



Sermon for Sunday, 17th January 2021



Worship led by Rev Dr André Groenewald
Music from Harry Thomson

Good morning and welcome to our service of worship.
Please read through the Intimation sheet on the website to stay in touch with everything that is happening in the Church.

Let us Worship God

Call to Worship:

Minister: The Lord is my light and my salvation;
All: **Whom shall I Fear?**
Minister: The Lord is the strength of my life;
All: **Of whom shall I be afraid?**

Beloved I greet you in the Name of God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn 531 My Jesus my Saviour

Gathering prayer & Lord's Prayer

Let us pray:

Lord God, we come to you as the wise men came: **to honour and worship you.**

Lord God, you revealed your Son through baptism: **reveal your word to us.**

Lord God, as Jesus called the disciples: **help us to listen to your calling for us today.**

Lord God, as Jesus healed the sick: **help us to be open to your healing presence.**

Lord God, Jesus was seen as a prophet. **Help us to be prophets for you.**

We ask all this through Jesus Christ, **our prophet, priest and king**
who told us how to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever. AMEN

For all the children...

I am sure you have had a great week with home schooling or should I ask your parents?

No-One can imagine what you are all going through... a new year, new beginnings and back to school – with the exception that it is Home schooling! It is indeed a hard time for you all and your parents but today's Bible reading is telling us that at every new beginning, God is present with us. So whatever we face, we are reminded of God's transforming presence. He can transform even water into wine....

Let me show you...a miracle

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: **John 2:1-12**

Jesus Changes Water into Wine

2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, ⁹ 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 ¹⁰ 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."¹¹ 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.¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

Sermon

I am sure that a lot of people will smile at the choice of the bible reading especially at the beginning of a New year where there is a lot of people who made New Year promises about drinking **less wine** while Jesus is making more wine! But off course this is not the full story...

Our reading is the first miracle Jesus performed.

In those days' weddings lasted seven days, and hosts invited as many people as possible, especially distinguished guests. To run out of wine at a wedding was a social blunder that

would become the subject of scandal for years. The host was responsible to provide his guests with **adequate wine for seven days**.

The **women's quarters were near** the place where the wine was stored; thus Mary learns of the shortage of wine before word reaches Jesus and the other men. Her words probably suggest that he should do something because **guests were to help pay the expense of the wedding with their gifts**.

"Woman" was a respectful address but hardly customary for one's mother. Jesus' statement here establishes **harsh distance** because Jesus' "hour" in John refers especially to the cross. So in the way Jesus is saying, "Once I begin doing miracles, I begin the road to the cross."

The description of the **stone jars** indicates that they contained enough water to fill a **Jewish immersion pool** used for **ceremonial purification**. Although Pharisees forbade storing such water in jars, some Jews were less strict; thus these large jars were being **reserved for ritual purposes**. Stone jars were common because they were less likely to contract ritual uncleanness than those made of other substances. But by using the jars for **another purpose would temporarily defile** them. However Jesus shows more concern for his friend's wedding than to obey man-made traditions.

"Master of the banquet" was a position of honour and one of his primary duties was to regulate the **distribution of wine** to prevent **excess** that would especially in a Jewish context **ruin the party**. Some observers might have held him **partly responsible** for the **host's running out of wine** prematurely.

Soon after the **grape vintage**, all wine would contain **some alcohol** because neither refrigeration nor airtight sealing existed. But the alcohol level of the wine was not **increased artificially**; rather, the wine was **watered down, with two to three parts water to one part wine**. Yet one **would normally serve the better wine** first.

God had often manifested his glory by doing signs. Moses' **first sign was turning water into blood** while Jesus' first sign is turning water into wine.

So what is the message? It seems evident that Jesus was preparing his disciples for a journey of miracles, faith, fellowship, love and hardship. His first miracle would be the introduction to a **far greater story** they could ever have imagined.

Jesus **transformed water into wine**. This would become a pattern of Jesus' whole life as He transformed lives too. He changed the way **poor and despised people** looked at themselves. He gave **children a place** and He treated all people with love, mercy dignity and respect. Even in our reading He is **caring** about an **ordinary life event** that He transformed water into wine and the **best of wine not just any wine**! He sacrificed His relationship with **his mother, his disciples, his family in order to do God's will**. And just like God did in and through Jesus, He still **changes and transform people** on a daily level, you and me.

The world and our society wants us to believe that we need to get a **"new look"** to fit in, to be accepted even be popular. Society wants us to get a **better job** or **learn a new skill**. People **want to lose weight** or get a face lift. Our culture dictates that we **have to justify** our existence by "doing more or working hard" and **not by whom we are**.

Jesus does not want to change our “looks”; He wants to **change our hearts**. He does not want to give us new clothes; He wants to make us new people who can forgive, love and have mercy. He wants to totally transform us from the inside to His glory.

And when this transformation through faith happens, it will show on the outside.

When Jesus changed the water into wine, he did not just **change the colour** and fool the people’s taste buds — he changed the water into wine. When the water was turned to wine, the shame of the bridal family was **turned to joy**. The mood of the party was transformed. And Jesus’ disciples were **transformed**. Our text verse states, “He thus **revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.**”

Jesus did not bother too much about the religious laws of his society. He **cared about people**. He used the prescribed ceremonially clean jars to do something good for the better of others. He filled them with new **wine**.

Likewise, did He cleanse all our sins through His blood. The water in the jars were used to clean the people on the outside. Jesus’ blood cleansed us on the inside. He **cleansed and changed our destiny and hearts**. Our sins are not just taken away, we have received a “changed and transformed heart” that desires to love God and live for him.

God **performs miracles** on a daily level in and around us. There is no limit to His grace, love and mercy. Sometimes He uses people, other times situations or events.

Speaking about **changing hearts**, God used a surgeon in South Africa to do the first heart transplant, transforming the lives of so many people...

Here in Scotland, there is also one man who **transformed the lives**, hopes and dreams of ordinary people. I am speaking of Robert Burns who unlike other **revolutionaries did not use violence** to change the perspectives of people. He used his vivid imagination and transformed ordinary **lives with his pen**.

And now several years later people from around the world celebrate his birth by reciting the pieces he wrote. And by reciting people are once reminded what exactly he said. **That everyone is important** when he wrote “a man is a man for all that, and that **heavy drinking is not good** at all in the ghost story of Tam o Shanter.

They are people just like you and me. They grabbed the chance to be **transformed by God** and in the event used their talents, gifts and situations to transform people, situations and circumstances for the better.

God can even use **a very bad situation** and turn it into a better one. Let us be **prayerful** about the disturbing events that happened this week in Washington — **praying** that God will transform all those who chose to hate, to disrespect and to be intolerant....

There is **no limit to what God can do**. He **transforms our lives** in ways we cannot imagine or even understand.

So maybe in the New Year let us **focus** on God and how He can **transform** us rather on ourselves trying to be everything to everybody! God will not perform a heart transplant, but change and transform our hearts within through His Holy Spirit! Amen

Dedication

Let us Pray:

Father, You have given us everything,
We gather our thoughts now to thank you for your generosity,
You have given us new life in Jesus Christ
The revelation of your love in the life that He led,
The proclamation of your truth in the things that he said, the promise of eternal life
through faith in him, the inspiration to serve him daily through the power of the Spirit.
We thank you now for all this that you have given us.

We pray for all your people on earth,
Transform and change our hearts to be servants of your LOVE and GLORY
We pray for peace in Washington and elsewhere
We pray for your transformation in the hearts of people who chose to hate ...
We pray for your peace to transform our hearts and our world...

We pray for each and everyone who is ill,
Everyone who is suffering because of the Corona virus,
Everyone who is home schooling
All the children whose lives has been turned up side down by the pandemic...
Lord God please help us to get through the Pandemic, knowing that we are never ever
alone and without your constant care and love...

Amen

Hymn 374 From Heaven you came helpless babe

Benediction

Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

Generous God, as your Son changed water into wine,
send us out now in the power of your Spirit
to share abundantly in our community.
And The blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
Be with you all
Now and for evermore
Amen