

Dear friends

The theme of today's service is the miracle at Cana of Galilee, when Jesus turned water into wine. Do join in at home - the words of the service are attached if you find that easier than reading words on the screen, and similarly the text of my reflection.

[https://youtu.be/fYy7\\_e3EddM](https://youtu.be/fYy7_e3EddM)



## A Service for the Third Sunday of Epiphany

An Act of Worship for the Third Sunday of Epiphany (24th January 2021) from the Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Churches, with a reflection on the Gospel re...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/fYy7_e3EddM)

Next Sunday we shall be celebrating the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (or Candlemas). It had been my hope that we would have been able to make a safe return to worship in the church buildings for that occasion, but the wider situation in the country and region means that we are better continuing with worship at home, with a service filmed in one of the churches. We shall be continuing with Zoom compline on Tuesday at 8pm and Bible Study on Wednesday at 7pm (this week looking at Luke 2.22-40). The log in details are on the newsletter and are the same as last week. All are welcome.

As ever, do give me a ring if there is anything I can help with, or pray for, or you would just like a chat.

With every blessing

John

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## Epiphany 3 (24-1-21) – Worship Text

### ***Introduction***

Welcome to this service for the Third Sunday of Epiphany from the Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Churches. I hope you'll feel free to join in with this time of worship in whatever way you find most helpful. The theme of the service today is that of the glory of Jesus that was revealed at a wedding at Cana of Galilee, when he transformed water into wine. You may wish to have a glass of water, or of wine, or both, with you as we worship.

### ***Preparation***

O Lord, open our lips  
**and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Your light springs up for the righteous  
**and all the peoples have seen your glory.**

Blessed are you, Sovereign God,  
king of the nations,  
to you be praise and glory for ever.  
From the rising of the sun to its setting  
your name is proclaimed in all the world.  
As the Sun of Righteousness dawns in our hearts  
anoint our lips with the seal of your Spirit  
that we may witness to your gospel  
and sing your praise in all the earth.  
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
**Blessed be God for ever.**

### ***Hymn – O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness***

#### ***Prayers of Penitence***

The grace of God has dawned upon the world  
through our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own.  
Let us confess our sins.

Lord Jesus, illuminate the darkness in our hearts:  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to your saving love:  
Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, unstop our ears to hear your living word.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness  
draw us to himself  
and cleanse us from all our sins,  
that we may behold the glory of his Son,  
the Word made flesh,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### ***Collect***

Almighty God,  
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles  
the wonder of your heavenly grace,  
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.  
**Amen.**

***Reading: Revelation 19.6-10***

***Gospel reading John 2.1-11***

### ***Reflection***

The sound that I am looking forward to hearing, perhaps more than any other, when the worst of the pandemic is finally over is that of the bells of Kingsbury Church ringing out across the village once again in celebration of a wedding. The current silence of the bells has been a potent symbol of the times we are enduring; times in which those joyful gatherings of families, friends and the wider community are sadly, but necessarily, having to be deferred. Here in our group of churches we have been offering whatever help and support we can to couples who have found themselves faced with difficult and painful decisions about their wedding plans, amidst the continuing uncertainty as to when the present restrictions on gathering may be lifted. For some, a simple, quiet occasion on which they make their marriage vows to each

other is all they ask; for others, the day would not be complete without the supportive presence of friends and family; but for all, these times are hard. The bells are silent.

And certainly, a gathering like that at Cana of Galilee would not be possible in the current circumstances; or if it did take place, would soon attract police attention and some £10,000 fines. We do not know how many guests were present at Cana, but it is a reasonable assumption that the whole village had turned up to celebrate with the happy couple. And given our current tribulations, a mistake in catering that led to the wine running out prematurely may seem a somewhat minor disaster; but it is enough for Mary, the mother of Jesus, to turn to her son, to point out the problem, and to trust that he will save the day.

And he does, although only after the apparent demurrer, “Woman, what has that to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” Mary is not put off. She tells the servants, “Do what he says”, the stone water jars are filled, and then, miraculously, from them is drawn wine, the finest of wines, in abundance.

The turning of water into wine; is it just an impressive but ultimately trivial magic trick, performed to save an unfortunate bridegroom’s social embarrassment? Or is it something more than that? The fact that John gives this incident such a prominent place in his narrative, describing it as “the first of his signs”, in which Jesus “revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him” suggests that there is much more to this story than merely a neat way of providing the drinks at a party. A sign is something that points beyond itself; and the miracle at Cana of Galilee points to a greater and more profound truth than its outward and superficial meaning.

Both water and wine are important symbols, and feature frequently in the scriptures. Both are good, both are gifts of God, but they are also very different in their associations. There is a time for drinking water and there is a time for drinking wine. Water is that which is essential to life – it is a basic necessity, on which we depend for our survival. But wine speaks of that which goes beyond our need, to our enjoyment. It is used in the scriptures as an image of joy and gladness, of celebration, of life in all its fullness. On various occasions in the Bible, the kingdom of God, the fulfilment of God’s purposes for creation, is depicted in terms of a wedding banquet, a feast in which the tables are overflowing with rich food and fine wines. There is a time for water and there is a time for wine; and a wedding is very much a time for wine.

And so Jesus turning water into wine at Cana of Galilee is saying something about what time it is. It is no longer time just for water, the symbol of purification and preparation. Now is the time for wine, the symbol of celebration and fulfilment. The kingdom of God, that John the Baptist had announced as something to expect in the future, is now making its appearance. In revealing his glory, Jesus reveals the glory of

the kingdom, the new age, that is appearing. It is the Epiphany; the making the glory of Jesus and his kingdom manifest in the world. The night has finally passed, and the first rays of sunlight signal the dawning of a new and brighter day.

I just want to finish with some words from the Old Testament, and they are words that I have often heard read at weddings. They come from the collection of love poetry known as the Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon. They go like this:

'My beloved speaks and says to me:  
'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;  
for now the winter is now past,  
the rain is over and gone.  
The flowers appear on the earth,  
the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtle-dove  
is heard on our land.'"

Well, for us, the winter has not yet passed, but it will. The first daffodil in Baxterley churchyard has poked its head above the surface of the soil. The time of singing will come, and with it the sound of the wedding bells, ringing out in celebration once again.

### ***Hymn – Christ is our light***

### ***Thanksgiving for the Water made Wine***

This day water is made wine at the wedding feast.

I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,  
coming down out of heaven from God,  
**prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**  
And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying,  
**'Behold, the dwelling of God is among mortals.**  
He will dwell with them and they shall be his peoples,  
**and God himself will be with them.**  
Behold, I make all things new;  
**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.**  
To the thirsty I will give water as a gift  
**from the spring of water of life.'**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe;  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come.  
make your Church ready,  
and clothe her with the righteous deeds of the saints,  
to join the praises of your new creation.  
**Blessed be God for ever.**

Almighty God,  
in Christ you make all things new:  
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,  
and in the renewal of our lives  
make known your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.  
**Amen.**

Believing the promises of God,  
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:  
**Our Father, who art in heaven...**

Christ the Son of God  
perfect in you the image of his glory  
and gladden your hearts  
with the good news of his kingdom:  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

***Hymn - Songs of thankfulness and praise***