

Sunday Thought

16th January 2022 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

Isaiah 62: 1 - 5

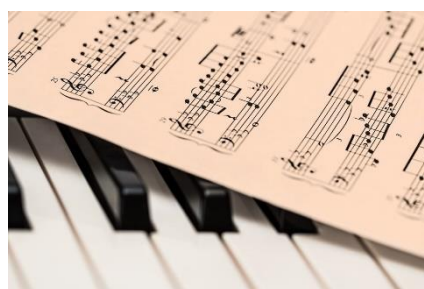
Psalm 36: 5 - 10

1 Corinthians 12: 1 - 11

John 2: 1 - 11

An Accompanist

In the sixties churches of many denominations were involved in a new wave of Christian teaching about the Holy Spirit. With it came a fresh understanding of the Spirit's gifts of ministry, gifts as described in Paul's letters, like preaching, teaching, healing, and speaking in other, often unrecognised languages (*there are about 7,000 in the world!*). Sadly, in some



places receipt of these gifts became somewhat competitive – the more obvious a gift the greater esteem being given to the recipient. This could sometimes create a measure of disunity in churches where well-meaning members missed the point that the greatest of the 'gifts' is *love*. Our reading from Paul's letter to Christians in Corinth today relates to a very similar problem in the church there. Paul is at pains to point out that there is one Holy Spirit whose gifts are given to individuals for the good of the whole church and its work of telling the world about Jesus and the Kingdom of God. '*You are all being used by God,*' he told them. '*Just as and where and when he needs you – together!*' It may be compared to a musician in an orchestra who needs to be attentive to the instrumentalists all around her for the benefit of an audience whose gift may be appreciation - a love of music.

Most important to come out of the discord we experienced was to see church fellowships discerning their members' gifts and suggesting how they may be best used. That could also present difficulties when some very frustrated people, feeling left out, began to ask '*What about me? What's my gift then?*' My reply was, '*Maybe you are the gift. For now, be yourself in Christ Jesus!*' *Be an accompanist.*

These memories were with me as I went on to look at today's Gospel reading. It is the familiar story of Jesus at a wedding in Cana at which he miraculously changed water into wine. Miracles have always made for a great deal of questioning and discussion among Christians, and some have come up with amazing ideas to get round the idea of the unnatural, even suggesting on this occasion the master of ceremonies decided that, after several days of feasting, watered-down wine was more beneficial! Some point to the size of the water jars

and ask if they really needed five hundred litres of wine! But it doesn't take that long to see 500 one litre bottles disappear from a Supermarket shelf at Christmas! I prefer to believe in miracles, as did John who saw a special purpose in what happened. He believed this miracle was a statement by Jesus about his mission. He would repeat it many times in his teaching. *I am not here to tell you more about the old 'water' of religious law and practice, but to introduce you to the 'rich wine' of life in the Kingdom of God.*

I leave you with these questions and turn to another 'thought' which has stayed with me – about *Mary's Gift*. I have always found difficulty with Jesus' words to his mother at the Cana wedding – '*You must not tell me what to do.*' It is important to understand the situation. This was a family wedding – Jesus' family were among many other invited guests, including his disciples and friends. There would be several days of celebration and no doubt Jesus would be sharing in them. It is presumed that Joseph had died by now, leaving Jesus as head of the family. Mary may well have had a share in the catering, but the wine was the province of the host. In a wine producing area, like Cana, reputations were at stake. Maybe Jesus' dismissal of Mary's help was in her defence – '*I shouldn't get involved here!*' He knew what he was about to do and the likelihood of religious leaders' opposition. Perhaps he preferred to save Mary from being involved. Now I am speculating too! I haven't an answer to that except to remember how Mary was constantly the accompanist in Jesus' ministry and think how he must have wanted to protect her. His loving accompanist was with him, in joy and sadness throughout his whole life, standing by him, watching his final death agonies, hearing his ever-loving concern as he commended her into the care of his closest friend, John.

Mary's accompanist gift began with her reply to an angel '*I'm here. Let everything happen as God says.*' We all need to start with **being** a gift of God. If there are gaps in his work, he will give people his special abilities to fill them. They will be given at his discretion and the church's need. Being an accompanist is after all, very close to the 'work of angels'



A Prayer (with Psalm 36 and Isaiah 62 in mind)

Isaiah envisions *The Christian's Dream Prayer – for our land to be married to God!*

Lord, we pray for our land to be wedded to you.

For us all to be aware of your constant love for us and all your creation'

In a land where Government and people live in obedience to your commandments,

Loving you above all others

and loving one another with devoted, selfless, untiring respect.

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