



Rev Linda Murphy

John 2:1-11

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

16 January 2022

When I first read this reading, I immediately could hear myself saying the same thing in these circumstances. “They have no wine” Our sons certainly couldn’t perform a miracle however in this situation I am sure they would obey my wish that more wine was provided. Their method of solving the problem would be very 21st century, a trip to the closest supermarket. Jesus of course didn’t have this option.

In the first century CE, running out of wine at a wedding was a social disgrace, there should have been better planning by the host. Weddings during this time went on for days and everyone was invited to be part of the celebration. The entire village of Cana would have been invited.

Jesus’ response to his mother’s request sounds disrespectful to our ears, however in the context, a rebuke was not unlikely. It is also possible Mary felt it time that Jesus began his mission, after all the disciples are attending the wedding.

Jesus’ miracle of turning the water into not just ordinary wine but of the best quality and in considerable quantity, illustrated compassion. The newly wed couple were not shamed in front of their community. By providing an abundance of wine, Jesus announces the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

On a deeper level the turning water into wine is covenantal. It represents the new covenant that Jesus was ushering in. Jesus was replacing the old wine of Judaism with the new wine of his covenant.

This miracle also provided an act of confidence to the disciples to have faith in him. The servants also had to have faith in what they were told to do, and they followed Mary's instructions, faithfully.

John's Gospel concludes with the words that this was Jesus' first miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee, and his disciples believed in him. The Gospel also mentions at the end of the book that the miracles recorded are not all the miracles that Jesus completed so we don't know emphatically that this is Jesus' first miracle.

This miracle was so understated it seems very few who were present were even aware that the wine had run out and probably would not have noticed that the quality of wine improved as the celebrations continued.

Next month another miracle will be open for business, Homeground. Homeground was a vision of many including Dame Diane Robertson and Bishop Jim White to name just two of our visionaries. Sir Chris Farrelly, in his five years as Missioner, drove the vision to what we have now. Helen Robinson has the honour of making it fall into place and work. No small task. At last, we can see the building almost ready for the Mission staff to commence working from it.

There is an air of excited anticipation and thoughts of how we are going to work in this new space. I have had the pleasure of being in the building a number of times and each time I see something new and wonder how this will work. This week

when I walked away, I thought how blessed I am to be finishing my working life in such a beautiful space. The colours are tranquil with lots of texture and greenery. In the old Prince of Wales building, a number of the original features are still present, the staircase, tiles from the 1900s and wooden pillars.

In 2008 I attended a meeting here at St Matthew in the City when Diane first introduced her vision of Mission in the City. This was met with scepticism due to the then estimated cost of \$80 million. Nevertheless, twelve years later and a much greater cost, we have the building, Te Tapui Atawhai, that will be offering accommodation, medical services, a pharmacy, detox services, outreach nursing team, Street to Home will continue to support whanau with housing in the community and our Outreach team will continue to care for our unending number of rough sleepers in the community. Haeata, our place of new beginning, where whanau gather daily for kai will continue the work, they started in Union St along with activities that have been sadly stopped during the pandemic. There are many in our community who cannot wait for our art classes to start again.

As of the 14th of February, we parishioners of St Matthews will have the Mission back as neighbours. There is now a staff of over two hundred people and eighty whanau will be residing in Homeground, which, will be a considerable change for us all. Of course, Omicron may change that timing but that is our plan.

While we are not having a wedding feast at Homeground we are planning on many feasts although running out of wine is not going to be a problem. There won't be any. We leave Union St, our home for the last three years, on the 11th of February for the last time. 23 Union St has served us well

giving us a place to continue our work especially in the CBD however I can't wait to be back home at 140 Hobson St.

Returning to Hobson St means Social Detox will return, they have been in Avondale for three years. A medical detox service will complete their service at Homeground. This will be a first for this service having both medical and social specialists offered in the same building.

It will be a miracle if everything goes smoothly, we have a new building full of technology operated everything so what could possibly go wrong!! The fleet cars are stacked. I must say I am terrified of the thought of operating this system when I need a vehicle to take a patient to Greenlane.

Jesus acted out of compassion for the bride and groom and their wedding was saved. The bride and groom were given another chance. Our God is the God of second chances. God wants us to have faith. The choice, like that of the servants is ours.

The Auckland City Mission, Te Tapui Atawhai, has been given a new chance in it's 102nd year of operation, by the people of Auckland. Let that new miracle begin. We are all part of it.