

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Third Sunday after Epiphany - 24th January 2021

Collect:

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.

Psalm 128

1 Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways.

2 You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

4 Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.



5 The Lord bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

6 May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

A reading from the book of Revelation (19.6-10)

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" - for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to 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.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection:

I'm sure you are all familiar with this reading already. It is Jesus' first public miracle (that we know of), and the drama of turning water into wine at a wedding is enough to make it stick in our memories. I'm sure every wedding crowd would appreciate such a miracle!

What I love about this story is that it shows immediately that Jesus, the son of God, is living a fully human life. We are still in the season of Epiphany, the season of 'God with us', and here we see Jesus as 'God with us', but also as a man who attends weddings, who celebrates with friends, and who seems to enjoy a good glass of wine! In fact, this particular miracle demonstrates the balance between Jesus' curious fully-god-and-fully-man -ness quite perfectly. The miracle is done with no fanfare, it is done quietly and simply, yet it shows that Jesus has power. It is a miracle of generosity and celebration, an act of kindness for the wedding couple, a gracious act of love. Yet it also speaks of the divine, of the extraordinary person that Jesus is.

Epiphany means 'the revealing', and it is thus very fitting that we read of Jesus first miracle while we are still in this time of the Church year. It is now that Jesus is made known, that we see the beginning of his ministry, that we realise that he truly is God on earth, among us.

The second reason I love this story is that it demonstrates a meeting of heaven and earth. Here there is no difference between a sacred site, and normal life! Instead the sacred, the divine, the miraculous, steps into normal life and embraces it. It's a beautiful picture of the way God is now with us. The boundaries have been split open, and hallowed ground is no longer restricted to temples and churches, but instead the whole of life, the whole world, is hallowed ground.

Wherever you are, wherever you walk, is hallowed ground, because God is with us. That is what the season of Epiphany gifts to us - the incredible nearness of God, woven into all things.

The poet Malcolm Guite has written a wonderful poem about the wedding at Cana, and I invite you to take some time to read it and reflect on it.

- Rev Cat

Epiphany at Cana

*Here's an epiphany to have and hold,
A truth that you can taste upon the tongue,
No distant shrines and canopies of gold
Or ladders to be clambered rung by rung,
But here and now, amidst your daily living,
Where you can taste and touch and feel and see,
The spring of love, the fount of all forgiving,
Flows when you need it, rich, abundant, free.*

*Better than waters of some outer weeping,
That leave you still with all your hidden sin,
Here is a vintage richer for the keeping
That works its transformation from within.
'What price?' you ask me, as we raise the glass,
'It cost our Saviour everything he has.'*

Our Saviour Christ is the Prince of Peace..

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

To God be the glory,
great things he hath done:
so loved he the world
that he gave us his son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the lifegate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father,
through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory,
great things he hath done.*

Oh, perfect redemption,
the purchase of blood,
to ev'ry believer the promise of God.
The vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things he hath taught us,
great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing
through Jesus the Son,
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we
see.

A prayer for Epiphany

Come freshly to us now, Lord God,
And as we offer you our lives, renew in us your
gifts:

The gold of our potential.
The incense of our prayers and aspirations,
The myrrh of healing for our pain;
Feed us and nourish us
that we may grow in the life of Christ;
Fill us with your Spirit
that we may overflow with your love,
and transform the world with your glory.
Amen.

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian, Jean Dominy

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie, Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Lee Grigs, Stacey Pratt, Andy Fosker

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives; the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refuges across the world & diplomats and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: Barry Stammers, John Chapman

Prayer for growth! Please join in this prayer at home:

"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

Call this number —> for free.



Notices:

Private Prayer in church *is paused for now.* While we are all recommended to travel and mingle as little as absolutely possible, we take care of ourselves and each other by practicing caution.

New Vicar Search: to let you know that the process for appointing a new vicar at St Thomas' is underway. The PCC is having the required meetings with AD Rhiannon, our Area Dean Nick Atkins, and Bishop Mike. The hope is to advertise around March/April, and potentially have a new vicar appointed by September.

- Rev Jackie is collecting scripture verses / words of encouragement & inspiration for our prayers. Please email her with anything you'd like to share as this process unfolds.
- We'd love to know what you would most value in our next priest! Email or phone Rev Cat with a word or sentence saying what qualities would be most important to you.

Inspiring Ipswich Parish Plan: the Covid crisis and Jutta leaving has had an impact on our 5-year plan for St Thomas. But we are still excited for growing our church! Please look at the attached / enclosed leaflets about our parish plan and our building development dreams! If you'd like to chat or ask questions, speak to any of our Learning Community members: Lyanne, Malcolm, Roger, Emma, Stephen, Rev Cat.

This Week:

Sunday 24th January

10am: Zoom church - you can join by phone too! Speak to Malcolm or Rev Cat.

Monday 25th January

4.30: STPC evening prayer – all welcome, speak to Malcolm for Zoom link

Tuesday 26th January

5.30: Meditation group —livestreamed on facebook/stthomaspilgrimcommunity

Wednesday 27th January

10am: livestreamed Eucharist

Thursday 28th January

7pm: Zoom Alpha

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Susan Dickerson; Amanda Di Benga with Luke & Ruth; Lucy Drake; Caren Elwis with Patrick, Emma-Louise, William & Daniel; Keri & Justin Harrison and family; Roger and Gloria Elmer



No birthdays this week

Contacts:

Acting Priest-in-charge: Revd Cat Connolly

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Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

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If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

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Revd Pat 464748