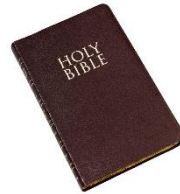




EPIPHANY 3 – SUNDAY 24TH JANUARY 2021

As we are unable to meet together in church, this service will give you an outline of a service you can do at home. If you have them, gather a few things that will help you create a sacred space – we suggest a cross, Bible and candle.



INTRODUCTION

Hope you are all well and managing during this extended lockdown, we have Rev Robin Usher to thank for the reflection today all about the wedding in Cana, Jesus' first miracle, wouldn't it be lovely to be able to go to a family wedding and mix with all our friends and family. It will come soon hopefully so let's be patient.

I would ask you to remember in your prayers Rachel Greaves the daughter in law of Arthur and Alison who is undergoing cancer treatment and Phyllis Greenhalgh who passed away last week. It is difficult at this time to get names into our prayers as the service is done early in the week and has to be formatted into a booklet and printed for those needing hand delivery. Those of you that get the online service email will have had these in the service but apologies for those that didn't. We will add the names for the next week but please let us know and we can get the message round. Prayer is a wonderful thing and the more of us that pray the louder it is heard.

We remain closed during this lockdown and we are having our PCC meetings on line. Rev Jan moves out of the vicarage this week and we wish her well and hope she has a long and happy retirement.

Jan B

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

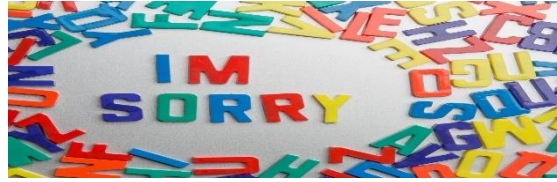
We come together in the presence of the Lord –**Who knows our needs, hears our cries, feels our pain and heals our wounds.**

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

The spirit of the Lord fills the world and knows our every word and deed. Let us open ourselves to the Lord and confess our sins and penitence and faith.

Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us

and restore us to the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



GLORIA

This is the Gloria we use in St Maxentius Church on our Youth Service Sundays, sing it if you know the tune remember there are four Alleluia. Amens if you sing it.



Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Father (rpt)

In him be glory forever (rpt) Alleluia Amen.

Glory to God, glory to God, Son of the Father (rpt)

To him be glory forever (rpt) Alleluia. Amen.

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the spirit (rpt). To him be glory forever (rpt). Alleluia. Amen

THE COLLECT

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

THE OLD TESTAMENT READING - GENESIS 14: 17-20

After his 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!’

And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.

This is the word of the Lord – **Thanks be to God**

THE NEW TESTAMENT READING

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 thunder-peals, 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**

THE GOSPEL - JOHN 2: 1-11

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John – **Glory to you O Lord.**



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

The Wedding in Cana of Galilee

So, Jesus, and his mum, and his friends, go to a wedding in Cana of Galilee, not far from Nazareth (we think). And they run out of wine! The gospel writer doesn't say why — bad planning, maybe? Or the additional influx of hard-drinking fishermen friends of Jesus? Who knows?

Now wine is not exactly essential for a wedding, but it does help turn the event into a celebration — it gives the occasion an extra lift, as it were. In biblical times, wine was often seen to be a symbol of a deeper, richer, enhanced life. If water was essential to life, then wine gave it that bit extra — not just life, but M&S life! And by extension, feasting, with wine, became a symbol of the richness of God's life - and a sharing in that life - a sharing in the Kingship and Kingdom of God. There's a significant verse from the book of the prophet Isaiah that sums up the idea: *"On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of*

well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained *clear*." (Is.25.6) God's kingdom was going to be a ball!

And that idea was carried into the New Testament with an added emphasis. It was not going to be just any old ball, but a wedding ball - a wedding banquet - celebrating the union of God, the Lamb, with his people, the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem.

"And the angel said..., 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb'." (Rev.19.9 – from today's second reading.) So, the wedding at Cana, and particularly the turning of water - common or garden, plain water - into the rich, well-matured, clear-strained wine of the Kingdom, was the celebratory, first 'sign' of the coming of that Kingdom.

But it was a sign with a message - some helpful hints about how we might participate in that great supper of the Lamb.

"There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding." (Jn.2.1) There is, first of all, an INVITATION. God never compels us. That would be to violate that image of God that we carry within ourselves, the fact of our free will (to use for good or ill). He does not compel us, but he does invite us: *"Listen"*, he says, "I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." (Rev.3.20)

Then there is INTERCESSION. **"When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine'."** (Jn.2:3) God so often uses other people as an intermediary, to make us aware of the need within us for that extra dimension to life, an extra dimension that we often look for elsewhere among all the good things of life, but which, sometimes, we need pointing out to us!

And then comes INSTRUCTION. **"His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you'."** (Jn.2:5) There is a sense that we have to take some things as a 'given', as a command. The deeper things of life are not always easy to find, they're not all open to logical deduction, or wishful thinking. Sometimes, in trust, we just have to do what we're told.

And when that happens, we become INSTRUMENTS, instruments of God's transforming love. **"Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification..."** (Jn.2:6) We offer ourselves as water to be turned into wine, as clay to be moulded by the potter, as flour awaiting the yeast of God's creating Spirit. We don't leave ourselves behind when we accept the invitation into the Kingdom, but we are transformed, transfigured, enriched — as water becomes wine; and wine becomes blood, and bread becomes body.

"Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." (Jn.2.11) And then we are INSPIRED.

We have life, real life, breathed into us. And we begin to recognise all that is around us for what it is: a gateway to the Kingdom.

Rev Robin Usher

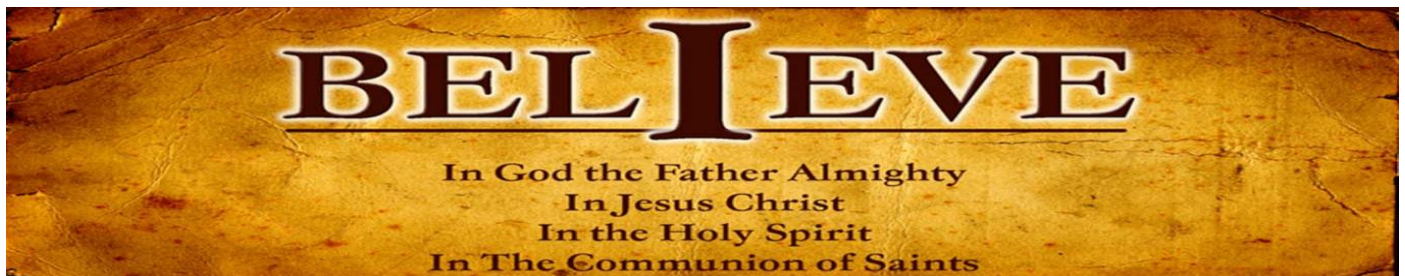
AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on 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



PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION



During the intercessions, we pray for the church, our country, our government, people in difficulty and those who have died. You can use your own prayers or if you *prefer here are some on today's theme.*

You, O Lord, are almighty, endless in power and in love. When we have no power to help ourselves help us to know we can trust in you, in your presence and in your power.

We pray for the church that it may know its true resources and power are from you; that it may be enabled to proclaim your saving power and your love. Give your church the ability to be a healing instrument in the world, to bring peace, and to proclaim your presence especially in all the new ways of working at this time. Bless our churches and ministry teams in our Turton Moorland team that we can flourish, be mindful of the needs of others and be firm in your worship.

Lord on your mercy – **Hear our prayer**

We remember those who struggle for survival, the poor the oppressed, the hungry and the homeless, all who feel powerless. We ask you to bless all who strive to bring justice and peace to our world.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for all who enrich our lives by their love and goodness. We ask that your love may be experienced in our homes and among our loved ones and friends. We pray for homes where there is conflict. Violence and abuse, especially for any who live in fear or unable to change.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer**

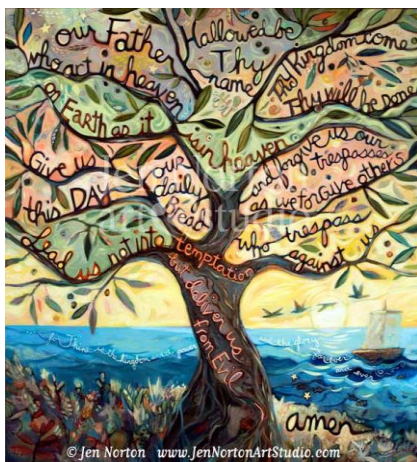
Give strength to the weak, encourage the fearful and protect all who are endangered. We remember friends and loved ones who are ill or need comfort and refreshment. We pray especially today for Rachel Greaves and anyone else known to us. We pray for their families and friends and especially this week we pray for those in the NHS who are battling to keep us safe and well during these very difficult times.

Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer**

We rejoice that you give us life in all its abundance and life eternal. We pray for loved ones departed, especially Phyllis Greenhalgh who passed away last week, those who have their anniversaries at this time and others known to us. May they have the fullness of life in your Kingdom.

Merciful Father – **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER



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.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

THE BLESSING

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe-

To you be glory and praise forever.

From the rising of the sun to its setting, your name is proclaimed in all the world

To you be glory and praise forever.

When the time had fully come you sent the Sun of righteousness.

In him the fullness of your glory dwells. To you be glory and praise forever.

The blessing of God almighty, the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore Amen.

