

## *Water into wine*

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*Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36: 5-10; 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11; John 2: 1-11*

“Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

The Epiphany season begins with the story of the Wise Men, the Magi which is also called “The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles”—the Nations—and week by week new things are uncovered

Last week Baptism

Jesus the beloved Son, who bears the Spirit of God

Today we are presented with the purpose of Christ’s coming into the world to bring about a “krisis” a decision between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death.

(Fuller)

I don’t know what really happened that day in Cana of Galilee at the wedding where Jesus is reported to have turned water into wine.

but, once again, if we believe it to be true, Jesus was indeed the life of the party, albeit reluctantly!

When I was growing up — and some would say still — a party was judged by the quantity of beer. If there was an 18 gallon keg it was a good sign.

There were of course those occasions where the host/hostess had not organized for anyone who knew how to tap the keg and I can recall the occasional party where we waited for a suitably qualified person.

The keg properly tapped, and the beer flowing, the mood of the party changed markedly!

If we read the story about Jesus and the wedding carefully, we notice something similar the celebrations have stalled

until Jesus gets hold of SIX stone water jars, each containing 20—20 gallons.

That means 120—150 gallons or 300—375 litres(!) of wine. The volume is significant because it indicates a proportional change in proceedings.

And that is exactly the point of this story!

The water was for Jewish ceremonial purposes. Presumably this can no longer happen because the water is otherwise occupied and we are reminded that by the time John wrote his gospel the Christian movement saw the reality of God in the life and ministry of Jesus superseding strict ceremonial abandoning the traditional law for the freedom and joy of God’s spirit so evident in Jesus’ life.

This indicates a sea change in one’s understanding of a relationship to God.

As I ponder this reading, I realize that water is symbolic of the Spirit in this Gospel We have already seen it in ch 1 at Jesus’ baptism where baptism with water also indicates the activity of the Spirit and we see it also in Ch 4. with the woman at the well.

Here water is the means by which the Spirit of the party is changed. Acts 2 v 12

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said: “They are filled with new wine.”

Peter “Indeed there are not drunk as you suppose for it is only 9 o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.”

The letter to the Ephesians, (Paul) “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be (Eph 5:17) filled with the Spirit as you sing your psalms hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts ...

So he believed worship to be a joyful liberated experience but not devoid of wisdom and thought.

There is always a balance!

So here is this water of purification, turned into the wine of the Spirit, by the word of Jesus  
And willingness of the servants at the feast.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that the setting of the story is a wedding feast highly symbolic for the Jews

as we can see from the Isaiah reading.

There God is the bridegroom and the people of Israel the bride.

In our gospel story the bride and bridegroom are notably absent except when the bridegroom is complimented on keeping the good wine for later even this may suggest that the earlier inferior wine was before Jesus and the good new wine his gift.

So with the bride and bridegroom in the background, Jesus appears as the one who comes to God’s people to bring joy and newness of the Spirit the divine bridegroom.

Having said that we must consider the work of the Spirit among us from I Corinthians.

The first point is that God’s Spirit will never enable us to curse Jesus.

but will always enable us to recognize him as Lord and therefore learn from his ways.

The second point is that there are varieties of Spiritual gifts the list is therefore just a summary.

there are many others these are the ones which stand out for Paul.

[It starts with] wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracle working, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues

Paul prefers the word charismata, gifts of grace, rather than pneumatika, spiritual things, for it emphasizes that they are gifts from God and NOT natural abilities in which we can take pride. Paul also uses the word diakonia (service) and emphasizes their use in service of the community and unity (rather than disunity) of the body of believers.

Christ comes to liberate us from old ways, prejudices, dependencies, guilt, by giving us the new wine of the spirit but in our story we hear him say “My hour is not yet come”.

Although the change has begun, this story points ahead to what Jesus will accomplish

The water into wine symbolizes the real, final epiphany and revealing of God’s glory in the cross.