

May these words be pleasing. Amen.

A great and famous story in today's reading. It may be a set a long time ago in a place far away but we can imagine a wedding. We've been to weddings, perhaps our own wedding, the stress, the tension, the joy, the things that can and do go wrong. At this wedding (Jesus happened to be there as a guest) something goes badly wrong. The drink, the wine, begins to run out. Guests will be polite, they will understand but no one will forget the wedding at which the wine ran out. There was water, plenty of it in large stone jars, but not drinking water, merely washing water used as people entered the house. Six jars, 150 gallons, 700 litres. Jesus said fill the jars with water and it is then transformed into wine. The steward was given some of the wine and was struck with the quality, the servants who knew where this fine wine had come from would have been impressed with the quantity. No one will forget the wedding at which there was much wine and the wine was fine (although I suspect that there might have been some sore heads!).

Can I cast your mind back to a another great celebration – Christmas was but 5 weeks ago.

At Christmas the Lunns, like many, are blessed with many presents. Some unpredictable and wonderful, some bizzare yet still wonderful. Over the years I remember a grow-your-own mushroom kit (nothing actually grew), a greenhouse heater (we didn't have a greenhouse) and book where the middle sections were upside down, an Oxfam goat, a sponsored toilet in Africa.

Some presents are annual necessities, the chocolate coins, perhaps an orange and the renewal of magazine subscriptions – utterly predictable but very welcome both at Christmas and throughout the whole year ahead.

Here is a magazine from this Christmas. Alastair's 'Rail Express' ('Deltics' then and now) – great stuff. Feel free to have a look at the end and especially on page 15, a picture taken in 1980, at Darlington station, and a group of young rail enthusiasts admiring the train. Our surprise on Christmas day was to see a nine year old me, slightly hidden, with longish trousers, a fine brown jumper (even though it's August) and hair badly in need of a brush (life father likeyeah).

Imagine would you finding a picture of *you* when you were nine years old, or when you were young, a child. What would your reaction be, your emotion? Perhaps you have or a friend has such a picture that opens up memories.

Can we, this morning, do some amateur psychology? I want you to imagine a corridor that goes – who knows where? Going off this corridor are doors and you are free to open them but you don't have to. The first door is a good door to open. You think of a picture of yourself when you were a child and you contemplate all the love and kindness shown to that child from the time of the

picture right through to where we find ourselves today. In my picture I am dressed, well fed, I have a home to go to, a family, education, a future. We hope that that same goodness of love and kindness was as evident on that wedding in Cana as we wish it to be at every wedding today, and tomorrow, in every family, in every home. That is a good door to open, a good room to visit (poignant though it may be).

Come back into the corridor and open the next door. This is a very easy door to open and we can visit this room too frequently. Bad things happen to all people. In this room I want to go back and reach out to that 9 year old me in the picture. I know his story - 37 years between then and now and I want to stop bad things happening. But of course I can't. Don't hit that rabbit with your bike, I would say! Much more satisfying, however, is to brood and to fester on all the bad things that other people have done to you, have said to you, the things that you were denied, the bitterness we carry. It is true that our lives, all our lives carry scars inflicted by others.

The risen Lord Jesus retained the scars on his hands, his feet and his side when he appeared to his friends. But he was healed, he was alive. Just so for us in our room through prayer and mutual support our own open sores can be healed into scars. What may seem impossible to us is possible through the same Lord who transformed unclean water into fine wine.

Come out of that room and enter our third and final room. Some will rarely enter this room. I look at the child-me and I remember the things I prefer to forget. The things I have done wrong in my life since that picture was taken. The people I have hurt, some deeply, the people I have let down, the things I should not have said or done, we can all bring to mind the damage each of us has done to relationships, to others, and we long to turn the clock back, but we can't. This is an uncomfortable room but a good room if one knows to the transforming power of a God who turns the unclean into clean, the dirty water into fine wine. A good room if one knows the forgiving and transforming love of Christ. The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Come to the wedding, the festival, the celebration, the dance. Marvel at the quality of God's wine. Marvel at the quantity of God's wine. Marvel at the love of God which he lavishes upon you. May this same love flow through us and flow through our church both in quality and quantity. Because it can. Amen.