

Glory!

So, the feast is slowly drawing to an end.

There has been much fun and laughter. There have been presents and tokens of affection. There has been the excited chatter of children, the polite small talk of adults. There has been the family reunion and catching up with old friends. And, of course, there has been food and wine, lots of it.

Only now we hit the problem. The feast is not quite done but the wine is. Slightly embarrassing at a dinner party, disastrous at a wedding.

This is the scene that John gives us as the first of his seven signs that reveal the glory of Christ. It might seem slightly odd that only this morning we were celebrating the Magi arriving to see the Christ child and suddenly by this evening he's all grown up and at a wedding!

Epiphany is, of course, the feast which celebrates the revelation of Christ to the world. In the Magi we celebrate the revelation of Christ to

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the gentiles, to us. In the wedding at Cana and the miracle of the water into wine we celebrate the first of the miraculous signs that Jesus performs to reveal his glory. In this season we celebrate the baptism of Christ, the event where heaven opens and God the Father reveals God's love and purpose for Jesus, God the Son.

And so tonight, we are presented again with the invitation to behold the glory of the only Son, the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. Because the revelation of Christ's glory is always by invitation, one to which we need to respond individually.

In John's account of the wedding of Cana and the turning of the water into wine we are informed of the response of the disciples. "His disciples believed in him," because "he revealed his glory." John's Gospel is all about the glory of Christ, nothing is allowed to overshadow it. We are never told his mother's name, there is no transfiguration account because John's narrative is impeccably designed to reveal the glory of Christ from the prologue, which we heard so much over Christmas, to the final verses. John's setting is the cosmic glory of Christ, "In the beginning, the Word was with God and the Word was God." We are

transported out of the darkness of our reality and lifted. Archbishop Michael Ramsey wrote, “The manifestation of the glory of the Son of God is the climax of the activity of the Word who was in the beginning with God, created all that exists, and gave life to the whole creation and light to the human race. The event cannot be torn from its cosmic context.”

Here in this passage the cosmic context is contained in a wedding. The water jars are filled and ready for the end of the celebration, for guests to wash and leave, for the vessels to be washed and put away. In order to reveal his glory, Christ uses the ordinary, end of the party elements and starts the party again.

And yet in so many ways we miss this revelation in this story. We are so obsessed with the details, whose was the wedding? Why does Jesus talk to his mother in that way? What do the jars signify? Does all the water turn into wine? What vintage wine are we talking? So often are we compelled to look down at the details that we fail to lift our eyes and look around and see the glory revealed to us.

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Why do we need to? Because the revealed glory of Christ changes us, changes our lives, changes our world. Bishop Westcott wrote, “the sight of God is the transfiguration of man.” We are invited to behold the revealed glory of God in order to be transfigured. We are called to reveal the glory of God in order to transfigure.

Friends, at the feast of Epiphany we are called back to lift our eyes and look around. To come with the Magi to behold the glory of God revealed in Christ. To come with Israel to arise and shine, to look with joy for our salvation. To wonder afresh at water turned into wine.

But glory is not just for Epiphany! As we seek to make the love of God visible in our lives in this parish, the call is on us daily to seek out the glory of God, to raise our eyes.

To see in the beauty of creation, the “grandeur of God” that Gerard Manley Hopkins so beautifully writes about, “flaming out like shook foil.” In this created world, in the beauty and the fragility of our environment we are called to see the revelation of the glory of God.

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To seek God in prayer and worship, listening to and reading the Bible, regularly encountering Christ in the sacrament. The glory of Christ is here every day for us to behold.

Friends, let us lift up our eyes and look around with joy and as we behold the glory of Christ, as we take this sacrament let us take off our garments of affliction and sorrow and put on the beauty of the glory from God, let us be changed and in turn change our community.