

Virtual Church News

24 January 2021

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call Jacqui on 356993.

A Reading for the Week

John 2:1-12

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

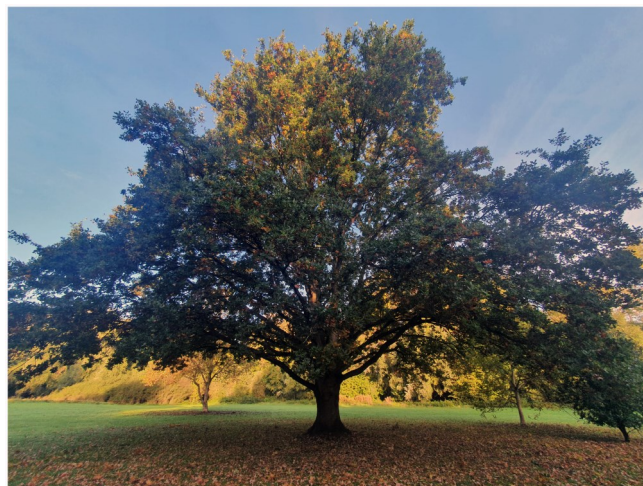
His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 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 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."

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. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.'



Services in Church

I know that this has been a very difficult time you, and I find it very sad that we have not been able to meet together for Public worship. Given the current circumstances, and the dangers posed by the new strain of COVID 19, it is felt that we should continue our worship online for the time being. Although we are legally able to open, we have been encouraged by Bedford Borough Council, and supported by the senior clergy in the decision to remain closed (as a high proportion of other parishes have chosen to do). Please contact me if you would like a chat over anything at all. My numbers are 01234 328452 and 07805879537. God bless

Eric

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

Over the last 10 months I've experienced the sense of detachment. It's not easy to connect with members of the church. I imagine that it is the same for the rest of you. Of course, we have done our best on Zoom and holding services online has certainly had its advantages, but there have been disadvantages as well. I have so missed singing, fellowship and the closeness and intimacy of human contact. Community lies at the heart of our faith. We believe in a God who draws us together into community, the koinonia of Christ.

People talk to me about private religion. There may indeed be such a thing as private religion, but there is no such thing as a private Christian faith. We are bound to one another in Christ and we cannot be Christians in isolation.

I draw so much from the 4th Gospel. Nowhere in the Gospel does it tell us who wrote it.

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Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued*

It does describe a 'disciple who Jesus loved,' who is probably not the author but the founder of the community to which the author belonged. The author of the 4th Gospel had drawn its deep perceptions of Jesus from ancient Greek sophia (wisdom). He, or perhaps she, spoke with a deep respect for the women who surrounded Jesus; The Samaritan woman at the well, Mary Magdalene, Martha, the woman caught in adultery (though some say that this story belongs more in Luke's Gospel) and of course, when we encounter the mother of Jesus in the 4th Gospel we find a much more three-dimensional character than the way she is presented in Matthew and Luke and, in this story, Mary takes centre stage.

Jesus in John is the pre-existent, divine Logos (Word) of God, embedded in the physicality of human existence. Jesus is not simply the son of Mary from Nazareth, but he has his beginnings before the foundations of the earth. He comes from God and not from Nazareth and urges us to enter that eternal identity in him by being born again from above. 'Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.' (John 3:6-8).

In our reading, we find ourselves at a wedding feast, the ultimate illustration of the marriage relationship between Christ and his Church. They run out of wine, and quite vocally, as mothers often do, Mary invites Jesus to sort the problem out.

We have had water before in John 1, which briefly mentions Baptism, though the author does not mention the fact that Jesus was Baptised; "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." (John 1 verse 26-27).

This is the 4th Gospel's stab at a Baptism story. The Jews were no strangers to Baptism, which was essentially a purification ritual to bring the outsider into line with Judaism. John hints that this is water used for Baptism or purification (v6). There are six jars, while seven is the perfect number, so these vessels with their religious contents are a less than ideal way of making us what we should be. This is another theme of the 4th Gospel that is repeated throughout the text, that we need something much deeper than religion to transform us (John 4:23-24).

What follows is the miracle that this story is about. The water in these jars is gently and silently transformed into wine, not just ordinary wine, but the finest wine. Not only this, but there is now over 150 gallons of it. This reminds us so much of the infinite generosity of God.

The imperfect has been, and now the perfect comes. Remember the other Gospels have John the Baptist saying, 'I Baptize with water, but he will Baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Here, the author of the 4th Gospel says the same thing. Baptism, and all religious rituals are about what is on the outside, but it is what God does on the inside that transforms us. The new wine is what fills us, so that although we look just as we have always looked, we are filled with the Spirit of the living God.

This was the moment that the world had been waiting for, the transformative power of God in Christ, and the indwelling of his Spirit in God's people. God has saved the best wine until last.

God Bless

Eric



Please pray with me

God and father,
We move beyond the religion of our faith,
And recognise who Jesus really is.
We ask you to fill us with the new wine of the Spirit,
Your Spirit of Love, of Faith, and of courage,
So that we can witnesses to the miracle of your presence.
Through Jesus Christ
Amen.



Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 24 January

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship. Be the light in the darkness! A service marking Holocaust Memorial.
- 1.15pm on BBC 2 - Songs of Praise. Celebrating 60 years (*please note the change to the usual channel*)
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong. Choral Vespers from the Church of the London Oratory.

Wednesday 27 January

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St Paul's Cathedral, London.

For the Children (& young at heart!)

This week's reading (see front page) is all about a wedding. The hosts of the wedding ran out of wine, so Mary came to Jesus and asked if he could help. Jesus then performed a miracle and turned water into wine. Why do you think Jesus did this? Can you think of a time when you helped a friend or family member who was in need?

This is a great story to encourage us that God cares not just about our needs or our behaviour, but also about us having fun! Sometimes building a relationship with God may seem like a chore, but God can be included in our time with our friends and family. Think about how you can speak to God, and share with him all that you do.

Activities:

Water into wine race: Pre-freeze some fruit squash into ice cube trays. When you are ready for your race give everyone a glass of water and then add an ice cube or two to each. See who's water turns into wine (squash) the fastest!

Taste Challenge: Get ready some different drinks. Give a member of your household a blindfold (a scarf will work well) and then ask them to taste each of the drinks. Can they work out what they are drinking?

Song:

Water to wine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUUEaXRvpJw>

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the story of Jesus turning water into wine. Thank you that this story show us how much Jesus cares for his friends. That you that Jesus still cares for us and wants to help meet our needs today. We pray for all those who have had wedding celebrations cancelled or postponed over the last few months, that they would be comforted by you. We pray for all those in the world who are struggling because they do not have the food or supplies that they need. God please would you be their provider. Amen.

Resources from Together at Home.

For more free resources visit tath.co.uk.



**GOD HAS SAVED
THE BEST WINE
UNTIL LAST!**

All Saints Church
Kempston

St James's Church
Biddenham

Virtch (Online Church)

Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.

The Love of Christ is not locked down

**Virtual
Virtch
Church**

St James, Biddenham, All Saints, Kempston

Discovery Group

This bible study group meets via Zoom on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 8pm.

Everyone is welcome to join the group. For further details, contact john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Suggested Music for this week

And can it be

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQeIGbKqiw8>

Immortal Invisible

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfu1dqKCGd8>

Be still and know (Amy Grant)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF1duZuGqAw>

I come with joy, a child of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpBs0b8Nnzs>

O taste and see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heiiATCrwVQ>

Water to wine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUUEaXRvpJw>



Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome.

Contact us for login details or if you have any prayer requests.



Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452

Mob: 07805 879537

Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Bedford Foodbank

Sadly we have decided we cannot currently continue to collect items for the Foodbank in the St James's Church porch, as it is too much of a risk to those who then take the items on to the Foodbank.

At this time we would ask that you make donations at the supermarket or by way of a financial donation. Further details can be found on their website: <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>



Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695