

that our senses can discover in it. But when Christ at Cana makes water into wine, the mask is off (John 5:19). The miracle has only half its effect if it only convinces us that Christ is God: it will have its full effect if whenever we see a vineyard or drink a glass of wine we remember that here works He who sat at the wedding party in Cana.

"Miracles", God in the Dock / C. S. Lewis. 1970

2

It's not the task of the church to change the world by legislative force. It's the task of the church to be the world changed by Christ. This is revolutionary in a way that conventional politics never can be.

Water to wine: some of my story / Brian Zahnd. 2016

Related topics

For further study:

Christology; revelation; New Covenant ' Old Covenant; church; Mary as icon of church

Closing Prayer

God of wonders,
at Cana in Galilee
you revealed your glory in Jesus Christ
and summoned all humanity to life in him.

Show to your people gathered on this day
your transforming power and give us a foretaste
of the wine you keep for the age to come.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, OT2, Year C²

CPL • LBC Year B Epiphany 3.odt • 2020-12-12

² *Opening prayers: scripture-related collects for years A, B and C, from the sacramentary / International Committee on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1999.*

4

Epiphany 3

(Sunday between 21 and 27 January inclusive)

Principal Service readings

Genesis 14.17-20	Melchizedek brings bread and wine
Psalms 128	Blessing on the faithful
Revelation 19.6-10	John's vision of worship in heaven
John 2.1-11	The wedding at Cana

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The wedding at Cana

¹On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' ⁴And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' ⁵His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' ⁶Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. ⁹When 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 and said to him, ¹⁰'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.' ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2.1-11 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

At the beginning of chapter 2 the phrase 'On the third day' alerts the reader to the theme of 'days' that marked 1.19-51.. In the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, following the account in Exodus 19.16, on the third day the glory of the Lord is revealed in the gift of the law (cf. 2.11) after four days of preparation (cf. 1.19, 29, 35, 43). In 1.43 Jesus had decided to go to Galilee Now, here he is. There is a change of style as more characters come into the story and it changes from a response to 'the Jews' to a miracle story.

This is the beginning of a major new section in the gospel, which ends at 4.43-54, where the second Cana miracle is linked with this first miracle: 'Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed water into wine' (4.46).

In this story Jesus' mother, his disciples, and his brothers (2.12) all appear. The setting of a marriage feast summons up the idea of the messianic era and its fullness, marked by wine and an abundance of food (cf. Hosea 2.19-20; Isaiah 25.6-8; Jeremiah 2.2; Song of Songs). The first character introduced is the mother of Jesus, which indicates that she may have an important role to play. Jesus' mother makes the observation that the wine has run out (2.3). The response of Jesus is to say, 'O woman, what have you to do with me?' (2.4), which seems unduly harsh. The narrator does not mention her name, and Jesus simply calls her 'mother'. His question puts distance between himself and his mother. Then he makes a statement that indicates that his life is marked by a sequence of events leading to 'the hour': 'my hour has not yet come' (2.4). This is the first mention of a theme that will recur as the narrative unfolds. Tension is introduced. Is his mother trying to impose something on him?

If the reply of Jesus to his mother is surprising, then so is her reaction to it. In the face of his rebuke, and from her position outside the inner world of Jesus and the Father, she tells the servant to, 'do whatever he tells you' (2.5). Her first statement implied that she had no knowledge of God's designs, but her second statement, a carefully worded command, shows her level of trust in Jesus – it is unconditional. What

she says triggers a series of events that leads to a miracle (2.8-10), the revelation of glory, and an indication of faith by the disciples (2.11).

There are six stone jars (2.6), one short of the perfect number 'seven'. They are large jars, each capable of storing around twenty-four gallons. The problems raised by Jesus' mother are about to be solved. The water jars, used for Jewish purification rituals, will be transformed into a 'sign', in and through which the glory (*doxa*) will be revealed. Jesus tells the servants to fill the jars with water, which they do. The transformation into wine is not reported. Jesus issues a second set of instructions, to distribute the contents of the jars, which the servants also obey. The steward tastes the water that is now wine, but doesn't know where it comes from. The importance of accepting the 'word' of Jesus is a crucial theme.

The bridegroom is summoned and asked to explain the strange appearance of the good wine late in the day. The steward seems to think the bridegroom is responsible, but no response from the bridegroom is given. The larger story of Jesus points beyond this particular story. It is an important moment, but not the final moment, in the revelation of Jesus.

In the narrator's comment (2.11), can be seen the tension between the 'not yet' of the hour, and the 'now' of the miracle. This is the beginning, the first of the signs to reveal his glory. Perhaps the symbolism of the wine is the messianic wine that replaces the inferior wine of the Torah. Although Jesus' 'hour' had not yet come, when it does come in the future, the mother of Jesus will be there (cf. 19.25-27).

Quotations

1

God creates the vine and teaches it to draw up water by its roots and, with the aid of the sun, to turn that water into a juice which will ferment and take on certain qualities. Thus every year, from Noah's time till ours, God turns water into wine. That, men fail to see. Either like the Pagans they refer the process to some finite spirit, Bacchus or Dionysus: or else, like the moderns, they attribute real and ultimate causality to the chemical and other material phenomena which are all