



# Breaking Open the Word

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I'm over here!



Prepared by

Dennis Webster



St Peter's by the Lake  
Paynesville, Victoria Australia  
Anglican Diocese of Gippsland

Isaiah 62.1-5

Psalms 36.5-10

1 Corinthians 12.1-11

John 2.1-11

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

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Introduction

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Reflection

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Discussion Questions

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Five Days of Meditation and Prayer

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Almighty and everlasting God,  
who dost govern all things in heaven and earth;  
Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people,  
and grant us thy peace  
all the days of our life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## INTRODUCTION

In Dennis's sermon titled "I'm over here! Manifesting Christ's Glory Through Mission," he discusses the importance of the Wedding at Cana. He compares the joy and excitement of weddings today to the biblical story, explaining that weddings during Jesus's time were community gatherings where being welcoming was very important.

Mary's faith stands out at this wedding as she tells the servants to follow Jesus's commands, leading to his first sign of changing water into wine.

This sign represents God's abundant grace and marks the start of Christ's mission, encouraging believers to see God's glory in both big and small moments in life.

Dennis discusses the themes of mission and community, highlighting that everyone has unique spiritual gifts essential for the Church's work.

He asks the congregation to consider how they can use their talents to support Christ's mission in their local community and beyond. He emphasises that mission goes beyond local boundaries and encourages everyone to show Christ's love through their actions and outreach.

He finishes by inviting members to consider taking on roles that support this mission, reminding them that their combined gifts and efforts are vital in sharing Christ's message and glory.

### Prayer Prompts

- Reflect on how you can embody the message of love and service in your daily interactions this week.
- Think about ways to support one another as a community, and pray for guidance in reaching out to those in need.
- You can consider any personal challenges you're facing and ask for strength to apply the lessons learned in the sermon.
- Think about how you can be intentional in spreading kindness and grace, and pray for opportunities to do so in your life.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,  
your gift of life so that we, made in your image  
may become your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

#### Psalm 19

Reflecting on today's Gospel reading brings back warm memories of my family's weddings. I can still picture the delightful chaos they created—deciding who to invite, figuring out accommodations for everyone, and navigating the intricate dance of family dynamics. Just think about the fun challenge of catering to a family like mine, with Mum being one of fourteen children! And when you include Dad's relatives, grandparents, and cousins, the guest list seems to balloon faster than a parish budget meeting agenda!

Weddings have always been a heartwarming blend of joy and complexity, reflecting the fabric of community life. In today's Gospel, we see Jesus, his mother, Mary, and the disciples joyfully attending a wedding in Cana. Back then, weddings were not just one-day events; they evolved into delightful multi-day celebrations that involved everyone in the village. Hospitality played a vital role in these gatherings, and running out of wine would have been quite the social faux pas!

In this cherished story, we encounter a genuinely heartwarming moment between Jesus and his mother, Mary.

With gentle concern, she prompts him: "They have no wine." When he replies by calling her "Woman," it might seem a touch surprising or even slightly dismissive to us. Honestly, if I had spoken to my mum like that, it would have been quite a touching moment! She would have gently reminded me to be more polite—probably with a not-so-playful nudge to ensure I got the message!

Mary demonstrates remarkable faith by gently encouraging the servants, saying, "Do whatever he tells you." This moment beautifully reflects her unwavering trust in her son and sets the stage for the first miracle of Jesus' ministry—the transformation of water into the finest wine. This is not just any wine; it signifies God's overflowing grace and heralds the exciting beginning of Christ's Messianic mission.

#### The Manifestation of Christ

The Wedding at Cana isn't merely a tale about wine; it serves as a sign, highlighting the first public manifestation of Christ's glory and the commencement of his remarkable ministry. Throughout the season of Epiphany, we concentrate on "making known" the ways Christ reveals himself to the world and each other,

inviting us into a deeper connection.

If we aren't careful, mystery, romanticism, and mysticism can obscure the nuances of the Wedding narrative. Over the years, Marian theology has placed a great deal of emphasis on Mary. The quality of wine is often trivialised—a standard joke at the bishops' expense suggests they could turn Gippsland Water into Grange Hermitage and wonder why there are six jars instead of seven.

These questions are truly excellent—extraordinary! They connect beautifully to the central theme of the Epiphany season, which focuses on "making known" and "manifestation." The Wedding Feast at Cana isn't merely the first miracle; it's a significant indication that the Messianic mission is unfolding, heralding an exciting start to this incredible story. To truly grasp this, let's examine the role of the "Woman" who appears in this inspiring narrative at the outset of Christ's reign. She symbolises the enlightening path towards fully realising the Messianic mission's banquet.

Mary's role illustrates how God often works through everyday people and situations. She encourages action, trusts Jesus, and gracefully steps back, allowing divine work to unfold. Similarly, we are invited to engage in God's mission—to reveal Christ's presence in our world. We do not hear about the "Woman" until Jesus' reign

begins on the cross when he turns to her and says, "Woman, behold your son." To the beloved disciple, he says, "Behold your mother." From that moment, the responsibility for caring for the Woman is now fulfilled, and the hour has come.

#### Our Gifts in God's Mission

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul emphasises that everyone has received spiritual gifts intended for the collective benefit. These gifts—such as teaching, healing, comfort, and creativity—are integral to the body of Christ. Each gift holds equal significance; they support one another, strengthening the Church and serving the wider community.

Paul compellingly articulates the profound qualities of Jesus' mission. Consider the significance of the wedding at Cana in Galilee, where the glory of God shines through on the third day, echoing the momentous events of Exodus 12. This connection invites us to reflect on the glory manifested on the third day following the giving of the Ten Words at Mount Sinai. What the Lord requires of us is crystal clear, articulated in the enduring words etched on the stone tablets of Moses.

Three days after descending from the mountain, his face glowing from his encounter with God, Israel is invited to witness God's glory descending upon the Holy Mount. This journey toward the ultimate third day

culminates in the sacrificial offering of Jesus, whose blood - the finest offering imaginable - is intricately linked to our baptismal commitments. This path leads us to glory and invites us to share in this divine mission. Just as Jesus lovingly referred to the Woman as Mother, we too must embrace our journey with the gifts bestowed upon us, ensuring that others may encounter and witness the majesty of God's glory. Let us commit to this sacred mission, transforming lives and illuminating the path to divine glory.

We might reflect on our mission here. To be manifest is to be seen. What do people perceive in our daily mission? I'll explore with you, not at you, some observations I've made over the past year and help map out our journey towards making God fully known so that others, whom God also delights in, may be informed at the fullness and hour of God when we... are to dwell for evermore.

We are part of this mission as an Anglican community in East Gippsland. Our outreach—through food banks, prison ministry, support for refugees, and care for the sick and grieving—demonstrates God's love in practical ways. We share in Christ's glory through music, prayer, and the many ways we serve one another.

But the mission isn't just something we do "over there." It's about what we do right here. As our local population grows, presenting new challenges and opportunities, we must ask ourselves: What does mission look like in our backyard? How can we use our gifts to make Christ known to our neighbours, whether they're young families, retirees, or

those seeking a sense of belonging?

With our gifts, our journey is also, like that of Mary and the disciples at Cana in Galilee, towards the reign of Christ. Through our activities, we aim to make known, bring to life, and manifest God's glory in all that we do, all that we are, and all that we enable. Drawing inspiration from the words of Teresa of Avila, I emphasise once more that God has no voice but ours, no hands but ours, no heart but ours. Our offering of gifts from God makes the mission possible.

Mission describes the Church's work in the community's everyday life locally and abroad. Unfortunately, many people misunderstand the term, believing it suggests a singular focus instead of a collective effort. Mission isn't just something we do "over there"; it includes everything we do "out there." It forms an essential part of our baptismal commitment, yet many fail to recognise our efforts as a mission.

#### A Call to Action

At the Wedding at Cana, Mary turned to the servants and said, "Do whatever he tells you." Today, I invite you to reflect on what Christ asks of you. We have a vacancy on the Parish Council for a Mission Secretary, an important role that guides our collective efforts. Is God calling you, or perhaps someone you know, to step up this way?

I could suggest someone for the role, but I need to check with Parish what this has to do with me. The Mother has a special request for the stewards. We ask God to open our hearts to those who might fulfil this critical role. I have a few ideas, and I know others do as

well! Are you thinking of reaching out to the stewards? It would mean a lot if you could hold off on nominating anyone specific to me. Parish Councillors, it's your time to shine! I'm fair dinkum about this!

Talk to God first, then chat with them. They will indeed reflect on God and then on me.

Take a moment to pray about this. Share your thoughts with God, and then open up to one another. Just as the stewards at Cana united to create a miracle, we can come together as a parish to discover the best ways to share our gifts in serving God's mission.

#### Our Journey Towards Glory

On this third day—echoing the wedding at Cana, which also took place on the third day—let us remember that we are on a journey towards the ultimate third day: the resurrection, where Christ's glory is fully revealed. Throughout this journey, we are encouraged to reflect that glory through our actions, faith, and love.

May we continue to make Christ known within our community and beyond. Therefore, we conclude with Paul's final words to the Corinthians, remembering that grace shares the same root as the word "gift." May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

#### QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS

In what ways does the story of the Wedding at Cana demonstrate the importance of community and hospitality?

- The sermon discusses how weddings in Jesus' time were community events where hospitality was crucial, and running out of wine would have been a major issue.
- How can we apply the values of community and hospitality in our own lives, especially in our school or neighbourhood?

What do you think Mary's role in the miracle at Cana teaches us about faith and trust?

- Mary shows remarkable faith by telling the servants to 'do whatever he tells you,' highlighting her trust in Jesus to perform the miracle.
- Can you think of a situation in your life where you needed to trust someone, and how did that impact the outcome?



What does it mean to 'make Christ known' in our everyday lives according to the sermon?

- The congregation is encouraged to reflect on how they can manifest God's glory and serve their local community.
- Can you think of a specific action you could take this week to help others see the love and glory of Christ in your community?

Why is it significant that the wedding miracle is considered the first public manifestation of Christ's glory?

- The sermon explains that the Wedding Feast at Cana symbolises the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and reveals God's glory.
- In what ways do you think you can help reveal God's glory in your own community or school?

How do the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 play a role in the mission of the Church as discussed in the sermon?

- Paul emphasises that everyone has unique gifts that contribute to the collective mission of the Church, helping to support one another.
- What gifts do you feel you have, and how could you use them to support your friends or community?

#### QUESTIONS with YOUNGER PEOPLE

1. What do you think about Mary asking Jesus to help with the wine at the wedding?

- Why do you think Mary had such faith in Jesus?
- Context: This comes from the story of Mary recognising the need for wine and trusting Jesus's ability to help.

2. Why do you think community events, like weddings, are essential?

- How can gatherings help us connect and support one another?
- This is reflected in the sermon's discussion on the importance of hospitality during weddings.

3. What gifts do you think you have that can help others?

- How can we use our gifts to serve our community?
- This is inspired by the sermon's point about everyone receiving unique spiritual gifts.

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4. In what ways can we show love to those in need around us?



# Walking Gently on Sacred Ground



This five-day devotional will be taking a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend.

## Day 1 Psalm 19

In today's devotional, we'll reflect on the significance of the Wedding at Cana and how it reveals God's overflowing grace. Just as wine symbolises joy and celebration, this miracle illustrates the notion of transformation that God invites us into. It serves as a reminder of how Jesus meets our needs, often in ways that far exceed our expectations, and how we, like Mary, are called to trust in Him and inspire action within our communities.

Let us contemplate how we can reflect Christ's presence in our lives.

Are we willing to act in faith, trusting that God can turn our ordinary moments into extraordinary testimonies of His glory?

- What aspects of your waiting for God to transform?
- How can you encourage others to believe in God's plan, as Mary did with the servants?
- What steps can you take today to reveal Christ's presence in your community?
- Pray for openness to God's transformative work in your life.

## Day 2 1 Corinthians 12

As we move into Day 2, we focus on the gifts God has bestowed upon us. The communal aspect of the Church is highlighted in Paul's teachings, reminding us of our interdependence.

Just as the servants at the wedding were called to act, we must engage with one another, using our unique gifts to serve our community and shine a light on Christ's glory.

Today, think about how you can embody the gifts of teaching, healing, and comfort in your daily interactions.

Every contribution, no matter how small, plays a vital role in the Church's larger mission.

Reflect on how God is preparing you for the tasks at hand.

- In what ways do you see your spiritual gifts at work around you?
- How can you better support your fellow parishioners in their missions?
- Where is God calling you to step out in faith and use your gifts today?
- Ask God for clarity regarding your unique spiritual gifts.
- Meditate on how you can contribute to the church community.

### **Day 3** John 2:1-11

On Day 3, we delve deeper into the miracle at Cana, exploring its significance beyond the initial transformation of water into wine. This miracle sets the tone for Jesus's ministry, revealing His divine authority and the abundant grace He offers. Each miracle provides a glimpse of the Kingdom, showcasing the beauty of God's love and the reality of His presence among us. In contemplating this passage, reflect on its immense implications for us today.

How might the abundance of Christ influence our understanding of generosity, hospitality, and community?

Let this miracle encourage us to expect God to work in our lives and to trust that His timing and methods are perfect.

- How do you see God's abundance manifesting in your life?
- In what ways can you demonstrate generosity towards others?
- What situations require your faith and trust in God's provisions?
- Reflect on times you've experienced God's provision and abundance.
- Pray for a heart that recognises and responds to others' needs.

### **Day 4** Luke 9:10-17

Day 4 encourages us to connect the miracle of the loaves and fishes with our ongoing exploration of Jesus's mission. Just as thousands were fed five loaves and two fish, we are similarly called to share our resources and trust God's ability to multiply our offerings. This day highlights the importance of community in fulfilling our mission and the Holy Spirit's role in guiding us.

Reflect on what you have to offer, no matter how small, and consider how God can use it to impact those around you. Each contribution, given with faith, has the power to bless and significantly transform lives.

- What small offerings of yourself can you bring to God today?
- How can you rally your community together to fulfil God's mission?
- Where is God calling you to trust in His multiplication of your efforts?

- Pray to see your gifts as valuable in God's hands.
- Reflect on past experiences where you've seen efforts being multiplied by God.

### **Day 5** Romans 12:1-2

As we conclude our five-day devotional, we return to the theme of transformation and service.

Paul's call to present our bodies as living sacrifices requires surrendering to God's will. This act of devotion is our reasonable response to the grace we have received, reminding us to pray for His glory.

On your final day of reflection, consider how your life aligns with the teachings and examples presented throughout this week. How can you ensure that your actions testify to the grace you've experienced?

Embrace the challenge to live out your faith within your community authentically.

- How do you need to renew your commitment to God's mission?
- How can you be a living sacrifice in your daily life?
- What actions will you take to bring Christ's glory into your community?
- Pray for clarity and fulfil your calling.
- Reflect on how you can embody the message of grace in everyday situations.

# End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina:     The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press)  
                      The Gospel of Matthew  
                      The Gospel of John

Tannehill, Robert C, **Narrative Unity Luke Acts Vol: A Literary Interpretation: Volume One: The Gospel According to Luke:**, Augsburg Fortress Publishers 1991

The Worship Cloud: articles by N.T. Wright and Jane Williams  
The Vine Newsletter SPCK

Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

Bible Hub



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