



CHRIST CHURCH
CROUCH END HILL
LONDON N8 8AX
CROSSLINKS

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A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH ON THE HILL



A QUESTION OF SCARCITY AND UNCERTAINTY

Vicar's seven- minute reflection

A QUESTION OF SCARCITY (Another look at John 2)



I am fascinated each time I read the gospels and observe the emphasis of the gospel writers. While Matthew, Mark and Luke will give detailed description of the miracles that Jesus performed prompting questions about Jesus' identity, John is out at almost every available opportunity to supply the answer to people's curiosity about the person of Jesus. So, I am not surprised at the report of the gospel writers as to what Jesus did first in his ministry.

So what was the first thing Jesus did? Preach a sermon, says Matthew, Mark and Luke. Luke even tells us what the sermon was about. He says that Jesus talked about the lame walking, the blind seeing, prisoners going free, and all debts being forgiven. Then, as his final punch, he said: "Everything you just heard has come true today." This led the members of his congregation to scratch their heads and say: "What?" As for uncle John, he reported that the first thing Jesus did in his ministry was to perform a miracle at a wedding reception. So I ask you, which event would you rather attend, Sermon or Reception? On this occasion, we shall go to the reception with Jesus.

One detail about a Jewish wedding in those days is that it was as long as it was big. It was a "multi-day event". The bride and groom would not leave the reception to rush off on a honeymoon. Instead, they stuck around until the last guest left. Why? Because they wanted to see and enjoy everybody. It was really a good time until a hitch developed. Mary, the mother of Jesus, overheard a waiter tell the caterer: "We're running out of wine." And it was the groom's responsibility to see that there was wine enough to last. This would have been a social disaster and a symbol that all might not be well with the marriage! In a small town, people would talk about this one for years.

I can hear a question in Mary's voice as she relays the situation to her son Jesus that the wedding guests have run out of wine. I hear a question that I carry deep within myself, a question familiar to many of us. Will I have enough? Are we running out? Are we rich enough? Safe enough? Good enough? Will we go over the budget? Can we put dinner on the table and keep the wolf from the door? Can the Church weather the present financial crisis? What does the future hold for me and my family with such a deficit balance on my health?



Will our marriage weather the present storms? Will our children grow up into responsible and stable adults? Will...? Will...?

I hear a question of scarcity and apprehension in Mary's voice, and Jesus answers it, as he always does with abundance and assurance.

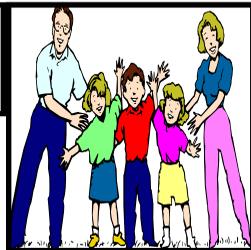
Mary said to Jesus: "Do something." She made the crisis her concern and told the waiters: "Do whatever he tells you to do." **You should NOT give up on a situation until you have done whatever Jesus tells you to do.** So what did Jesus do? John says that near Jesus were six stone jars, each one large enough to hold 20-30 gallons. Jesus instructed the waiters to fill each jar to the brim with water. Then he said: "Fill your jugs and take them to the caterer"

The caterer sniffed the wine, rolled it over his tongue, handed the flask back to the waiter, walked over to the groom and whispered: "May I speak to you for a moment?" When the two of them were out of earshot, the caterer said: "Are you crazy? Everybody knows you serve the best wine first. Then, when things get rolling and folks won't be able to tell the difference, that's when you bring out the inferior stuff. But this beats anything I've ever seen. For some reason, you've saved the best for last."

So, what can we learn from this episode? Well, on a very elemental level, it's about a party saved. That's what prompted Mary to act in the first place. But I wouldn't make a big deal out of a saved party. I suppose this story might serve as an allegory about one wine being supplanted by another, the old wine being Judaism; the new wine, Christianity. And this explanation would fit John's purpose rather nicely (writing 70 years after the death of Jesus, at a time when Jews and Christians were finally divorcing themselves from each other in the synagogues of Israel). But this would scarcely have been the motive of Jesus who, at the time of this miracle, was very much a Jew. This leads to a third observation and it is instructive to mark John's words. John doesn't call it a "miracle" at all. John calls it a "sign." And what do signs do? They announce things, introduce things and call attention to things. So what kind of "sign" is it?

Let us start with the stone jars. Jews used stone jars to hold what they called "the water of purification." (Concluded on page 6)

THE FAMILY IS NOT FINISHED YET



The home has been taking a lot of heat lately. There are people who say the family is obsolete; that it's out of date; that it's irrelevant; that we should forget even the idea of the family; it's no use any more.

The family is not finished, it's just fragmented and fragile and it needs to be strengthened. The family home is still one of the most important places on earth for everybody. What is it that you want from your home? What do you need so that you can daily face the strains and tensions of the 21st century?

If we are going to have relationships that work, we must start at the beginning of all relationships, those we have at home. I need my home to be:

A shelter from storms (Proverbs 14:26; Eccl. 4:12). A learning Centre for Life (Psa. 144:12; Ephesians 6:4; Luke 2:52). A Place to play and be yourself (Ecclesiastes 9:9; Proverbs 5:18). A launch pad for Ministry(1 Corinthians 16:15)

I want to challenge you to follow the example of Joshua, who said in Joshua 24, "as for me and my house we're going to serve the Lord." I don't care what the rest of the world does but as for me and my family, our mind is made up and the die is cast. We will serve the Lord.

STOP PRESS

The news just filtered in about the devastation that occurred in Haiti as a result of a massive earthquake. Dazed people wander past dead bodies in rubble-strewn streets, crying for loved ones, as rescuers desperately search collapsed buildings.

We join millions all over the world to pray for God's intervention. Already, we can see Him in all the aid coming from all over the world and the daily miracles of survival from the rubble. If you are able to help financially, please don't hold back.

AM I DOING A GOOD JOB AS A PARENT?

How can I tell if I'm doing a good job as a parent?

Practise the art of discipline. (Read Hebrews 12:5-13)

One of parenting's biggest challenges is finding the balance between being tough and being loving. You know you need to love your children unconditionally, and you know you need to discipline them when they do something wrong. But loving your kids is usually a lot easier than disciplining them.

So how can parents find the balance between being tough and tender?

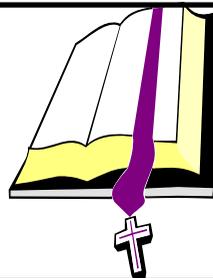
Look to God for a beautiful example of a loving parent who also gently corrects his children when they make mistakes. God corrects us because he loves us. God wants us to learn the right way of doing things so we can live the life he wants for us (Hebrews 12:11).

You can do the same with your children. When you think of discipline as a way of guiding them, it no longer clashes with your desire to show them love. Gentle correction and loving guidance are crucial parts of good parenting. (See also Luke 2:41-52; Ephesians 6:1-4.)

Good Words to Remember: For whom the LORD loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives (Hebrews 12:6). Is your discipline balanced with love and with your child's best interests in mind?

Memory Verse

His mother said to the servants,
"Do whatever he tells you."
John 2:5



A Question of Scarcity (from page 3)

The "water rituals" didn't stop with food. If you touched something that had been declared unclean, you'd go and wash. If you came into contact with the dead, you'd go and wash. If you got involved with something messy (like childbirth) you'd go and wash. The list of purification rituals went on and on. The Jews said: "God is clean and God is pure. You can't be close to God and be unclean at the same time." So, day after day, the rituals of purification continued.

When Jesus turned water into wine, it was as if Jesus was saying: "Look, that water won't clean you up. That water won't make you pure. You can wash with that water seven times a day, seven days a week, it still won't help." Ask Martin Luther about it and he'd tell you that it almost drove him crazy. There he was, holed up in a monastery, desperately trying to clean up his life so that God would think well of him. But just about the time he came to the lunchroom thinking he was spotless, he would remember another sin. So he would race back to his room and try to clean up some more.

But how do you clean up when there's no wash water (because Jesus changed it)? Well, you ask yourself what Jesus changed it to. He changed it to wine, that's what he changed it to. And what is wine? Wine is grace. Wine is mercy. Wine is forgiveness. Everybody needs a little of that in their lives. But here's where the rest of the story comes into play. We don't get "a little of that." We get 180 gallons of that (6 jars times 30 gallons equals 180 gallons). That's an awful lot of wine

Just as there was more wine than the guests at that wedding could ever drink, there is more grace in God's heart than you and I can ever use up. Maybe the point is that you and I don't have to worry about God ever saying: "Sorry, you're too late. The jar is empty. I've run out." Maybe the point is that we don't need to limit the number of times we turn to God out of fear that we will exhaust some heavenly quota. I mean, could that be it? Could those gallons and gallons of wine be a sign that God has gallons and gallons of grace for us?

Such is the change that Christ can make from dull, flat, colourless, tasteless water to rich, rewarding, exciting, challenging wine. That is the change that Christ can make in a person's life and current dull and colourless circumstances.

AT LARGE WITH Dr. RALPH WILSON

Overflowing with Thankfulness

I hate organ recitals. Not pipe organs, especially, but this kind: "How are you today, Gladys?" "Terrible, just terrible. Did I tell you about my gall bladder acting up?" "Yes, Gladys."

She doesn't seem to acknowledge my, "Yes," but launches into a full-scale report on gall bladders around the world, and hers in particular. When she sees my eyes beginning to glaze over, Gladys falters for a moment. She knows she has to switch gears quickly to keep me from nodding off.

"And I have this terrible skin rash that drives me so crazy that I can't sleep at night." I am trying hard to be polite. "Oh, I'm sorry...."

I attempt to stop myself, but it is too late. The ill-fated word has crossed my lips -- "sorry" -- and now I have fed Gladys her first morsel of real food for the day. She seems to take new energy, and as she describes her itching, I begin to sense little crawling things in my scalp. I unconsciously reach up to scratch my head, but nothing gets by Gladys. "Oh, that's the first sign...." she begins.

You've met Gladys, haven't you? It might be a different name. Gladys goes under a number of aliases and dons many disguises. But it's the same complaining, self-centred woman.

Too often, however, I meet Gladys in me. I want people to sympathize with me, so when something is going wrong, -- and when doesn't it? -- I begin to complain. The morals of our nation are terrible. The election was depressing. My spouse is in a bad mood. It doesn't have to dwell on the interior plumbing of a sick Gladys. Normal complaining comes all too easily to my lips.

So when I read Colossians 2:6-7 it hits home. The phrase, "overflowing with thankfulness," begins to repeat itself over and over in my mind. (concluded on page 13)

NOTICE BOARD

**YOUR SPECIAL INVITATION
TO AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL
CELEBRATION OF LOVE
AND
RENEWAL OF MARRIAGE COMMITMENT**

Date: Saturday 6th February 2010

Time: 10am

Venue: Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

London N8

OFFICIATING MINISTERS

The Rev Dr. Justus Omoyajowo
Vicar, St Jude & St. Paul Islington

The Rev Trefor Jones
Pastor, Campsbourne Baptist Church
(To preach at the Marriage service)

The Rev Canon Dele Agbelusi (Host Minister)
Leads seminar on :
How to beat marriage busters and remain in love

Refreshments will be served after the service

Please use the registration slip (inserted) and send it to
Celebration of love
Christ Church
32 Crescent Road
London N8 8AX
or
Email to: christchurchN8@aol.com

NOTICE BOARD

Equality Bill—the Public Sector Equality Duty and Employment Exceptions for Churches and Christian Organisations

The Equality Bill aims to sweep all of the existing law on equality into one Act of Parliament and to eliminate more forms of discrimination than are currently covered.

While Christians believe in the innate worth of every human being, the Bill undermines basic Christian freedoms to adhere to biblical values in the area of employment. The Bill will affect Churches, who will not be able to discriminate on the basis of sexual practice that contravenes biblical values or gender reassignment when employing staff. Only roles that wholly or mainly involve, promoting or teaching religion or leading worship services will be exempt from the provisions of the Government's Equality Bill... During the Report Stage in the House of Commons, John Mason, MP said:

Let us consider the definition: "wholly or mainly involves...leading or assisting...liturgical or ritualistic practices...or...promoting or explaining the doctrine of the religion". Even a full-time priest, minister or pastor would not "mainly" be doing that, because much of their time is spent visiting the sick and perhaps with funerals and so on. In fact, therefore, the definition could exclude everybody.

Mark Harper, MP, Shadow Minister (Disabled People), Work and Pensions, explained this in more detail and added that "If the definition does not even include people who lead worship in their churches, it seems to me that it is a faulty one."

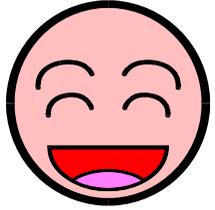
Some Christian groups fear it would mean someone applying for a job as a pastor wouldn't even have to be a Christian. The Rt Revd John Hind (the Bishop of Chichester and a member of the House of Lords) tells Premier Radio he's also nervous about parts of the bill. While we talk about Fundamental human rights, there is a need to balance the rights of individuals against each other.

Read more about this topic on Christian Concern For Our Nation (ccfon.org) and what you can do as an individual. You need to act now.

LAUGHTER LINES

Where's Mommy?

My six-year-old son seems to demand my attention just when I am most busy around the house. My standard reply has been, "I'm busy right now. Go ask your mother."



The disappointed look often on his face as I sent him away convinced me to change my priorities. I resolved to give him my immediate attention whenever he asked. My resolve was quickly tested. I had just climbed to the top of our two-storied house, paintbrush and bucket in hand. As I dipped my brush into the paint I heard his little voice call, "Daddy, Daddy."

Determined to keep my new resolution, I immediately laid paintbrush and bucket aside and climbed back down to the ground to see what he wanted. I got down on both knees, looked him straight in the face and asked, "Well, now what can I do for you, son?"

His reply: "Daddy, where's Mommy?"

Rick Harrison, Newark, OH. Christian Reader, "Lite Fare."

Lord Help us

An old Methodist preacher once offered this prayer in a meeting: "Lord, help us to trust Thee with our souls." Many voices responded with a hearty, old-fashioned "Amen!" "Lord, help us to trust Thee with our bodies," he continued. Again the response was a vociferous "Amen!" Then with still more warmth he said, "And, Lord, help us to trust Thee with our money." Not an "amen" was heard in the house, except that of an impoverished old lady.

LAUGHTER LINES

Walking Sermon

As our pastor's sermon stretched on, my daughter grew impatient and started to talk.

"Shh," I whispered. "I want to hear the sermon." Later that week, we saw our pastor while shopping. We exchanged greetings, and as we walked away, I asked my daughter, "Do you know who that was?"

"Sure," she replied. "That was the Sermon."

—*Helen Siml, Wheaton, IL. "Heart to Heart," Today's Christian Woman*

Child Draws Humorous Picture of Christmas

A little girl came home from Sunday school waving a paper for her mother to see. "Look Mommy," she exclaimed, "Teacher says I drew the most unusual Christmas picture she ever saw!"

Her mother took one look and had to agree with the teacher. Hoping her daughter could explain her creation, the mother asked, "Why are all these people riding in the back of an airplane?"

"Well, Mommy, that's the flight into Egypt."

Accepting that, mother asked another question: "Who is this mean-looking man in the front?"

Her daughter answered quickly and knowingly: "That's Pontius, the Pilot." Looking at the picture even more closely, the mother said, "I see you have Mary and Joseph and the baby. But who is this large man sitting behind Mary?"

"Can't you tell?" the little girl asked, beginning to shake her head in disappointment. "That's Round John Virgin."

John Beukema,

HUMILITY :

HUMILITY has nothing to do with genetics and it is neither a talent nor the result of one's environment. Humility is a 'heart thing' and a matter of choice every man/woman, old/young, rich/poor, educated/uneducated, spiritual/non-spiritual makes or refuses to make.

God made a choice to leave heaven's glory to dwell in this slum called earth. God made a choice to come through a family that hardly had enough to survive on and whose little town was of no significance.

God made a choice to be born in the filthy environment of a barn and chose shepherds, people stripped of good reputation, to announce his coming. When He grew up, He chose to associate more with the down trodden while at the same time condemning those that thought they had it all. We are enjoined to willingly clothe ourselves with humility (1 Peter 5:5-6). It is a matter of choice. What choices will you make this new year and for the rest of your life in order to walk humbly before your God?

God made a choice to leave heaven's glory to dwell in this slum called earth

Sunday Bwanhot

THINK ABOUT THIS

Psychoanalysts try to rid the soul of guilt, but they are powerless to deal with the stain of sin that is deeply ingrained in every human soul. They may expose an old wound, but they cannot heal it. They may show you that your trouble is an ancient sin, but they cannot cleanse it from the system. And that is what our sick souls need most of all-**forgiveness**. It is only in Jesus that we experience a complete forgiveness of our sins. Have you been to Jesus to experience his forgiving and cleansing power? Let Jesus into your life this new year and your life will never remain the same. D.A

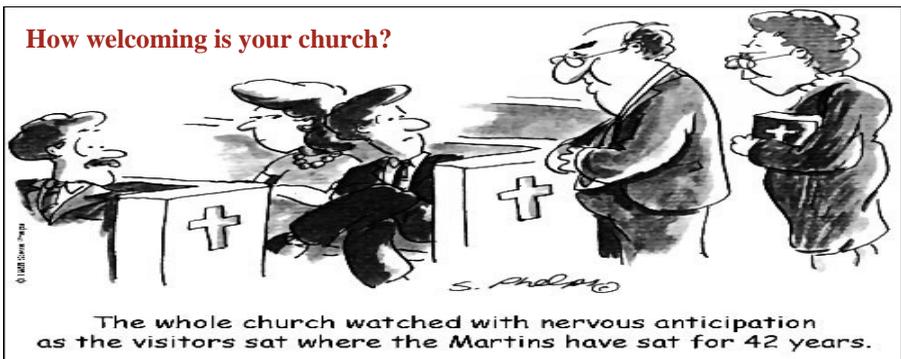
At large with Dr. Ralph Wilson (from page 7)

"Overflowing" - abounding," some translations say - brings the mental picture of the Thanksgiving cornucopia spilling out an abundant harvest blessing. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." What is in my heart? Complaining? Selfishness? Pride? -- or Thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving is the mark of a Christian, because thanksgiving points out and up while my complaining points only back to me and feeds my pride and dissatisfaction. Thanksgiving towards God and man fits the Great Commandment like a glove, to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love my neighbour as myself. What better vehicle than thankfulness to express love?

The Pillsbury Doughboy® has that endearing quality that when you poke him he doesn't flare up but automatically responds with a friendly, perky, "Oh!" I want to be like him. Not so plump, mind you, but that full of friendliness.

When someone pokes me I want my first instinct to be thankfulness rather than anger. I want people to find thankfulness oozing out of me. I want thanksgiving to mark my conversation and manner. I want to abound with it, be full of it. I want to overflow with thankfulness. How about you?



WHAT IF?

What if, God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn't follow Him today?

What if, God couldn't take the time to bless us today because we couldn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?

What if, we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when God sent the rain?

What if, God didn't walk with us today because we failed to recognize it as His day?

What if, God took away the Bible tomorrow because we would not read it today?

What if, God took away His message because we failed to listen to the messenger?

What if, God didn't send His only begotten Son because He wanted us to be prepared to pay the price for sin?

What if, the door of the church was closed because we did not open the door of our heart?

What if, God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others?

What if, God would not hear us today because we would not listen to Him?

What if, God answered our prayers the way we answer His call to service?

What if, God met our needs the way we give Him our lives???

HEAVENLY CORRESPONDENCE

E-MAIL FROM GOD (13)

File Edit View Options Tools Help

Send Contacts Spell Attach Security Save

From: **GOD, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

To: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

Subject: **THE GIFT THAT CHANGES YOU**

Dear child,

What's holding you back from accepting My free gift of a new life? Do you think that if you accept, you'll have to change yourself and be perfect from now on? That I'll be mad if you ever mess up?

That's not the deal. What I'm offering you is a free gift. You can't earn it with your good behaviour. You don't change to earn the gift. You accept the gift, and it changes you!

What exactly is the gift? What is this new life about? It's about forgiveness, freedom and friendship with Me. It's about a deeper happiness than you have ever experienced and an inner feeling of calm and peace that you can't find anywhere else.

Believe in Me. Receive your free gift.

Your heavenly Father,

God.

MOTTO/TEXT FOR THE YEAR

“I CAN DO EVERYTHING THROUGH HIM WHO GIVES ME STRENGTH” PHILIPPIANS 4:13

FINDING OUT ABOUT ...CHRIST CHURCH?

Tel/Fax: 020 8340 1566

We are a family of men and women, boys and girls who are trying to live for God in a world that has largely chosen to ignore Him.

We believe that it is God's world and that He has given the answer to all human problems in Jesus Christ.

As a body of believers, we offer to all who come regular opportunities for worship and service that point the way to God as our strongest resource in all aspects of life.

We will be pleased to welcome you to any of our activities. You will find a warm welcome at Christ Church.

Times of worship and fellowship are shown below:

- Sunday**
- **8.00am.** Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
 - **10.30am.** Main service with Crèche facilities
- There is family/parade service once every month— usually the third Sunday of the month unless otherwise indicated.
- **5.00pm.** Evening worship

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

- Sunday - Choir practice in church (**9.30 am**)
- Monday - Baby n' Toddler Group and Brownies - *meetings in church*
- Prayer meetings –1st, 15th Feb; 1st March (**8 pm**)
- Wednesday - Bible Fellowship in church - West Chapel (**7:45 pm for 8.00pm start**)
- Friday - Bible Fellowship in church - West Chapel (**2.00 pm**)
- Scouts meeting in hall and church(**6.30 pm**) -
 - Music Team practice in choir vestry (**6.30 pm**)

Enquiry/Counselling/Prayer Lifeline - please phone 020 8340 1566

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Organist: Pavla Bockova

YOUR COMMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME

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