# **The wedding at Cana: a sermon preached by Roland Price at St Mary’s on Sunday 29 Jan 2017**

I am confident that most of us are aware that John’s gospel is very different to the other three gospels in the NT

In writing his gospel some years after his colleagues, John the Evangelist was unhappy with the practices of the Early Church

He wanted his readers and hearers to acknowledge the centrality of Jesus and the importance of their personal relationship with him

In particular, John insists that Jesus brings us into ultimate reality which is eternal life with the Father and the Son

The wedding at Cana in Galilee is the first miraculous event recorded by John in his gospel

For John, the miracles he refers to that Jesus performed are signs and not just miraculous events

In fact, John refers to very few of the miracles mentioned in the other three gospels

Just as he does not record details of the last Supper with his disciples

But in the first chapter he has already said some important things about Jesus

1. Grace and truth (rather than law and righteousness) came through Jesus Christ
2. John the Baptist clearly said that he himself was not the Messiah; indeed, he was worthy to untie the Messiah’s sandals. John baptised with water but Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit
3. Jesus said to Nathanial that he would see greater things than Jesus’ ability to know people, and promised a vision of the ultimate reality, and the means whereby those who have faith in him can participate in it

This is very different from the traditional Jewish view of the Messiah as a warrior king

Jesus came after the Law and Moses, and after baptism in water and John the Baptist

But he is greater than both Moses and John, and he existed before them

He is the Word through whom all things were made

Jesus has come to complete what he made by uniting believers with God in a way that will far surpass anything the law could do or even hint at

And God’s new gift exceeds all that he has done before

So there was not enough wine at the wedding

This describes our basic life situation

Many of us enjoy what we do and the things that have happened to us in our lives

And you don’t have to be a Christian

There are many who we would call happy pagans

They seem to have everything going for them, and they have no need of God

CS Lewis said ‘There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God “Thy will be done”, and those to whom God says ‘Your will be done”.

The joy we experience leads us to want more, and there is limit to what is available in this life

Everything here is subject to decay and death

All the good things of this world: love, friendship, music, art, health, knowledge, as well as all the bad things, will one day be done away with

Being alive raises our expectations, for us only to become disappointed in the end

The story of the wedding at Cana is the account of a party where there is some drink but not enough

Mary and her family are there by invitation, including Jesus with his disciples

The mother of Jesus is aware of the problem of the shortage of wine

She has faith in her son Jesus to solve it

But she can do no more to help

She represents Israel, which gave birth to Christianity

She has no resources or ability to give anything

But she knows her son can

She asks Jesus to give the wine that symbolises eternal life

He can only do this by laying down his life for others to receive it

However, the time for this has not yet come

What he can do is to perform the sign which points towards the final gift that God gives, namely eternal life

The reality has to wait for the appointed time

Jesus performs the sign by producing better wine in huge quantities

This takes place in jars that were there for an entirely different purpose, namely the Jewish rites of purification

Grace and truth take the place of the law

And Jesus displaces Moses from his position of authority

The steward of the feast supposes that the bridegroom is responsible for the good wine being made available later

In fact, Jesus is the real bridegroom and it is he who will bring the better thing at the end of his life rather than at the beginning

Jesus’ glory is not the power to change water into wine but to give eternal life

The disciples, who had tasted what Jesus gives, believe in him

So Jesus’ glory far exceeds what we might have suspected

He gives eternal life which is way beyond our wildest dreams

This gift of eternal life is being with him, the Father and the Spirit

Who make their home in us now

This Sunday is set aside as Giving Sunday

As God has given us so much, surely we can determine our response to him through our giving of our time, talents and money