

# **Sermon on Sunday 16 January 2022**

**8.00am at St Andrew's Church**

**by Rev. Bill Church**

***Readings: Romans 12. 6-16 & John 2. 1-11***

## **Wedding at Cana**

We all know and love the story about the wedding at Cana.

John puts it in his Gospel as the first of Jesus' miracles; the church quotes it in the marriage service to show Jesus' support for marriage; many treasure it as including the last recorded words of Mary and her advice, "Do whatever he tells you"; others point to it as illustrating Jesus' new and generous approach as against the old law symbolised by the water jars; people like me claim it shows Jesus was no Mrs Grundy and was all in favour of people having a good party (but not during lockdown, of course).

Let's look at yet another angle – what it was like for the bridegroom.

He or his catering manager had not got in enough wine, either to save money or just by miscalculation. The result was running out of wine, something which would have been more than just embarrassing. It would have been shaming, a local scandal, would have upset the bride's family and made him a laughing stock and could even have blighted the marriage.

As it turned out, he was rescued at no expense to himself and without having publicly to admit his mistake. And the guests had

an opportunity to drink a lot of very good wine. All of which was as near an ideal outcome as you could imagine.

Alas, in our fallen world, rescuers are not always so considerate and may demand public acknowledgement of their generosity, or control over those they help, or fawning gratitude. We should remember Jesus' mocking description of those who sound a trumpet when they are about to give alms.

If we find ourselves in the fortunate position of being able to help, or even rescue, the less fortunate, we should make sure we respect the dignity of those we help; we should not expect public, or even private, praise; we should see the virtue in the act itself, not in any reward.

And, by happy coincidence, today's Epistle also sets out an ideal. St Paul's theology was radical, but his ethics were conservative and, for some, controversial, but it would be hard to argue against this lot of advice.

We can ponder how good the world would be if everybody – I suspect we mean everybody else – did what St Paul urged. Then we would see... leaders working hard at the task; people sticking to what they are best at; putting up cheerfully with misfortune; not harbouring grudges; no false declarations of friendship; no slacking; cheerfully open homes and wallets etc.

How nice if everyone else were like that... or even, remembering that, for the rest of the world, each of us individually is "everybody else", how good it would be if we tried to follow that advice ourselves.