



St Marylebone
Parish Church

BCP Holy Communion 2nd Sunday After Epiphany

One recurring conversation with people in the last 9 surreal months has been the value of food and drink. Confined to our homes, and blessed with access and means, a chief joy has been a glass of wine or a box of chocolates kept fatally close to the arm of the sofa... the joy of feasting (in its proper place) is heartily blessed by the Lord today.

For some, especially those on furlough or retired folks, what HM the Queen Mother called 'magic hour' has crept earlier and earlier into the day.

This first miracle of the Lord seems to be a little early, too. Jesus is very concerned in the Gospels that the timing of each stage must be right: according to God's plan, and in line with ancient prophecies and unfolding events.

It is His mother that lovingly, trustingly, (but as mothers do!) forces His hand. Hence the sharp exchange between them in St John's account. Perhaps in a culture where domineering parents can possess and control their children, this is a healthy balance?

So, the Lord turn jars of water for the *ritual cleansing* into gallons of wine, for a *party*. Behold, this is our God. A God of generosity and joy. All those prophecies and timing calculations are leading here: the vision of heaven that St John gives us in Revelation at the back of the New Testament, depicted in our apse, is the whole world summoned to an eternal celebration – joy and singing. Generosity and joy.

I know many of us hunger for feasting with friends and family, rather than drinking wine with only Netflix and a newspaper supplement for

company. But it will come, and how much more we will appreciate even boring auntie Jane, or Granny Willis' two stories that we've all heard a million times.

And of course, even that is only a poor shadow of the banquet we *really* await – the wedding feast of the Lamb, that which we foretaste in this Eucharist.

And in the meantime? As we await the post vaccine parties, whenever it will actually be safe to do so; let alone as we await the time we're each called home through death's gate into the heavenly throng (apse).

Well, as ever, Mary knows best: 'His mother saith unto the servants (that's us) Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it'.

The God revealed in generosity and joy calls us not to twiddle our thumbs or wait impatiently, but to be busy in the vineyard even now in these doldrum days of Covid.

Whatever our manner of life, the evening G and T and square of dark chocolate (or whatever it is) will be best enjoyed after a day doing as today's scriptures 'saith unto' us:

- The servants see what Jesus is doing: look for God at work even in tiny signs of grace, beauty, truth and love in daily life and join in.

- 'The hour has not yet come': don't let impatience poison, cultivate holy waiting and inner peace. Meet the angst and sadness we're all feeling at the moment with the balm of contemplative prayer and reliance upon God.

- And St Paul, ever practical, tells us in today's Epistle how we are to manifest God's grace. These words are just nice words, unless we take them and en flesh them in ways that give life to ourselves and others: hospitality, blessings, forbearance, mercy, faith, doing honour to one another, fervency, patience, humility.

You will find your own lessons too in the readings given for today, do. Inspired by them, we can tread gently and confidently into the tricky weeks ahead towards, I pray, better times, and even then, the glory that lies ahead, in which however bad or good things are on this side of death *true joy* awaits us at the banquet of the Lamb. Blessed are we who are called to His supper.