

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
23rd November 2021

READINGS

Hallelujah!
Sing to GOD a brand-new song,
praise him in the company of all who love him.
Let all Israel celebrate their Sovereign Creator,
Zion's children exult in their King.
Let them praise his name in dance;
strike up the band and make great music!
And why? Because GOD delights in his people,
adorns plain folk with salvation garlands!

Psalm 149:1-4 (the Message Translation)

Three days later there was a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were guests also. When they started running low on wine at the wedding banquet, Jesus' mother told him, "They're just about out of wine." Jesus said, "Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn't my time. Don't push me." She went ahead anyway, telling the servants, "Whatever he tells you, do it." Six stoneware water pots were there, used by the Jews for ritual washings. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus ordered the servants, "Fill the pots with water." And they filled them to the brim. "Now fill your pitchers and take them to the host," Jesus said, and they did. When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn't know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, "Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you've saved the best till now!" This act in Cana of Galilee was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum along with his mother, brothers, and disciples, and stayed several days.

John 2:1-12 (The Message Translation)

REFLECTION

It's really the last place you would expect to find Jesus -at a wedding! It's a party! And Jesus is there with his disciples! Why on earth are they there? Are they there to do something spiritual? No! Are they there to discuss policy? No! Are they there to get a deeper understanding of theology? No! In fact, Jesus' work has not really started in earnest yet. So why are they there? And, when you think about it – who would invite Jesus to a wedding?

Maybe Jesus is invited because he was good fun at parties! Maybe people wanted him there because he was excellent company. Maybe it's because people cared about him and called him friend. Maybe that's why Jesus was there - to laugh and joke and share time with people who mattered to him, and to toast the bride and groom and wish them the best.

Is that so hard to believe? Is it so hard to believe that Jesus had fun? That Jesus enjoyed a celebration? Jesus must have been good company, because this isn't the only time he gets invited to a party or to someone's home to share time and food with people.

Throughout his life, Jesus depicted God's kingdom as like a celebration. Like a great banquet, or like a wedding feast. A time of celebration, a time of laughter and happiness, a time of pleasure. So, it's no surprise that his ministry starts out at a wedding, with a very ordinary miracle where no one is healed, no one is brought to faith, no great point is made, just that the guests have a good time.

We have lost something of that joy from our faith, haven't we? We have allowed faith to become dull, even legalistic. Please understand, I am not saying that Christians can do whatever they want or live it up in any way they please! No, we are called to live to God's standards. But we do have relationship with the King of Kings, we are one with the Lord God, creator of all, He calls us friend, He calls us child, And we call him Father! And if that is not cause to celebrate, then I do not know what is.

Our faith is a celebration! It is a joyful thing that we have come into relationship with God. That is one of the reasons why we sing hymns! Worship is joyful! Just look at the Psalms - this week's reading from Psalm 149, is one of many Psalms that call on God's people to celebrate, to be joyful. And the King himself, King David was known to dance in worship such was his joy at praising God!

And it is no surprise that the greatest act Jesus leaves us, the communion meal, is also a celebration. A solemn event, yes; deeply significant and important in the life of the church - it is a celebration after all that goes very heart of all that we believe. Jesus died and rose for us. But that is not something we remember with sadness, it is to be remembered and celebrated with joy.

In the early Church, communion was a special event, not just a separate service added in at the end of worship, not just a few bits of bread and a wee drop of wine, but a shared meal, when all the fellowship came together, laughing and joking, sharing their ups and their down together, and sharing in the Lord's supper - The bread and the wine.

They say that people who eat together become much closer. Isn't that why you invite people to your house for a meal? It is one of the nicest things that you can do for someone. To share fellowship together, literally means to break bread together, to share such an intimate part of lives as eating with another.

There is something else I want you to note from this story of the wedding: Jesus had never performed a miracle, he had never healed a person, he had hardly ever preached, yet Mary, his mother, knew him. She understood some of what he was capable of doing. It is she who does not doubt what he can do, and I can imagine her beaming from ear to ear with pride at her son.

Faith is really believing that, despite all the evidence that the world seems to throw at us, despite all the difficulties in life, and even though there seems so little evidence to prove it, we trust in Jesus – and Jesus always comes through for us. And so, we can say that ours is not a sad religion but one of joy, and church a place where we do truly celebrate.

PRAYER

Lord our God,
Sometimes we are a bit guilty of going through the motions in our faith,
Of doing what we do out of habit and routine.

But, Lord, you remind us that it is a joy to worship,
That our faith is filled with hope and with promise.
You bless us with your love,
And give us reasons to celebrate
You are with us,
Your strength and your comfort are ours to call upon
And your purposes for each one of us are glorious.

Don't let us ever take faith for granted.
Don't let us give the wrongful impression that Jesus is dour!
Let your joy burst in our hearts,
And let faith and hope cause us to praise you holding nothing back.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

