

Isaiah 60: 1 – 9; John 2: 1 – 11

**‘Following on from Cana’**

It’s almost as if we’re being let into a secret. We’re to regard the changing of water into wine as a ‘sign’ – the first sign – that Jesus did.

I doubt that it was obviously so to many people who were at the wedding ... nor those who were involved in discussion about it afterwards.

That’s perhaps one lesson to take forward into 2023 ... the fact that we aim to follow Jesus ... and the hope that we’ve discerned his will accurately ... this will not mean that others won’t be critical or mis-interpret what we say and do.

Here’s an imaginative conversation between Jesus and Peter:

**“Water or Wine?”**

**PETER:** Eh ... Jesus ...?

**JESUS:** Yes, Peter.

**PETER:** What would you rather have ... a glass of water or a glass of wine?

**JESUS:** Who’s buying?

**PETER:** Never mind who’s buying, which would you prefer?

**JESUS:** I’m not thirsty ...

**PETER:** But ... if you were thirsty ...

**JESUS:** It would depend on the time of day and where I was.

**PETER:** What do you mean?

**JESUS:** Well if it was nine o’clock in the morning and I was in the middle of a class of school children, it wouldn’t be wine.

**PETER:** Because it’s alcoholic?

**JESUS:** No ... because I don’t know many schools that have a bar in them. But what is all this talk about wine anyway?

**PETER:** It’s not me that talks about wine.

**JESUS:** That’s right. You don’t talk about it. You conduct an interrogation ... Why?

**PETER:** To test the strength of your interest.

**JESUS:** Oh I see ... You’re surveying the potential market before you open an off sales. Is that it?

**PETER:** No ... people are just talking again.

**JESUS:** Are they calling me an alcoholic?

**PTO**

**PETER:** How did you know?

**JESUS:** Well it wouldn't surprise me. If I talk to a girl at the side of the road, I get called a womaniser.

If I heal a centurion's servant they call me a military sympathiser.

If I as much as smile at a Pharisee, I'm a pawn of the establishment.

So if I take a glass of wine, I'm bound to be called an alcoholic.

**PETER:** Does it not bother you?

**JESUS:** Not really, Peter. I mean, it's a no-win situation. If I refused a drink, I'd be called a kill-joy. If I accept a glass, I'm a total inebriate. There's no pleasing everybody.

**PETER:** You could wear a temperance badge on one lapel and a real ale badge on the other.

**JESUS:** No, Peter ... that's the kind of thing you would do. I prefer not to give significance to such a minor issue.

**PETER:** But do you not think you should be showing an example?

**JESUS:** Well, there's two things, Peter. The first is that I live in Palestine and wine is our national drink. If I lived in Turkey, I'd probably drink coffee and get labelled a caffeine addict. And secondly, wine is all right for me, but it might be all wrong for other people. And I want to respect and be sensitive to that. I don't believe that me taking a glass of wine will make other people alcoholic, if that's what you are implying. But if I were to get drunk ... that would be another matter.

**PETER:** All right, but even in your stories, you mention drink.

**JESUS:** I do?

**PETER:** What about the man who built a winepress?

**JESUS:** Peter ... that's called local industry and I'm a local person. All my stories are about things people can identify with. It would be pointless talking about micro-technology and thermodynamics to people who know nothing about them.

**PETER:** ..... thermo what??

**JESUS:** Exactly!

**PETER:** (PAUSE) ... What about putting new wine in new skins?

**JESUS:** What about it? When I talked about that I wasn't giving a lesson in home-brewing, I was using something that people know about to let them into the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**PETER:** All right. You've convinced me. Are you feeling thirsty now?

**JESUS:** I am.

**PETER:** What would you like ... water or wine?

**JESUS:** It's my round, Peter ... what would you like?