

Love - committed love, faithful love, passionate love, selfless love, - is what we celebrate in the covenant of marriage. That covenant maintains that two people will become lifelong companions - offering mutual support and encouragement, through life's peaks and troughs.

Our gospel story this morning tells us that the first public sign that revealed Jesus' identity as the Son of God was performed at a wedding - the celebration of covenant love.

In this text we're transported to the scene of a wedding in the little town called Cana. Among the guests for this week-long celebration, we find Jesus, his mother, and his first students. Imagine you are a guest at this wedding. We see Jesus mixing and mingling, talking and laughing, eating and drinking.

Then there's a bit of a stir. You see Jesus' mother approach him and from where you're standing, it sounds like she said that the wine is gone. The wine is gone?! For a Jewish feast wine was essential. "Without wine," said the Rabbis, "there is no joy." At any time this failure of provisions would have been a problem, for hospitality in the East is a sacred duty; but for the provisions to fail at a wedding would be a terrible humiliation for the bride and the bridegroom.

But all is not lost because Jesus is present. The water is changed into wine - the best wine - and the celebration carries on.

There are two ways that we might relate this to marriage and life:

Firstly, Jesus brings new possibilities.

The celebration would have turned out very differently if Jesus had not been present. It would have ended far too soon. Anyone who has been married for any length of time knows the challenges it presents. Unmet expectations, mistaken words, money worries can leave us feeling like the joy of marriage is all but lost. But with Jesus present in our lives and in our marriages, the water of bland routine can be transformed into the wine of grateful gladness.

Secondly, Jesus gives in abundance.

The wine may have run dry, but when Jesus is asked to intervene there is no hint of meanness. He gave freely, and there was plenty to go around. In our relationships there can be the temptation to do as has been done to us. This provokes us to withhold a kind word that should be spoken, or to close down when we need to open up. But the abundance of Jesus prompts us to act first - to make the first move of forgiveness, to say that kind word, to open up, and to

live graciously. Following Jesus empowers us to move past the stinginess of doing only that which has been done to us, and into the abundance of doing that which we would like to have done to us.

Emptiness is filled. Water becomes wine.

This is the story of possibility and abundance.

These are surely blessings for any marriage, and they are available wherever Jesus is present. In Jesus' name. Amen.