

# 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – Morning Service

Rev Andrew Roberts

Water into wine

## Call to Worship

God, who called all things into being from nothing, **we adore you.**

Christ, who combined the human and divine in equal measure, **we adore you.**

Holy Spirit, who enables the ordinary within us to become extraordinary, **we adore you. Amen.**

## StF 113 – O worship the king

- 1) O Worship the King, all-glorious above;  
O gratefully sing his power and his love:  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.
- 2) O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;  
His chariots of wrath the deep  
thunder-clouds form,  
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.
- 3) The earth with its store of wonders untold,  
Almighty, your power has founded of old;  
Established it fast by a changeless decree,  
And round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.
- 4) Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;  
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,  
And sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.
- 5) Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
In you do we trust, nor find you to fail;  
Your mercies how tender, how firm to the end,  
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.
- 6) O measureless Might, ineffable Love,  
While angels delight to hymn you above,  
Your humbler creation, though feeble our praise,  
With true adoration our voices we raise.

*Robert Grant*

*CCL No. 515642*

## Prayers<sup>1</sup>

In the middle of the longest month of the year, on an ordinary Sunday, we come to you, O God of change and transformation, seeking fresh glimpses of your glory. We thank you for the ordinary yet special, miraculous life-giving gifts we so often take for granted. Thank you for water to drink and to cleanse, and to nurture crops and flowers. Thank you for food to eat and to share.

We praise you, Lord, for surprising us sometimes by lifting these things above the ordinariness of every day. Moments when you turn water into wine in our lives. Moments when we are blessed by your presence with us as unseen guest. We bless you and thank you for the everyday miracles that transform our lives.

Forgive us we pray, when we don't see beyond the immediate and the problematic. When we think everything's impossible and don't do what you say. Renew your gifts of faith in us. That we may live gladly and generously. And see the wine of your Kingdom flow anew. May it be so. **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

## Comment

Marriage is a practice that is as old as human civilisation. At its best, it is the kind of institution that gives people and communities joy in the humdrum of life. Think of the best weddings you've been to – they bring people together to celebrate with singing, partying and an escape from daily life.

It is this vision of God's community lifted up in marriage and relationship that Isaiah celebrates in this week's reading. Perhaps some of the language strikes us as strange and old-fashioned, or patriarchal. The idea that the 'land' shall be married is odd for us. However, Isaiah wants to say to a people healing after their time in exile that their community will be holy and blessed, as a marriage is holy and blessed. God will heal the broken parts of the Promised Land that had previously been damaged. The people have come back to the Promised Land and God rejoices. In the ordinary run of life, there will be song and celebration. There will be a new start. We celebrate that in our next two hymns.

## StF 66 – The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
His mercies never come to an end.  
They are new every morning, new every morning,  
Great is thy faithfulness, O Lord;  
Great is thy faithfulness.

*Edith McNeil © 1974, 1975 Celebration CCL No. 515642*

## StF 164 – Your words to me are life and health

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| 1) Your words to me are life and health;<br>They fortify my soul,<br>Enable, guide, and teach my heart<br>To reach its perfect goal.      | 3) Your words to me are full of joy,<br>Of beauty, peace, and grace;<br>From them I learn your blessed will,<br>Through them I see your face. |
| 2) Your words to me are light and truth;<br>From day to day they show<br>Their wisdom, passing earthly lore,<br>As in their truth I grow. | 4) Your words are perfected in One,<br>Yourself, the living Word;<br>Within my heart your image print<br>In clearest lines, O Lord.           |

*George Currie Martin CCL No. 515642*

## Reading: John 2.1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim.

He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. 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 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.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

## **Address**

Wedding receptions seem to be getting ever more extravagant these days. When my parents got married their reception was held in the Church Hall and the wedding breakfast was a buffet provided by members of the Church. And all those present had a great time. At the most recent wedding reception we went to there was, amongst other things, a sweet factory for the children and at each table a full chef's outfit for one of the guests to wear as they carved the joint of meat that was brought to the table.

Wedding planners are earning a small fortune but I suspect none of them have yet produced a wedding that has been talked about as much as that which took place at Cana in Galilee, a few miles to the west of Jesus' home town of Nazareth. It was here, according to John, that Jesus performed the first of his signs, or symbolic acts that revealed Jesus' true identity and important truths about the kingdom of God. This first sign involved helping a family hosting a wedding celebration out of a very embarrassing situation. They had no wine. As becomes customary in John's Gospel someone alerts Jesus to the problem. In this case it is Mary, Jesus' mother. Then, as also becomes customary in John's Gospel, Jesus works with those present to address the issue in a glorious way. Here changing ordinary water into extraordinary wine. Lots and lots and lots of extraordinary wine. About 120 gallons of the stuff.

Notice how the sign happens on 'the third day'. John's Gospel makes repeated use of the notion of the 'third day'. It is a feature of Jesus' first sign and of his seventh and last sign, the raising of Lazarus. It is also a foreshadowing of God's definitive work of love and greatest sign: the resurrection of Jesus on the third day after his crucifixion. What would it mean for us to act as people of the third day? If today is 'day one', then day three is 'the day after tomorrow'. People sometimes say, 'You never know what tomorrow may bring.' How much more is that true of the day after tomorrow? If we are people of the third day, what does this tell us about hope in God?

It can be tempting, as people shaped in part by the cynical culture we live in, to read a well-known miracle story such as this one with great suspicion. Perhaps, we say, it is nothing more than a conjuring trick. And people have said the very same thing of the resurrection of course. We might think that people 'back then' were just more credulous than us. But this doesn't do justice to John's account. Consider, for example, the person whose job it was to taste the wine. This 'first drinker' or 'steward' is no naïve fool, easily tricked. He would have officiated at many weddings. When he is offered the new wine, his first reaction is to come up with a rational explanation: given that people serve the good wine first, and then the poor wine once everyone is drunk, this must mean that the bridegroom is exceptionally generous! He may or may not have been, but the sign performed by Jesus points us to the truth that the God of miracle and wonder is. In the middle of an ordinary event, a wedding, God reveals his exceptional generosity and extraordinary hospitality. God upends the expectations.

I wonder what part openness to miracle and wonder play in our faith and discipleship? Have the cares and trials of the years closed our eyes and hearts and minds and imaginations to such possibilities? Do we sense what God is calling us to be and do, but hold back because we might end up looking stupid? Maybe we need to hear again the words of Mary to the servants. 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2:5). Next week I will be attending the funeral of someone who was instrumental in me becoming a follower of Jesus and doing what I do. His name is Alun Davies, a most wonderful person who encouraged many, many young people to follow Jesus. Alun would always say he was nothing special, pointing out that all he left school with was his cycling proficiency. I was 'thick as a docker's sandwich' he would joke.

But like the steward at the wedding in Cana he was no fool. In fact, he was very smart and savvy going on to develop several very profitable businesses – with a few failures en route such as the chip vending machine which was not the best idea ever.

Alun taught me many important things. One of which was to trust God in prayer in all of life, including business. For a couple of years, I use to meet with Alun and Sylvia (our then Minister's wife) at 9am on a Sunday to pray before the morning service. I will never forget the morning when Alun came and asked Sylvia and I to pray for him because he was thinking of starting a new business. If he was going to start that business, he wanted to be sure it was what God wanted him to do (maybe he'd learnt from the chip vending machine episode). He wanted to 'Do whatever he tells you'. So we prayed and Alun had the assurance that he should go ahead. He did and that enterprise went on to do very well. So well in fact that it enabled him and his dear wife Rose to fund a significant piece of Christian children's work for several years.

In John's Gospel, signs always proclaim God's love for us in the middle of our ordinary lives. In our work, our businesses, our retirements, our family and community life. They encourage us to seek and to see God doing extraordinary things in our everyday ordinary lives. At the beginning of a New Year, after two very trying years, maybe God is calling us to open our eyes and hearts and imaginations to the possibilities of transformation and with faith and exaptation to see more signs of his love and wonders of his grace. May it be so. Amen.

### **StF 45 – Earth's creator (Verses 1-7 & 11)**

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| 1) Earth's creator, everyday God,<br>Loving Maker, O Jesus,<br>You who shaped us, O Spirit,<br>Recreate us, come, be with us.                | 5) In our dreaming, everyday God,<br>In our daring, O Jesus,<br>In our searching, O Spirit,<br>In our sharing, come, be with us.     |
| 2) In your presence, everyday God,<br>We are gathered, O Jesus,<br>You have called us, O Spirit,<br>To restore us, come, be with us.         | 6) God of laughter, everyday God,<br>God of sorrow, O Jesus,<br>Home and shelter, O Spirit,<br>Strong and patient, come, be with us. |
| 3) Life of all lives, everyday God,<br>Love of all loves, O Jesus,<br>Hope of all hopes, O Spirit,<br>Light of all lights, come, be with us. | 7) Way of freedom, everyday God,<br>Star of morning, O Jesus,<br>Timeless healer, O Spirit,<br>Flame eternal, come, be with us.      |
| 4) In our resting, everyday God,<br>In our rising, O Jesus,<br>In our hoping, O Spirit, in our waiting,<br>Come, be with us.                 | 11) Alleluia, everyday God,<br>Now and always, O Jesus,<br>Alleluia, O Spirit,<br>Through all ages, come, be with us.                |

*Bernadette Farrell © 1996 Bernadette Farrell CCL No. 515642*

### **Prayers<sup>2</sup>**

Lord, we pray for your Church today, gathering all around the world, whether in tiny chapels or in great cathedrals, to praise you, to hear your word, and to meet you in bread and wine. Help us to unite behind the great commission of Christ, to go through the world, turning its water of ordinariness into the wine of your kingdom and make disciples of all nations.

**Lord, help us to turn the water of the world into the wine of your kingdom: in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

You have given us this world and all that is in it. Help us to use its resources properly, that we do not waste today what should be saved for tomorrow. We thank you for all who enrich our world by their time and talents. May we daily exercise the gift of discernment as we distinguish the true from the false. Govern the hearts and minds of those in authority and may the good of all be their principal and constant aim.

**Lord, help us to turn the water of the world into the wine of your kingdom: in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We thank you for those people who sustain us by their love and forgiveness. Thank you for the network of people with whom our lives are inextricably linked and who make up the fabric of our family and community life. Make us alert to each others' needs and quick to serve and encourage one another. Keep us faithful to our friends, family and neighbours as you are faithful to us.

**Lord, help us to turn the water of the world into the wine of your kingdom: in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those to whom this day will seem long and hard, for those in hospital or ill at home, those struggling with depression or despair. Lord, we ask you to touch with your love all those who are on our hearts today because of their needs. May your love flood their lives with hope and healing, in spirit, mind and body.

**Lord, help us to turn the water of the world into the wine of your kingdom: in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We remember with deep gratitude those who have left their mark on our lives by giving us love and laughter, but have now gone before us to be with Christ. We hold them in our hearts, knowing that you, Lord, hold them in yours. **Lord, help us to turn the water of the world into the wine of your kingdom: in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.**

### **StF 354 – Jesus is the name we honour**

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| 1) Jesus is the name we honour;<br>Jesus is the name we praise.<br>Majestic name above all other names,<br>The highest heaven and earth proclaim<br>That Jesus is our God.     | 2) Jesus is the name we worship;<br>Jesus is the name we trust.<br>He is the King above all other kings,<br>Let all creation stand and sing<br>That Jesus is our God. |
| <i>Ch) We will glorify, we will lift Him high,<br/>We will give Him honour and praise.<br/>We will glorify, we will lift Him high,<br/>We will give Him honour and praise.</i> | 3) Jesus is the Father's splendour;<br>Jesus is the Father's joy.<br>He will return to reign in majesty,<br>And every eye at last will see<br>That Jesus is our God.  |

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### **Closing prayer<sup>1</sup> & Blessing**

May Jesus Christ, changer of water into wine, taker of the ordinary in our lives, transform us for his glory, and make us extraordinary for his sake. Let us go out from here with God's miraculous grace brimming up inside us, taking with us that abundance of love and power, and sharing it with everyone we meet.

And may the blessing of God; Father, son and Holy Spirit be with us and the places of this world that cry out for transformation, this day and forevermore, **Amen.**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Roots for Worship*

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *layanglican.org*