

# SOLE<sup>+</sup>BAY CHURCHES

BLYTHBURGH • REYDON • SOUTH COVE  
SOTHERTON • SOUTHWOLD • UGGESHALL  
WALBERSWICK • WANGFORD CUM HENHAM

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**Worship at Home: Sunday 24th January**

**The Third Sunday of Epiphany**

***Epiphany Season***

**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.**

## ***Jubilate – A Song of Joy***

O be joyful in the Lord, all the earth; ♦  
serve the Lord with gladness  
and come before his presence with a song.

Know that the Lord is God; ♦  
it is he that has made us and we are his;  
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise; ♦  
give thanks to him and bless his name.

For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting, ♦  
and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

*Psalm 100*

**Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

***This opening prayer may be said***

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;  
let us pray with one heart and mind.

***Silence is kept.***

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever.  
**Amen.**

**The Word of God**

**Psalmody**

***The appointed psalmody is said.***

*Psalm 113*

*From the rising of the sun to its setting  
let the name of the Lord be praised.*

Alleluia.  
Give praise, you servants of the Lord, ♦  
O praise the name of the Lord.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, ♦  
from this time forth and for evermore.

From the rising of the sun to its setting ♦  
let the name of the Lord be praised.

The Lord is high above all nations ♦  
and his glory above the heavens. *R*

Who is like the Lord our God,  
that has his throne so high, ♦  
yet humbles himself to behold  
the things of heaven and earth?

He raises the poor from the dust ♦  
and lifts the needy from the ashes,

To set them with princes, ♦  
with the princes of his people.

He gives the barren woman a place in the house ♦  
and makes her a joyful mother of children.  
Alleluia.

*From the rising of the sun to its setting  
let the name of the Lord be praised.*

*From the rising of the sun to its setting  
we praise your name, O Lord;  
may your promise to raise the poor from the dust  
and turn the fortunes of the needy upside down  
be fulfilled in our time also,  
as it was in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

***Each psalm or group of psalms may end with***

**Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

***If there are two Scripture readings, the first may be read here, or both may be read after the canticle.***

***Revelation 19:6-10***

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out,

“Hallelujah!  
For the Lord our God  
the Almighty reigns.  
Let us rejoice and exult  
and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready;  
to her it has been granted to be clothed  
with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

## Canticle

### **Refrain:**

**Above you the Holy One arises,  
and above you God's glory appears.**

Arise, shine out, for your light has come, ♦  
the glory of the Lord is rising upon you.

Though night still covers the earth, ♦  
and darkness the peoples;

Above you the Holy One arises, ♦  
and above you God's glory appears.

The nations will come to your light, ♦  
and kings to your dawning brightness.

Your gates will lie open continually, ♦  
shut neither by day nor by night.

The sound of violence shall be heard no longer in your land, ♦  
or ruin and devastation within your borders.

You will call your walls, Salvation, ♦  
and your gates, Praise.

No more will the sun give you daylight, ♦  
nor moonlight shine upon you;

But the Lord will be your everlasting light, ♦  
your God will be your splendour.

For you shall be called the city of God, ♦  
the dwelling of the Holy One of Israel.

*Isaiah 60.1-3, 11a, 18, 19, 14b*

**Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Above you the Holy One arises,  
and above you God's glory appears.**

## **Scripture Reading**

*One or more readings appointed for the day are read.*

*The reading(s) may be followed by a time of silence.*

### *John 2:1-11*

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

### **Sermon**

A wedding: a celebration with family and friends, eating and drinking together, toasting the couple's union, their current and future happiness. Together, celebrating the sacrament of marriage. Who'd have thought this time last year that this would be such a strange event to reflect upon and yet, after a year of Covid-driven restrictions, it's true.

Last year on the 7<sup>th</sup> March, immediately before the first lockdown, I participated in my first Sole Bay Team wedding preparation day at Wangford village hall. Meeting many of the couples who were planning to marry in our churches in 2020 was delightful. During the morning and over lunch Simon, Alan & I touched base with their understanding of the commitment they were making in choosing marriage, the challenges of being a couple for life but, understandably, centred on the significance of the sacrament and blessing of their marriages being celebrated before God, in church. It was an interesting morning, and a most delicious lunch was served and enjoyed together. On reflection, it seems almost dream-like to think of the ease of our gathering, chatting freely, and mingling to meet and eat together, with what has followed since.

For obvious reasons, many of these couples are still waiting to get married, new dates arranged, reflecting their hopes to allow their many friends and family members to witness

their promises and to celebrate together, much as we read about in our gospel reading today. We should continue to pray for them as their 2021 dates approach with continued uncertainty about when the pandemic will loosen its grip, for this to happen.

Across the land many, many couples have had their planned celebrations altered, deferred, miniaturized, and relocated. Some got inventive, such as the couple who invented a 'drive in' approach and welcomed a crowd safely. Unfortunately, others who pressed ahead regardless, have seen other more concerning outcomes, such as a spike in infections affecting the people on the isle of Barra. While the pandemic continues, hope gains strength due to the vaccination programme; God give us the grace to continue to put the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities before our own desires and rights!

So, in our reading, we consider Jesus' role in this wedding story, coming hot on the heels of last week's call of Philip and Nathanael. Indeed, they are in Cana because this was reported to be the latter's birthplace. Jesus remains here and, with his mother and the disciples, and attends this wedding feast. These characters remain unknown and unnamed in the story; we never meet or know anything of the couple celebrating the sacrament of marriage; the event that was the reason for the feast. That is because the focus of the Gospel story is Jesus' emergence, at Mary's prompt, into his public ministry.

It seems even back then being a good and gracious host was important, no-one wanted to run out of wine at a wedding feast. Jesus was not the host, whose responsibility this would understandably have been. Yet, in his command to the stewards, the transformative power of his ministry was inaugurated in an act of celebration rather than the familiar miraculous acts which would follow; the healings, feeding the multitude and raising Lazarus. There was no 'magic' moment; no prayers over the newly filled jars are recorded in this story. For sure, it was unexpected that these large stone jars, filled with water as Jesus' command, would provide the best wine yet served at the feast. That is until they were tasted: O taste and see, that the Lord is good.

Jesus' first act of public ministry only appears in John's Gospel and the first of seven used to illustrate the divine reality that informs the miracles performed and witnessed by those gathered. Here traditional Jewish ritual objects are utilised to show Jesus creating something new precisely through this context; transformed beyond its accepted bounds by the great goodness of God. The miracle is about abundant goodness, about 'grace upon grace' delivered through transformation of that which is already here among us, to those gathered together, and it's God's love we see as the divine reality overflowing with the appearance of Jesus in the world.

In John's gospel, they all gathered as family and friends to celebrate the marriage feast, and today we hold in our hearts and minds the whole world-wide Christian family, in this the week we particularly celebrate Christian unity. We are inevitably physically separated from one another by necessity, unable to worship as a community as is traditional during this week but

still connecting and celebrating in other ways. Despite the necessity to protect one another by remaining apart at present, our eyes should remain fixed on Christ, Son of the living God, that we may know and celebrate His love in other ways. As an example, I for one am glad that places of worship are serving the wider community in a new way, repurposed and reconnecting us to hope- even if on the face of it that hope is of a more familiar informal, face-to-face, embracing, connected post-vaccine life. Understanding our ministry and mission in today's world asks us to show God's loving presence in ways that connect with those of all faiths and none.

God comes revealed in glimpses, in bursts, in word, in acts, in water and wine – often not in a way that is pin-downable, seen by all, or understood fully by anyone. God is still mystery, there may be a vast gap between our understanding of him and of his true being but we have our lives to search, serve and share what we learn by walking in the light of His love.

*Rev Judy Miller*

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;  
**let the whole earth tremble before him.**  
Tell it out among the nations that the Lord is King.  
**O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**  
Tell out his salvation from day to day.  
**Let the whole earth tremble before him.**  
Declare his glory among the nations  
and his wonders among all peoples.  
**O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;**  
**let the whole earth tremble before him.**

*from Psalm 96*

## **Gospel Canticle**

***The Benedictus (The Song of Zechariah) is normally said***

***Refrain:***

**This is the Christ, the Chosen of God,  
the one who will bring healing to the nations.**

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ♦  
who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ♦  
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old ♦  
to save us from our enemies,  
from the hands of all that hate us,

To show mercy to our ancestors, ♦  
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: ♦  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear, ♦  
holy and righteous in his sight  
all the days of our life.

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, ♦  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦  
by the forgiveness of all their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God ♦  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, ♦  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

*Luke 1.68-79*

**Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

***Refrain:***

**This is the Christ, the Chosen of God,  
the one who will bring healing to the nations.**

**Prayers**

***Intercessions are offered***

***for the day and its tasks***

***for the world and its needs***

***for the Church and her life***

***The unity of the Church***

***The peace of the world***

***The healing of the sick***

***Those affected by Corona Virus, whether sick themselves, anxious for a loved one, or concerned for their livelihoods.***

***The revelation of Christ to those from whom his glory is hidden***

***These responses may be used***

Lord, in your mercy  
**hear our prayer**

***(or)***

Lord, hear us.  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

***Silence may be kept.***

***The Collect of the day is said***

Almighty God,  
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles  
the wonder of your saving presence:  
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.**

***The Lord's Prayer is said***

Believing the promises of God,  
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

## The Conclusion

May Christ, who sends us to the nations,  
give us the power of his Spirit.  
**Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**