



**THOUGHTS FOR SUNDAY
EPIPHANY 3
24 JANUARY 2021**

Weddings

Revelation 19:6-10, John 2:1-11

I am a bit of a curmudgeon when it comes to weddings. I don't suppose I have attended all that many really, and those that I have attended have always been at the least jolly occasions, if not always something more profound, but I have sometimes come away thinking that there was rather too much striving after 'show'. One wedding I attended was very different. It was held at Cheltenham Register Office, and only five of us attended, the bride, the groom, the two witnesses and me (and I was only there as I was staying for a few days with one of the witnesses!). After the brief ceremony we piled into the groom's car, and, stopping to take on provisions at a supermarket, we returned to the groom's parents' flat (the parents were abroad at the time), where the new bride cooked lunch for us. I cannot even remember the names of the bride and groom, and I know nothing of their subsequent history, but it was a pleasant way to spend a sunny morning.

My theoretical preference for minimalist weddings flies in the face of common human practice for, at least, most of recorded history, and our two lessons for today are testimony to that. Both the imagined wedding in Revelation and the actual wedding in John's gospel are clearly grand affairs, got up very much for 'show'. This indeed provides the impetus for the story at Cana. The whole celebration is going to be wrecked by the supply of wine running out. It was obviously a big affair as Mary, Jesus and his disciples were among the guests, and there is every indication that they were but a small part of the guest-list, so, if the wine had run out, there would have been a great many people who would have been able, in later years, to shake their heads as they recollected that wedding at Cana of Galilee. It is into the midst of this high day in the ordinary life of an unremarkable town that John sets the first of his 'signs' of Jesus.

It is, of course, no coincidence that we read this gospel passage every year on one of the Sundays in the Epiphany season, which is the time when we consider how Jesus was 'made manifest' to the world. In this story the manifestation is in the midst of a celebration, but it is not with some great sounding of trumpets and the heavens being riven, nor even in a way apparent to all the guests, but in a thrillingly obscure, 'back-door' way. Not even the chief steward at the wedding feast knows how it happened; apart from Jesus and his mother, Mary, only the lowly servants know the details. We can speculate that the explanation gradually leaked out, so that people did recall that wedding at Cana of Galilee, but without the shaking of heads, and we are still remembering it today, although we do not know the names of the bride and groom any more than I remember those of the folk at Cheltenham.

The significance of this first 'sign' for me is God's power in Jesus, breaking into the lives of ordinary people and leaving them changed, perhaps without them realising it. As we live through the current plague-time, with dark clouds of threat massing on one hand, but with sparks of hope igniting in the gloom, look out for signs of God's power in our own lives; in the kindness of friends and neighbours, in the dedication of scientists, medics and others working tirelessly on behalf of others, and see how we might ourselves be agents of the manifestation of God's love.

Clive Lemmon