

## Bride Valley Service for Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Third Sunday of Epiphany

Please take a moment of silence before we begin, you may wish to light a candle

### Psalm 128 The Happy Home of the faithful

The Lord bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem

verse 5

#### Opening Prayer

Lord, direct our thoughts and teach us to pray. Lift our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### Confession

We have not always worshipped God, our creator.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have not always followed Christ, our Saviour.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

We have not always trusted in the Spirit, our guide.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

#### Absolution

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

#### Collect

God of all mercy, your Son proclaimed good news to the poor, release to the captives and freedom to the oppressed; anoint us with your Holy Spirit and set all your people free to praise you in Christ our Lord,

**Amen**

#### Revelation 19:6-10

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>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;

<sup>8</sup>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.

<sup>9</sup>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." <sup>10</sup>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."

## The Wedding at Cana John 2 verse 1-11

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 9 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 10 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." 11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

### Reflection by the Reverend Jane Williams

#### An invitation: we are invited to the wedding supper!

This time last year we were preparing for our wedding festival weekend. It was hard work, a lot of effort was put in, some were sceptical about it and yet in the end most of us were completely overwhelmed, thrilled at how it turned out. Both of our schools got involved and we acted out the Wedding of Cana, focussing on Jesus' first miracle when he did something completely amazing, much bigger than anyone at the wedding could have even imagined. Even his mother, Mary, had no idea what he would do, how he would solve the problem, but she had complete trust that he would, you hear it in the way she told the servants "Do whatever he tells you".

During the wedding festival last year, we were privileged to spend time with the couples planning their weddings during 2020. It was exciting at the time, but of course we now know that the reality for most of them was that they had to postpone the celebration, despite all their hard work in preparing. In fact, only one of those couples did get married in the end and that was on a much smaller scale than planned. Their guest list went down to 30 and then eventually it was paired down again to only 15! But do you know what, ultimately it turned out to be such a great celebration for them. Despite all the disappointments of the year, the way that their big day wasn't anything like they'd planned, they didn't even have their original bridesmaids, yet (and I'm sure those who witnessed it would agree) – it ended up being incredibly special, very intimate, clearly the most important people were there and I have to say, though it rained, not just rained, but at the time of the bride arriving at church it was absolutely bucketing down; it felt like a truly blessed occasion, an incredible moment for them as a couple and indeed for the whole family.

This year has left me wondering; when life is paired back to just the essentials, keeping it simple, only the most important things, it reveals something beyond us. Sometimes it feels as though God is actually blessing us in all the simplicity. John, in the book of Revelation speaks of a great multitude crying out "Hallelujah" - praising God, getting ready to embrace just as a bride meets her groom, as the church greets her beloved Jesus. I could get carried away in this call to praise ... It reminds me of that worship song: "**Lord I come**, longing to know you, longing to see your face, for you've called me to come into the holiest of place"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3ruvBxc4oU>

Jesus is a guest at the wedding at Cana and he brings a dimension of happiness that would otherwise be lacking, only Mary and the disciples and stewards see what has happened, how it came about. John says it reveals His glory, gives them an insight into what kind of God they are serving – for me the story is full of promise and hope of a future full of expectation. Imagine being the guest at a wedding where Jesus is not just the guest, he is the bridegroom, in Revelation we are invited to the wedding of the Lamb! Imagine the party, we are invited to celebrate with him, to revel in His glory. Indeed, we were created to wildly rejoice in His presence, born to praise Him. Hallelujah! We are truly guests at His table. Amen.

### **Let us declare our faith in God**

We believe in God the Father,  
From whom every family  
In heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son,  
Who lives in our hearts through faith,  
And fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
Who strengthens us  
With power from on high.

We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

### **Prayers of Intercession, prepared for us this week by LLM Mike Read**

#### **Let us pray**

We pray for the life of your Church, particularly in these days when we are unable to use our places of worship, but we give you thanks that we have the freedom to pray and worship whatever our situation.

Strengthen our Bishops and Clergy and especially we pray for our Rector Jane. Give her courage and guidance, and help us to give her the support and encouragement that she needs.

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

We pray for your world, broken by war and famine, and at the present time by the coronavirus. Give wisdom to all in authority especially in making decisions regarding the present crisis. Help us not to forget those who are persecuted for their faith (or no faith at all), and those who are refugees seeking a place of safety in which to live.

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

We pray for the well-being of our community in the Bride Valley. For our schools, those who teach and those who learn. We give you thanks that they have remained open teaching those who have been allowed to remain, and supporting those who have been confined to their homes. We thank you that you have protected those already in school and those who are at home.

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

We pray for our families and friends especially those who are separated from us by lockdown. Help us to endure the pain of that separation, to be patient knowing that in your good time it will end.

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

We pray for those in special need. Those who are ill in hospital, nursing home or their own home and for those who care for them. We pray for those who are lonely or depressed ... and for those who are suffering from the loss of a loved one ...

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

Look with mercy and love on us, gathered as your people on this Sunday. We each have a part to play in the body of Christ. Help us to grasp the great truth that the world is shot through with your presence, that nothing is foreign to you, that you are always there before us. And in that confidence we offer you again all that we have, all that we are and all that we should be, as agents of your love this week. **Amen.**

**Let us pray that we may know life and hope in Jesus Christ as we say:**

**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.  
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.**

To him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us without blemish  
Before the presence of his glory with rejoicing,  
To the only God, our saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority,  
Before all time and now and forever. **Amen.**

### ***The service ends with the Peace***

Peace to you from God our Father who hears our cry.  
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ, whose death brings healing.  
Peace from the Holy Spirit who gives us life and strength.  
The peace of the lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

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