

# Christ Church Freemantle

## Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January – Third Sunday of Epiphany

The Gospel for today (*John 2.1-11*) is the story of the Jesus at the Marriage in Cana. John makes three points in placing this story at the start of his great Gospel:

Firstly: Family life is central to the Gospel message. What constitutes a family may change with different cultures and times – today's family is very different from the husband and wife and 2.2 children which may have been the ideal even a hundred years ago - but we belong to each other in families, and Jesus' presence at the marriage shows for John that God blesses family life.

Secondly: Jesus presence is life-changing. Jesus wasn't there to rescue the host out of a difficult situation, but for a greater purpose – to enrich life to the full for everyone.

Thirdly: The transformation Jesus effected was a sign of his glory – the beginning for John of the revelation of God to the world through his Son. This, John writes, was the first of the signs – there would be more to come.



I thought of this story as we watched the inauguration ceremony of President Joe Biden in Washington on TV this week. For a nation which has no established church as we do in England, nonetheless there was great emphasis on the presence of God on this hugely significant occasion. As Joe Biden made his promise to defend his country and its constitution, he did so with his hand on the enormous family Bible which has been so important to him throughout his life, and the music and words of the ceremony kept referring to God's presence and his guidance. Kamala Harris, too, her hand on a Bible, made her pledge as the first woman and person of colour to be Vice-President of the USA, a wonderful step forward in the nation's history.

What we expected would be very much a secular national occasion was changed and enriched by the acknowledgement of God being present in the life of America, giving deeper meaning to the promises made. That great nation has seen dark days in the past few years, and especially the last couple of weeks, but we could see a real sense of hope that, with God's help, transformation really is possible. There was a feeling of light after a long period of darkness.

Darkness and light are two of the great themes of John's gospel, and they can give us real hope as we struggle through our difficult days. We see the horrific statistics of Covid deaths, and the battle going on in our hospitals to save life, the darkness of grief and loss, but also the light of resilience, determination, and courage. We have learned more than ever through this pandemic the real value of family relationships, and our belief that God is present with us does indeed transform our perspective and bring light into our darkness.

May we continue to place our trust in him as we hope for better days ahead.

*Ian Coomber*