breach of the demands of hospitality; and it would be devastating for the couple. Is such a concern far from the minds of a wedding planner even today?

Jesus listened to Mary, and driven by loving compassion acted.

The significance of Jesus first miracle occurring at a wedding and involving wine is I believe no accident. Jesus knew that by stepping up, by using his power he would be noticed and so a new age.

From Isaiah, we see prophecy of Gods promise being fulfilled through the symbolism of a feast involving food and wine.

"On this mountain the Lord will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of well-aged wines strained clear...This is the Lord for whom we have waited. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (25: 6-10.)

Such feast played a significant role in the celebration of social contracts. The unexpected abundance and improved quality of wine in the wedding at Cana in Galilee is met with great excitement , the best being delivered last, Reflecting on our first reading we can see how this symbolizes the arrival of God's new age.

By providing the new wine Jesus is announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is looking to develop faith. John tells us very clearly that a result of this miracle was the development of faith; “Jesus did this. The first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” (2:11)

Faith was not a chance result, Jesus had thought it though. In fact throughout the Gospels we see Jesus is looking to develop the faith of those around him through his example and actions. This was his mission, this is the mission he calls us too.

Messianic expectant Israel was unsettled to a point where even terrorist groups like the were Zealots were making a mark.(Acts 5:36-37) Understandably, the disciples were possibly anxious about following ‘any old Messiah’, for many “messiahs” had come and gone, but this miracle provided confidence.

Interestingly it was not only the disciples who displayed faith. Mary, Jesus mother by intervening on behalf of the couple and the servants in following the directions of Mary and notably Jesus. Consider they took Jesus at his word – even though it was utterly unreasonable. To give the master of the banquet - water - when he would be expecting wine - would be asking for trouble.

If we consider Jesus actions in the light of Paul's message to the Corinthians where he tells the Romans- and us-about the gifts of God, what can we take from this passage?

The lesson from the todays readings are that we must identify the gifts that God has given each of us, and then use them with love and compassion for the other. Do not belittle or shame another for what

they cannot do but using the gifts God has given you, humbly work with each other to enhance the effectiveness of what each of you can do. This will strengthen the bonds upon which the body of Christ will grow.

We are not told precisely how Jesus changed the water to wine, but we know that Jesus would pray often when seeking the intervention of the Holy Spirit. In today's gospel Mary intercedes for the couple, and Jesus listened. Pray always that God will hear you and shine a light on your path.

Trust God as Jesus trusted his Father. The servants had faith, Jesus shared his divine gift.

Jesus acted out of loving compassion for the bride and groom and the wedding was saved.

Our God is the God of the second chances.

God wants us to have faith in the divine.

The choice is ours.

Pray to God to show you your gift,

AMEN.