

A Thought for Epiphany 3

Sunday 24th January

John 2: 1-11

Today we hear John's description of Jesus's first miracle – the transformation of ordinary water – into the best wine anyone has ever tasted. This is a marriage feast, yet the names of the couple who are celebrating are not remembered.

This is not a story about alcohol consumption – there is nothing to worry the Chief Medical Officer. It is a much more imaginative and powerful story than that. So, read the passage through slowly and imagine that YOU are present at the occasion. It's a beautiful day, a day of celebration, the union of two popular families as the handsome young man and his beautiful bride begin their life together. But you are not one of the guests, or even one of the servants. You are simply a stone water jar. Waiting in the hallway, to be useful as people come in with dusty feet and hands that must be washed before eating. You do not even contain boiled water for drinking – just the ordinary, unglamorous variety for basic ablutions.

But for all that, you are important. The job you have to do is a quiet, unobtrusive job, but it is a necessary job.

And then something happens. A man comes into the hallway and looks at you. He runs his gaze across you and your fellow water jars and smiles. And you just know that something extraordinary has happened.

You feel different. You are transformed.

The butler comes towards you and pours out some of the liquid you hold. He doesn't pour it into an earthenware washing bowl; he pours it into a silver wine jug. And people don't wash in it – they drink it! What is more, it's clear that when they drink it, it fills them with delight. The ordinary, everyday water for washing feet has become a heavenly liquid – one that leaves no hangovers, causes no bad behaviour or physical ailments, but simply brings joy.

But you are just an ordinary stone water jar. There is nothing special about you. It is not anything you have done that has caused this transformation – it is the presence of God in the person of Jesus that has made the change.

It is lovely for you, a humble water jar, to realise that you have become an instrument of blessing to others. But actually, you don't need to be made of stone for God to transform you. And you don't need to be a jar for God to be able to use you to bless others. All you need is to be near to Jesus and open to his presence.

In this Epiphany season, may we all be blessed by knowing that God is near, that he seeks us out in love, and will transform us all if we can only let him.

Richenda Milton-Daws LLM

