

The Best Wine Has Arrived

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Date: 24 January 2021

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Welcome to you to this service from Stornoway Free Church. I hope you've had a blessed week and we trust that together we'll know God's blessing together as we worship him this evening.

Before we begin the worship, I have a couple of intimations to read out on behalf of the Deacons Court. I'll just read them as they've been given out by the Deacons Court. The first one's to do with the return of the 2021 Free Will Offering Envelopes.

At the most recent meeting of the Court, it was agreed that until such time as normal services of worship can resume, a monthly opportunity will be given to return Free Will Offering Envelopes.

The arrangements for doing so will be the same as on previous occasions and will be as follows.

On Thursday 28th January and Saturday 30th January, the Church Hall on Kennet Street will be open between 2 and 4 p.m. to receive Free Will Offering Envelopes.

If you wish to take advantage of this opportunity, you should come along during these times or else arrange for a family member or friend to deliver the envelopes on your behalf. You can also contact your district elder or deacon and arrange a time for one of them to collect the envelopes from your home.

[1 : 11] You'll find on arrival at the hall a one-way system in place. You'll be coming in the main door and leaving through the exit at the far end of the hall. Of course, the wearing of face masks is mandatory.

These should be worn while you're inside the hall. Also, office bearers will be on hand to guide you through the various parts of the procedure.

Finally, hand sanitizers will be available for use at both these doors on the way in and then as you leave as well. It is important that you use these but also that you keep the recommended 2m social distancing on your arrival and while you're inside the hall.

The second information has also to do with a collection. This is for Bethesda, Bethesda Hospice in particular. In normal circumstances, a special collection would have been taken at the end of January each year for Bethesda.

Due to the current restrictions, a special collection for this year will be taken on Thursday in the days referred to above. That's Wednesday 28th January, Saturday 30th January between 2 and 4pm.

[2 : 22] So as Wednesday 28th and Saturday 30th, same dates as for the return of the freewill offering envelopes. And again, contributions can be taken to the hall at these times.

Also, you can send a contribution through by check if you can't be there for that. You can send a check through to the treasurer, Mr. Merle McPhail. And if you make that available, that will be, if you make that check out to Bethesda.

Sorry, if you make that payable to Stornoway Free Church but mark the envelope, Bethesda so that we know it's actually going for that purpose. And then send that to Murdo McPhail at 12A Jameson Drive.

Okay, these are the two intimations prior to the worship. We're going to begin our worship now singing, first of all, from Psalm 92 in the Scottish Psalter.

You'll find that page 352 in your psalm books. That's the Psalm 92, verses 1 to 4, singing to a tune, St. Fulbert.

[3 : 33] Through to the end of verse 4, To render thanks unto the Lord, it is a comely thing.

And to thy name, O thou most high, due praise allowed to sing.

Thy lovingkindness to show forth when shines the morning light, And to declare thy faithfulness with pleasure every night.

On a ten-stringed instrument, upon the psaltery, And on the high with solemn sound and grave sweet melody.

For thou, Lord, by thy mighty words hast made my heart bright glad, And I will triumph in the words which by thy hands were made.

[5 : 44] Let's now read from God's word. We're reading from the Old Testament, firstly. This is in the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 25, and verses 6 to 9.

Isaiah 25, verses 6 to 9, that short passage. On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, A feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, The veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth.

For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God. We have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord.

We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. And we ask that God will bless to us this portion of his word.

[6 : 59] Now let's engage in prayer and call upon God in prayer. Let's pray together. Lord, our God, we give thanks as we gather once more in this way in your presence, That we can come before you to bring our worship to you, To bring our praises to you and our petitions, And to seek that we give as well as receive from you.

Lord, help us, we pray, to give willingly and gladly. And as we have been singing, help us to give our worship today, And always with rejoicing. Rejoicing that celebrates your salvation.

The fact that you have come to provide for us, For our dilemma as sinners, as saviour, And a rich salvation that is so wonderfully represented in your word, As a great banquet, a great feast, That we are invited to partake of.

We thank you, Lord, tonight, That we come to share together and to partake of this great banquet, That we find provided for us through, And in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We bless you for all that is on this great table, The banquet table of your salvation. That we come, O Lord, That we come, O Lord, tonight, To taste and to see that God is good, And that all who trust in him are blessed.

[8 : 20] We give thanks, O Lord, for the variety of fear, Of food that is set before us. We bless you that you have brought to us, Especially those things that answer to our sin, To our guilt, and to our lostness.

We thank you that we can come and taste once more, Of the wine of your salvation and gladness, Of the things that have to do with our forgiveness, The forgiveness of our sins by you, The righteousness that you provide for us, The clothing with which we sit at your table, And enjoy the things that you have provided.

We thank you, too, O Lord, That you have placed before us, Matters which answer to our sorrows and our pains. We thank you that you have provided against our weeping, Against the death that we know of, And are so familiar with, In our experience as human beings.

Lord, we thank you that everything that we require, Is on this table. We thank you that through the gospel, You invite us tonight, To come and partake of it.

We give thanks that we are able to come, In this way, The knowledge that you are waiting for us, To receive us gladly. The knowledge that you welcome us, To come and take our place, As we receive the things of the gospel.

[9 : 41] And as we, Lord, come before you tonight, We do come seeking your forgiveness. We have sins to confess. We have transgression. The various ways in which sin is described in your word, As they apply to us.

Our sin, our demerit, our guilt, Our transgression. Our shortcoming. We confess, Lord, all of this in your presence. We confess that it makes us unworthy, That you should look upon us.

That you have looked upon us in your pity, In your grace. And we thank you, Lord, tonight. That as we carry our confession, And make our confession before you of our sin, We meet with that richness of mercy.

And we meet with that willingness of God, To forgive our sin, To cover our transgression from your sight. To renew within us, A heart that is right with yourself.

To create within us a clean heart. Lord, cleanse us, we pray. And if we have indeed come to your service tonight, And have not been in that proper frame of mind or spirit, In the past days or weeks or even months, If we have gone astray from your ways, If we have wandered into the ways of the world, Lord, we pray tonight that you would reclaim us, That you would restore us inwardly, That you would give to us like David of old sought, In his great prayer of petition, That we find in the Psalms.

[11 : 08] To create in him a clean heart, And to maintain within him a persevering spirit. And to join together and to mend The bones that had become broken.

The brokenness of heart, That he had in his sorrow over sin. And of your own hand being upon him, To convict him of his sin. We thank you, Lord, For the process that you use, In bringing us to be convinced that we are sinners, That we need you, That you have answered our need, In the person of your Son.

Help us, we pray tonight, O Lord, That we may find your word, A means of our encouragement, Of our teaching, Means of our humbling as well. And we ask that your word may be powerful, In the experience of all today who heard it, Throughout the world, Lord, we pray, That your word will shine powerfully, Into the darkness of this world.

A darkness made, All the more heavy by, The pandemic that has overtaken the earth. Lord, we pray that, The light of hope and of grace, From yourself and from your truth, Will indeed shine into people's hearts, People's homes, People's circumstances, Neighbourhoods, Nations, Governments.

Lord, we pray that, Your word will come indeed, To bring us relief, And that you would use, In your own power, In your own way and time, Your power to eradicate, This virus from, Our midst.

[12 : 42] We give thanks for vaccines, For the means that, Are provided through the skill, Of those who have provided, And produced these. We pray especially for your skill, As the great physician, And help us to rely, Not upon human means, However wonderful they are, We give thanks for them, Help us to rely upon yourself, Upon your power as our creator, Upon the might that is yours, And is in your right hand, To come and save us, O Lord.

We ask tonight, Especially for those, Of specific needs, We pray for those, Who have lost loved ones, During recent times, We pray for our own, Congregation especially, As we know, That there have been some, In recent weeks, That have lost loved ones, Not only through, Not necessarily through, The COVID virus, But nevertheless, Have come to, Experience the death, Of loved ones, In their own, Family circles, Bless them we pray, And bless especially Lord, Tonight, Jessie McLeod, As she mourns, The passing of her, Beloved husband Donnie, Lord we pray for her, And we know that, She has had such, An incredibly difficult, Few weeks, With the death of two, Of her brothers, And now her husband, We thank you that, Your upholding strength, Is known to her, We pray that she will, Draw that strength from you, Through the faith, That you have given her, We pray that she, And the family, Will at this time, Lord know, Of your own, Particular blessing, For them and their need, And we pray that you, Bless also, Lord all those, Tonight who have, Difficulties in recovering, From infection, We pray for Mordor, Our deacon, As he recovers, And we ask that you, Bless him, And bring him onwards, We pray in health, Back towards strength, We pray for Helen, We pray for all his loved ones, And we ask that you, Bless them Lord, At this time, As they wait upon you, And wait for developments, We pray too, For those who have to isolate, At this time, Who have, Either been in contact, With those who, Have tested positive, Or, Have tested positive, Themselves, We pray for them, And their families, Remember, We pray, Our deacon Paul, Ferguson, As he, Isolates in Aberdeen, We pray for him, We pray that you, Bless him at this time, Even though we know, He's not, That he has not, Shown any, Signs of illness, Yet Lord, We pray that you, Would keep it that way for him, Remember Elizabeth, And Hannah, And Daniel, And the family, Grant to them Lord, That you would, Be pleased to draw near to them, Assure them of your presence, Grant to them, While Paul is, Having to isolate in this way, That you would grant them, Your presence, And your help, We pray for us too, And all our other needs, As a congregation, We thank you for those, Who uphold your cause, Through financial giving, Through other ways, Oh Lord, In which people give of their time, For Sunday school, For tweenies, For various activities, That still take place, We thank you Lord, For all of that, And we pray that, We may come before you, At all times, With thankful hearts, That we have these things, Among us, Done by those who are willing, And glad, To do this service, In the interest of your kingdom, We pray too Lord, That you would, Lay upon someone's heart, The work of church officer, As we seek a new

church officer, So shortly, We pray, That you would provide this, For us Lord, We know, How important the role is, In the working of the congregation, And Lord, We pray that you would, Bless Donnie, As he comes to the end, Of his, His period, As church officer, We thank you, For all that he has done, And for his commitment, To this work, And we pray, That you would bless him, As he relinquishes, This office, And now Lord, We ask that you would, Continue to bless us, Through this service, And in these days, In which we find ourselves, Bless again, We pray, Our government, In Edinburgh, In Westminster, And other places, In our nation, Where assemblies, Have government, Over the people, We pray, That you bless those, Who have to take decisions, We pray Lord, That you would, Whatever our thoughts may be, Of the measures, That are recommended to us, And required by government, Lord help us, To be wise, We pray, To realise, That these regulations, Are set out, For our good, For our mental, And spiritual health,

[17:17] As well as, Our physical health, And help us, As we seek to comply, With them, O Lord, That you would, Through that itself, Bring about better days, In association, With the vaccines, As they rolled out, O Lord our God, Look upon us, We pray, In your mercy, And in your forgiveness, To cleanse us, From all our unrighteousness, As we bring this before you, We don't deserve Lord, As a nation, To be remembered by you, Because we know, That we have turned our back on you, That we have elevated, Practices, And beliefs, In our land, That are offensive to you, Hide your face, We pray, From this our shame, And restore us again, To what we should be, And through the gospel, We pray, That you would restore, The years the locusts have eaten, As your word, Specifies for us, These years, That have come to no, Spiritual wastage, In our midst, Lord, Have mercy upon us, We pray, And use this time, Of difficulty, And anxiety,

And restriction, For us as a people, To realise the things, That are of most importance, And especially those things, That are eternal, And have to do with our salvation, Receive us, We pray, In Jesus name, Amen, Now children, I want to just, Spend a bit of time, Today, And in a few weeks, God willing, For a few weeks, To look at some of the numbers, That are used, In the Bible, The Bible refers, To, In a number of places, A few places, To various numbers, That are important, In the teaching of the Bible, It's important that we don't, Stretch out, Whenever we come across, A number, In the Bible, That we don't think, It's always got, Spiritual significant, But some of them, Certainly do, For example, The number 12, The number 40, And tonight, We're looking, At the number 7, Because the number 7, Is important, In various places, Throughout the Bible, And teaches us, Some very important things, About God,

And about, What God has done, And about ourselves too, In our relationship, With God, The number 7, Is used first of all, In the, At the beginning of the Bible, To describe, God's creation, Of the universe, Remember that it describes, The first two chapters, Of the Bible, In Genesis, Describe how God, Created the heavens, And the earth, The stars, The planets, Everything that exists, In the creation, Was created by God, And then at the beginning, Of chapter 2, Of Genesis, We read, The heavens, The heavens, And the earth, Were finished, And all the host of them, And on the seventh day, God finished his work, That he had done, And he rested on the seventh day, From all his work, That he had done, So God blessed the seventh day, And made it holy, Because on it, God rested from all his work, That he had done, In creation, He spent six days, Creating, The heavens, And the earth, Stars, The planets, Then he rested on,

The seventh day, And that's the pattern, That we still follow, In the weekly, Setting out of the days, Of our week, Because we have, The beginning of the week now, Is the day of rest, Today, The Sabbath day, Or the Lord's day, As it's become, In the New Testament, And it's followed by, The six days, Which are open to us, For our ordinary work, So that pattern of, Seven, As a complete unit, Six days, Of work, And one of rest, Or as we have now, One of rest, And then six days of work, That goes back, To God's, God's own, Appointment of that, In the days, Of the creation, And it's still, Of course, Important for us, That we look at, That pattern, As of importance, One of the things, That we, Sadly see, In our world, That so many, Many people, Don't keep, A day of rest, The Lord's day, Such as we're doing, By church services, By other things,

We do, To observe, The Lord's day, As a day, That we, Have more time, To think about God, To pray, To praise God, And so on, Sadly, So many people, Think that, They're far too busy, To actually observe, One day out of seven, So they just go, 24, Seven, At their work, Whatever kind of work it is, But of course, The Bible makes it very clear, In a lot of places, That having a day of rest, Is not just something, That's good for us, Spiritually, It is that, It's also good for our mental health, And for our physical health, Because our bodies need rest, Our minds need rest, And you as young

people, As you grow up, Please remember, That this pattern of seven, Is important, In your lives as well, So that you will give, Plenty time for rest, One day of the week, As God has appointed for us, Please, Don't forget that, Don't let, The way you see things in the world, Lead you to think that, [22 : 22] You just can't afford to have, A Lord's day of rest, You have to have it, For your good, And for my good, So there's seven days, In the pattern of six days of work, And one day of rest, But there's also in the Bible, The pattern of seven years, Six years of working the land, And one year of rest, You see, When God took Israel into the land of Canaan, After all these years in the desert, And we'll come back, To look at the number 40, Because they spent 40 years in the desert, But after they went through, The Lord had said to them, That they would actually have to, Keep every seventh year, As a year of rest for the land, In other words, The land would be worked for six years, And then the seventh year, For the good of the land, It would actually have a time of rest, And you find that, In Leviticus chapter 25, And I'm not going to read through the whole chapter,

Or the passage even, You can read it afterwards, Maybe your parents will help you, To read through it from the beginning, Of chapter 25, Of the book of Leviticus, When you come into the land, That I gave you, The land shall keep a Sabbath, That means Sabbath means rest, A Sabbath to the Lord, For six years, You shall sow your field, And for six years, You shall prune your vineyard, But in the seventh year, There shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest, For the land, A Sabbath to the Lord, So they're not allowed to sow the fields, Or prune their vineyards, Or reap what grows of itself, Or any other thing like that, On the seventh year, You have to keep it, As a year for rest, Now you might be thinking, Well six years of working, And being able to take in the crops, And so on, What about that seventh year, If it's going to be a whole year, Without the land being worked, A whole year without crops produced, Where are they going to get their food,

For that whole year, That seventh year, Well God of course, Had thought about that, And just to take away any worries, That they would have a whole year, When food would be scarce, This is what God said, In that same chapter, He said, The land would yield its fruit, And you would eat your fill, And dwell in it securely, And if you say, What shall we eat in the seventh year, If we may not sow, Or gather in our crop, I will command my blessing on you, In the sixth year, So that it will produce, A crop sufficient, For three years, You see how amazing that is, God is saying, I know you might be anxious, About the seventh year, What you're going to eat, When there's no crops growing, But I'll bless you, In the sixth year, So that you will have enough, Not just for the seventh year, But for three years, There's going to be so much produced, In the sixth year, That it will be enough, For three years after that, What an amazing God,

He didn't just say, I'll give you enough, For that one year, That you won't have crops growing, He said, I'll do more than that, I'll give you enough, For three years, To spill over, Even after the year, When the land, Is having its rest, And that of course, Is a reminder to us, Of how generous, God is, Now you remember, The words of Jesus, In John chapter 10, And verse 10, It's very easy to remember this verse, John 10 verse 10, And in John 10 verse 10, The end of that verse says, Jesus says, I have come, That they might have life, That's his people, All those, Who are going to be the sheep, In his flock, I have come, That they might have life, And have it, The more, Abundantly, When God gives us, Life in Jesus Christ, Eternal life, He gives it to us, In abundance, He gives it to us, Generously, He doesn't just give us, Meagre rations,

In our salvation, He gives us, Our fill, That's why as we said, And as we'll see, In the sermon tonight, The gospel, Or the salvation of God, Is described, As a great banquet, With so many good things, On the table, Spiritually for us, And we're invited to come, And take of that, Plenty, And so there's, The number seven, It's there for, Seven days, Going back to creation, It's there for seven years, Thinking of the rest, And then the abundance, That God was giving, For that final, Year seven, When the crops, Would not be growing, So think tonight, Of how special, God is, That he is, So willing, To give us, So much, Far more, Than we deserve, And that's still, How God is for us, The God, That we can come to, And pray to, And ask Lord, Fill us, Abundantly, With your generosity, Let's now say,

[27 : 31] The Lord's prayer together, Our Father, Which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth, As it is in heaven, As it is in heaven, Give us this day, Our daily bread, And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors, And lead us not, Into temptation, But deliver us from evil, For thine is the kingdom, And the power, And the glory, Forever, Amen.

Now our second reading, Is from the Gospel of John, And we're going to look at, This passage shortly, For a short time, The Gospel of John, At the beginning, Chapter 2, The beginning of chapter 2, Reading verses 1 to 11, On the third day, There was a wedding, At Cana in Galilee, And the mother of Jesus, Was there, Jesus also was invited, To the wedding, With his disciples, When the wine ran out, The mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine, And Jesus said to her, Woman, What does this have to do with me?

My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you. Now there were six stone water jars there, For the Jewish rites of purification, Each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water, And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, Now draw some out, And take to the master of the feast.

So they took it. When the master of the feast, Tasted the water, Now become wine, And did not know where it came from, Though the servants, Who had drawn the water, The master of the feast, Called the bridegroom, And said to him, Everyone serves the good wine first, And when people have drunk freely, Then the poor wine.

[29 : 25] But you have kept the good wine until now. This the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, And manifested his glory, And his disciples believed in him.

I'd like to begin tonight studying some of the miracles that we find in the Gospels, Which are fascinating in themselves, But have so much to teach us, Not only about Jesus himself, But also about the salvation that God has provided for us in him.

And as we look at these miracles in the Gospels, We'll find that they can be divided conveniently, Well we're not going to follow this pattern necessarily, But they can be divided into three types or categories of miracle, That are what are usually called nature miracles, Such as this one, When you find something natural turned into something different to what it was, Here for example water into wine, Or take for example the stilling of the storm, As Jesus came and spoke to the waves and the wind, As they were threatening to overthrow the vessel in which he and the disciples were, And there was a great calm, That is one of the nature miracles, Miracles that have to do with God, With Jesus' control and sovereignty over the natural world.

The second one category is a category of healings, There are many of the miracles in the Bible, That have to do with healing people who were ill, Some severely ill or disabled, So that you find Jesus actually coming, And sometimes he'll speak, Sometimes he won't say much, But the person that needs to be healed, Comes to be healed by Jesus, And there's always a remarkable completeness, In these healings, So there's no period of recovery as such, When Jesus speaks the word of Jesus, It's power, When he speaks that word of power goes out, And the person comes to be healed, Whatever type of illness, Whatever type of disease, They were suffering from.

The third category is, In a sense it's an extension, Of the healing miracles, But it has to do with the raisings, From the dead, Of people who were very much dead, There are three in fact, In the Gospels, Where Jesus raised people who were dead, Back to life, The daughter of Jairus, The son of the woman, Who was in a funeral procession, To bury her son, And of course there's also in John's Gospel, The raising of Lazarus from the dead, These three are raisings from the dead, And come into the category of miracles, And we will look at some of these, As well God willing, As we go through, Looking at the miracles of Jesus, Now one or two things, Just before we actually come to this one tonight, This is going to be something important to remember, In regard to all of the miracles, That Jesus performed, As they're described, First of all, We are dealing with facts, We're dealing with real events,

[32 : 44] Because as it comes from scripture, The reliability of scripture, Is important for us, Here as in everything else, That you come to read of in the Bible, And believe from the Bible, And its teaching, If you believe in the reliability of scripture, Then one of the things, That follows on from that, Is that when the Gospels tell us, That Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, That is fact, That's not something, That the church invented, That's not something, That entered into somebody's mind, And put it down, In order to actually present Jesus, In a good light, Lazarus was dead, Lazarus was taken back, From the dead, Back to life, By Jesus, We're dealing with facts, We're dealing with something, In relation to the reliability, Of scripture itself, So we accept as a miracle, Secondly, We accept the whole idea, Of miracle, As it's set out,

In the gospel narrative, Things that are different, To the usual way of working, If you like, All sorts of ways, In which theologians, Have described this, And in which opponents, Of the miracles, Have

actually sought, To find another explanation, For them, And if we don't actually accept, That they are miraculous, In the sense that, They are contrary to, The usual laws of nature, For example, People don't rise from the dead, But miraculously, Jesus did this, Himself of course, And also, The likes of Lazarus, So we're taking miracle, In the usual way, We understand it as Christians, As they're set out, In the gospel narrative, Otherwise we're left with, Trying to explain, As some people sadly do, Trying to explain, What we regard as miracles, By supernatural, Explanations, Some people, For example, Commenting on the gospels, Will tell you that,

The feeding of the five thousand, With such a small amount, Of food to begin with, Wasn't really literally true, It was something that, Really expresses, How God, How Jesus, Inspired people, To share their meals, With one another, Now that's completely, Contrary, To what you find, The bible actually saying, And the reliability, Of scripture is at stake, If we don't actually, Take it, To be as it says, As it says, It's a miracle, It was something, Jesus worked, By his power, It's the presence, Of the supernatural, The presence of God, The presence of the creator's power, Of course, One final point, On this as it comes to mind, Is this, That the greatest, Miracle of all, Is not the raising, Of Lazarus, But the incarnation, Of the son of God, God, Becoming human, God through the means, That he chose,

Coming to be born, In the person of, Jesus Christ, Through his mother Mary, Without natural, Fatherhood, And yet, There he is, A proper, Full human being, Taking that, And joining it, To his divinity, To his deity, That's the greatest miracle, That's really, The thing upon which, The whole gospel is founded, And if we actually, Believe in the incarnation, We're not going to have, A problem believing, That God, That Jesus raised, Lazarus from the dead, If you believe, That the son of God, Became flesh, As John puts it, In John 1 14, And that he became, A real human being, Through the way, In which the bible describes it, If you believe that, As I hope we do, It's not going to be, A problem, Believing that Jesus, Could turn water, Into wine, That's just, You might say, And I don't want it, To sound flippant, But for the son of God, Incarnate, That's par for the course, That's something, That he could do, Whenever the occasion, Arose for him to do it, These just, Preliminary thoughts, And we carry that through, Into these miracles, As we come to study them, Now, Here in chapter 2, Of John, The miracle we find, Of turning water, Into wine, Is one that has, The background, We read of, In the old testament, Where salvation, Is represented, By a banquet, By the banquet, Of the kingdom, You find this, In other places, In the gospels as well, But you find, This description of Isaiah, So fitting, As a prophecy, As a, Pre-figuring, Of what Jesus is about, And not just, In turning water, Into wine, But being here, As the saviour, In this world, On this mountain, The Lord of hosts, Will make for all peoples, A feast, Of rich food, A feast of well-aged wine, Of rich food, Full of marrow, Of aged wine, Well refined, That's the background, You find, To this particular, [37 : 51] Miracle here, And the two things, I want to use, Just to guide us through it, Two headings, First of all, This is a matter of, The old, Having advanced, Into the new, The old, Has advanced, Into the new, These words, I've carefully chosen them, Because, It's not a matter of, The old being done away with, Completely, We're talking here of the old, In the sense of the old testament, The old way of God, Revealing himself, Through the years of the old testament, The old, In the sense of, Anticipating the coming of Jesus, Prophesying about it, Giving various ways, By which that is, Both described, And worked through, In the sacrifices of, For example, Of the old testament, That is the old, It hasn't completely gone away, It's not something, That's discarded, As if it's no longer, Relevant at all, But it has advanced, Into the new, It is, If you like, Has flowed, Into, The greater stream,

Of the new testament, That's why we find here, First of all, An emphasis on, Water being turned, Into wine, I'm not going to deal, With the first part, There in the first, Three or four verses there, Just to say, That Jesus was not speaking, Disrespectfully, To his mother, When he said, Woman, What is this to do, With me, What he's doing there, Is beginning to, Dissociate himself, From, The ordinary, If you like, The ordinary, Life of human beings, Because he is here, In the extraordinary sense, As the son of God, And, For a wonderful, Mission, To save sinners, Anyway, He's saying here, Verse six, And you can see, Now there were six, Water stone jars, There for the, There for the Jewish, Rites of purification, In other words, He's telling us here, John is telling us, These water jars, These huge water jars,

You see, How much they actually contained, Twenty or thirty gallons, And, They were for, The rituals, That were associated, Were part of the Old Testament, Rituals, In the Old Testament, Religion, That anticipated, The coming, Of Jesus, But that's what they were used for, That's what

they, Were up to now, That's what they were associated with, And that all fits into, This magnificent, Description that John gives us, Of the old, Advancing into the new, They're no longer, Going to be used, For the old, Water of the Old Testament, If you like, Or the old system, Of rituals, And sacrifices, That has advanced, Into the new, Into what's represented, By the wine, In these vessels, That's what Jesus, Is doing, That's what he's come, To do, That's what he's brought, And if you take, Let me just mention this, In passing, You can follow it through, In much more detail, Yourself, But it is an interesting thing,

A fascinating thing, And indeed, Something which really, In a sense, As far as I'm concerned, Proves, Or goes towards, The proof of, This being the word of God, Put together, Under the direction, Of the spirit of God, What you find, In these chapters, Two, Three, And four, Of John, Is, Has to do with, This newness, Of the old, Advancing into the new, Because you find here, The new wine, You find also in this chapter, Jesus cleansing the temple, So, He's coming towards, A new temple, That's what he's saying, In verse 21, He was speaking about, The temple, Of his body, In other words, There's the wonderful emphasis there, Of us coming to be, In Christ, As the new temple, If you like, Although the church, Of course, Is also important, In relation to that, So there's the new wine, There's the new temple, Then chapter three, There's the new birth, Accept a person, Be born again, Jesus said,

To Nicodemus, He cannot enter, The kingdom of God, There's new birth, And then as you go through, To the next chapter, Chapter four, The woman of Samaria, You find Jesus speaking there, About new words, Worship, She has said, That they, Belonged in the old testament, To the descendants, Of Jacob, And, Jesus said to her, That from now on, They would be, God would seek those, To worship him, In spirit, And in truth, Not the same type, Of things that were used, In the old testament, And then chapter four, And then chapter four, Two, It speaks about new water, New water, Because the well of Jacob, Represents these things, Of the old testament, That's deliberately spoken of, Mentioned in verse five, And what this woman said, To Jesus, Are you greater, Than our father Jacob, Verse twelve, He gave us this well, And drank from it himself, [42 : 56] Jesus said, Everyone who drinks this water, Will be thirsty again, But whoever drinks of the water, That I will give him, Will never be thirsty forever, The water that I will give him, Will become in him, A spring of water, Welling up to eternal life, You see what's happening, The emphasis through these chapters of John, Is things are moved from the old, And it's advanced into the new, The old has now come to flow, Into the new age, The new age that begins, With Jesus himself, Arriving in the world, And there's all that newness, In these chapters that I've mentioned, That's worked through the gospel, But then just to complete this point, When you go to chapter three, You find a reference to John the Baptist, And then it continues with the, This continues with the banquet, Or the wedding scene, If you like, Where you find John the Baptist, Coming to speak about Christ, And in verse twenty-eight, You yourselves,

He said, Bear witness to me, That I said, I am not the Christ, But I have been sent before him, The one who has the bride, Is the bridegroom, The friend of the bridegroom, Who stands and hears him, Rejoices greatly, At the bridegroom's voice, Therefore this my joy, Is now complete, He must increase, But I must decrease, What is he saying?

What is John the Baptist saying there? Well he's really saying, I'm the friend of the bridegroom, I'm the one God sent, Ahead of the bridegroom, To prepare the way, The forerunner, As we usually refer to him, And he's rejoicing now, That the bridegroom has actually come, He has served his role, As preparing the way, And now he recedes into the background, And Jesus becomes the figure, That takes the foreground, Now a lot of people take, This reference, He must increase, But I must decrease, As primarily, A reference to John the Baptist, Own sense of humility, That in comparison, Or contrast with Jesus, He wants Jesus, To have the limelight, He's going to recede, As a person himself, Personally, He doesn't want the limelight, He's such a humble person, That is true of John the Baptist, But that's not what the verse, Is teaching us, John is the last, Of the prophets, He's where the Old Testament, Overlaps the new, He's where the old, Has advanced into the new, And as he is the last,

Of the Old Testament prophets, As he represents, The Old Testament, This is really what he's saying, Here in John 3, And verse 30, He must increase, And I must decrease, Everything I represent, Everything I represent, As of the old way, Of the old preparatory way, Of the Old Testament rituals, And of the Old Testament, The Old Testament, Sacrifices, And so on, I must decrease, They must decrease, They must now be, Giving way to the new, And that's Jesus

himself, He must increase, So all of that really, Is packed into, The meaning of, What Jesus is, What John is saying here, Was regard to Jesus, Turning the water into wine, And it's all summed up, You might say, In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, Verse 17, If anyone be in Christ, He is a new creation,

All things have passed away, Behold, Everything has become new, So there you have it, The old has advanced, Into the new, Represented by, The way that Jesus here, Turns water, Into wine, And, We stand tonight, As a privileged people, In the age of the New Testament, The age of fulfillment, You know, We sometimes say of ourselves, Well if only we were, Living back in the days, When we had revivals, When people lived, During a time of revival, How good would that be, Of course that would be good, And we sometimes think, Well would it not be better for us, That, Would it not be, A greater thing, If we were back, When Jesus was actually, Walking on the earth physically, When people could see him, When he touched them, Would that not be better than now, When we are not able, To see him in that way, Well he himself of course, Actually says, That's not the case, Because,

[47 : 25] What he really said, In another occasion, Was that, Blessed are those, Who have not seen, And yet believe, As he said in this, In chapter 22, To, As he was dealing there, With, With, The, The, The, The, Way in which, Thomas had declined, To believe, The fact of his resurrection, And, When Thomas, Eventually came to, Make his confession, That he, My Lord, And my God, Jesus said to him, Because you have seen me, Thomas, You have believed, Blessed are those, Who have not seen, And yet have believed, Friends, Tonight we have a huge, Huge privilege, We're no longer, In the twilight years, If you like, Of the Old Testament, Or we might say, The early time, Before the dawn, When the light is just beginning, And increasing somewhat, But we still can't see things, All that clearly, You might say, That's the days of the Old Testament, Prophecies and rituals,

We're now, In the day, Of Christ, The day has arrived, The light of the day has come, It's come in himself, The light of the world, Has broken, Over the world, Of humanity, The old has advanced, Into the new, Give thanks to God, That we have, A complete Bible, That we have the revelation, That's come in Jesus Christ, To us, That that's now, Taken place, That we're not living, In the shadows, That we are in the age, Of the spirit, The age of accomplishment, That the only thing, That needs now, To be fulfilled, Is his second coming, That's where God, Has placed us, And let's not, Mope, And mourn, As if things, Really are quite bad, Compared to, The situation, That others had, Take advantage, Of your privilege, Take advantage, Of the fact, That you have tasted, And continue to taste, The new wine, That is in Jesus himself, That you have been, Invited to, And have taken your place, At the gospel banquet,

Where the richness, Of the food, That is in Jesus himself, The spiritual feast, Is set out, On the table for you, That you have tasted, And seen, And known, That God is good, That he is abundant, And blessing, As we said to the children, Let's not let, Our immediate circumstances, Blind us, To these wonderful things, That give us, So much encouragement, Even during times, Of pandemic, Difficult, Though they are, So the old, Has advanced into the new, From water to wine, But there is also, An importance here, On faith, Because in verse 11, You find, These are the first signs, John calls, The miracle signs, The first of the signs, Jesus did at Cana, And manifested, His glory, And his disciples, Believed in him, Now that's interesting, Because, For one thing, It goes on to speak, At the end of the chapter,

When he was in Jerusalem, Many believed in his name, When they saw the signs, That he was doing, But Jesus, On his part, Did not entrust himself, Or commit himself to them, Because he knew people, He knew what was in them, And needed no one, To bear witness about man, For he himself, Knew what was in man, And that brings us, Something really, Really precious, When you commit yourself, To Jesus, When you believe in Christ, When you come to trust in him, As your saviour, As the ground of all your hopes, Jesus does something, In relation to that, He commits himself, To you, He entrusts himself, To those who believe in him, Not like those here, At the end of chapter 2, Who just believed, When they saw the miracles, They were going to follow him, As a miracle worker, And you see the result of that, In chapter 6, Many of them, No longer walked with him, When the teaching, Became too difficult, When the demands, Became too much, And Jesus, For these people, Didn't commit himself, To them, But, The corresponding, The other side of that, Is that he commits himself, To those, That trust in him, And you know, Tonight, As a Christian, One of the greatest facts, In your own life, Not just in your experience, But one of the

greatest facts, About you, Is the fact that, Jesus Christ, Has committed himself, To you, It's not just about, Our being committed, To him in faith, Our trusting in him, He has committed himself, To us, To all who believe in him, And that's one of the things, That you have to remember tonight, If you're not converted, If you're not a Christian, You are actually going about, In the world, Trying to manage life, Without Jesus, Not just without you, Having taken Jesus, To be your saviour, And to be your lord, But without Jesus himself, Committing himself to you, And managing your life, Trust in the lord, Because in that way,

[52 : 34] You'll come to know, How vital it is, That you know Christ himself, And be assured, That he has trusted himself, To you, That he has committed himself, To you, What greater privilege, What greater, What greater benefit, Could there be, Than to know, That tonight, God, In Jesus Christ, Has committed himself, To your life, To be with you, To be in you, In all your circumstances, And that's what you have, When you come, To think about the old, Having advanced into the new, Jesus himself, Has come to live, In the hearts, And the souls of his people, Through his spirit, It's taking us, Into a whole other area of study, I'm not going to, Do any more of that tonight, That's the first thing, The old, Has advanced into the new, And the time has rapidly, Gone past, And I want to finish by, Thinking of the best wine, Has come, See how this, Passage goes on, When the water was drawn, From these,

Vessels, And then, When those who drew out the water, Took it to, The master of the feast, The person who was in charge, Of the festivities, And he tasted the wine, He called the bridegroom, And said to him, Verse 10, Everyone serves the good wine, First, And when people have drunk freely, Then the poor wine, In other words, What he's saying is, The custom is, Let's get the good wine out first, And then people won't, Notice as much of, If the bad wine, Or the wine that's not so good, Wouldn't be bad wine, But the poor wine, Is served afterwards, But this has been reversed, He's saying, You have kept the good wine, Until now, And what is that, What are you saying to us? Well, It's saying that, Things are now, As it were, In advance of the Old Testament, The best wine, Has actually arrived, The best wine, Was not in the days of Isaiah 53, Wonderful chapter though that is, Not in the days of, Jeremiah's ministry, Not in the days of, The day of atonement, All the way through the years, Of the Old Testament, As the Jews, Jewish people, Kept the day of atonement, As representative, Of the death of Christ, These were not, The days of, The best wine, This is the day, Of the best wine, The best wine has come, Because Jesus has come, Because the son of God, Has been born into this world, Because he has died on the cross, And risen from the dead, And ascended to glory, The best wine, Is in your cup, And that's why, It's such a wonderful thing, To celebrate, That God has kept, The best wine, For our benefit, For the New Testament people, For the New Testament generation,

He is serving, The new wine, That is in Jesus, And it of course, It tastes, It tastes even, Better than the old, There was nothing wrong, With the old, In itself, This is not, What the Bible is teaching us, It's not saying, That the old, Had something wrong with it, That God hadn't just, Given it out, In a proper way, What it's saying, Is that, In God's pattern, Everything was working, Towards fulfillment, And the fulfillment, Is in Jesus Christ, Now, One of the things, That characterizes that, New wine, Is the abundance of it, I mean new wine, In a spiritual sense, As the, As the miracle represents it, Think again of what it says, In the first passage we read, A feast of rich food, A feast of well aged wine, Of rich food full of marrow, Of aged wine, Well refined, And here in John chapter 2, You find, Six water jars, And he didn't need, In one sense,

If it was nothing, Nothing important, He didn't have to tell us, Just how much they contained, But he does, Why? So that we can conclude, From that, That the old advancing, Into the new, The new that has arrived, In Jesus, Is abundant, In blessing, Abundant in life, As John 10, 10 put it, As we mentioned, To the children, I have come, Said Jesus, That they might have life, And have it, The more abundantly, And you know, That's true, In your personal experience, As well, When you come to know the Lord, When the Lord comes, To change your life, When the Lord, Brings you to know himself, You'll say, Well, This is really good, This is really good, This is really good, I just, Somebody once said, How was it, That I kept refusing this, The many times, I refused it, Well, That's the way it is, Until God opens our eyes,

[57 : 20] To see the reality, Of his kingdom, Of the new wine, Then that's what it'll be like, Till we're born again, And, Here is, A personal experience as well, The more you get to know God, The better it becomes, Now that doesn't mean, That God is going to, Leave you without, Any further sufferings, Without really testing you, That once you come to know the Lord, The testings will get gradually

less, It usually doesn't work that way at all, But it does work this way, That the more you come to know God, As a God who's with you through the testings, Who blesses the testings to you, Who assures you of his presence, Through the testings, Who assures you, That you are indeed, One to which he, To whom he has committed himself, Then you actually realise, This is better, Than even when it began with me, And it's going to get better, As life goes on, Because God, God is doing this, Constantly, Showing me, Himself, The salvation,

The banquet, The benefits, The privileges, But there's something even better, There's something even better, At least in the sense in which, This that we have now, In this world, Is going to advance, Into an even better state, And that is, When the new wine, Is aged to perfection, Which of course, Is in heaven itself, That's where, The better, The best of all, Awaits us, What you have now, As a Christian, Is rich, It is full, But heaven, Exceeds it, And that's the wine, Of the marriage supper, Of the lamb, Revelation 19, Verse 9, Blessed are they, Who are called, To the marriage, Supper, Of the lamb, And you know, When sitting at, The banquet in this life,

Is so good, When you taste of the new wine, Of the kingdom, And you say, That is really, Such a special thing, What must it be like, To sit at the marriage supper, Of the lamb, And take in, The fair that's there, The spiritual wine that's there, That never runs out, That never gets old, That never needs to be replaced, That never needs to advance, Into something new, And something better, There you have it, The old, Has advanced into the new, The new in Christ, That we presently experience, Will itself, Run into the new of heaven, Here tonight, Is your hope as a Christian, Here's the foundation, Of your hope, The Jesus, Who did this, As a symbol, Of what he himself, Had come to do, Or tonight,

Here's something for you, If you're still not sitting, At this table, The gospel provides, Please think of, What you're missing out on, You know in this life, Sometimes we, Have functions in the past, That we would like to go to, And we weren't invited, Or there just weren't enough spaces, And you said, Well I'd really like, To have been at that wedding, I'd really like, To have been at that reception, I'd really, I'd have loved, To have been at that banquet, To have seen that banquet table, To have taken, That wonderful food provided, And have shared, In that wonderful company, And there just wasn't enough space, Or I didn't have, An invitation, Here you are tonight, You're getting an invitation, To the greatest banquet, Of all, Make sure, Your place is not empty, Make sure, You receive that invitation, Because it's addressed,

To you personally, The son of God, Has written it, In the blood of the cross, And he's saying to you, This is for you, All you have to do, Is say yes, I accept it, And it's yours, Let's pray, Lord of God, Bless to us, We pray, Your word at this time, Enable us to, Enjoy the feast, That you have provided, Through the gospel, That feast, Oh Lord, That we find, Situated in yourself, In your salvation, That is so, Wonderfully replete, With life, We ask that you will bless, Your word to us again, And all for Jesus' sake, Amen, We're going to conclude, With another singing, This time we're singing, Psalm 98, That's on, Page 129, Psalm 98, Verses 1 to 3, We'll sing to the tune, Saint Ethelreda, Verses 1 to 3,

[62 : 27] These four stanzas, Oh sing a new song, To the Lord, For wonders he has done, His right hand, And his holy arm, The victory have won, Oh sing a new song, To the Lord, For wonders he has done, His right hand, His holy arm, The victory have won, The Lord declared his saving work, And made it to be known, To all the nations of the world, His righteousness is shown,

His steadfast love and faithfulness, He has remembered well, The covenant he made with them, The house of Israel, And all the nations of the earth, Have seen what God has done, Our God who brings deliverance, By his right hand alone, And now may grace and mercy and peace From God the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit

Be with you now and evermore. Amen. Thank you all for joining with us again, In this time of worship, We appreciate your participation, And we do trust that the Lord will bless you, And keep you, And keep you safe as well, Through these days ahead, So once again, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[65 : 14] Thank you. Thank you.