

Sunday Worship at Home, 24th January, 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

Opening Praise:

Today we remember the King of Creation and Prince of Peace; **Jesus is our King.**
Jesus Christ is the light of the world; **Jesus is our Way.**
With Jesus even dark places are light; **Jesus is the Truth.**
In Jesus we shall live for ever; **Jesus is our Life.**

A Prayer of Confession:

The grace of God has dawned upon the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins in penitence and faith firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in and peace with all:

God of mercy, we acknowledge that we are all sinners. We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done, and are mindful of all that we have failed to do. For the sake of Jesus, who died for us, forgive us for all that is past, and help us to live each day in the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

A Collect for the 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

God of all mercy, your Son proclaimed good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed: anoint us with your Holy Spirit and set all your people free to praise you in Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Old Testament: Genesis 14:17-20

After Abram's return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!'

Gospel: verses from John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' ⁵ His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' ⁶ Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. ⁹ When 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 ¹⁰ and said to him, '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.'

Reflection on the reading:

Reading the Old Testament lesson and Gospel set for today may feel a little bit like having salt rubbed into our wounds. They both seem to feature things that at the moment we are prevented by the pandemic from taking part in. The Old Testament features the mysterious character of Melchizadek, king of Salem (which means King of Righteousness, king of Peace), apparently giving Abram Holy Communion - bread and wine and blessing. The Gospel features Jesus turning a ridiculously large quantity of water (about 150 gallons) into the best quality wine at a wedding because the guests have drunk all there was. For me, one of the important features of this miracle is the triviality of it. There is no important teaching or major theological point to be made, Jesus is simply bringing God's blessing into the ordinary lives of ordinary people.

Like everyone else right now, I also long for the time when we can gather with families and friends to celebrate birthdays and weddings. I long for the time when our church community can gather for proper shared worship with singing, physically exchanging the peace and sharing wine as well as bread together. But that time is not yet. At last there is light at the end of this dark tunnel we have been travelling through, but it is often said the night seems darkest just before the dawn. Melchizadek brought Abram refreshment because after the battle he needed refreshment. At the wedding at Cana God's blessing was brought to the celebration but also in a time of need. Jesus meets us in the same place – in our need. So stay strong, stay safe, keep the faith, and both in our need and our celebration, on the journey and at its end, God, our God will bless us. **Amen.**

The Creed

**We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.
We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.
We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Be still and pray: In your prayers, include prayers for the church, the needs of the world and our local community. Particularly pray for: Our Prime Minister, the Government and all world leaders they struggle to control COVID-19 and manage vaccination programmes; for healing and peace for those who are ill; and for the souls of those who have recently died and comfort for those who are mourning their loss. ***Finish with The Lord's Prayer:***

Conclusion

May Christ who revealed himself as the new creation by turning water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana, transform your lives and make glad your hearts; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit remain with you always. **Amen.**
Remain forever in the light and peace of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Reverend Eddie