**Isaiah 62:1-5**

**For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. 2The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. 3You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. 5For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.**

## John 2:1-11

**On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” 5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.**

**Aspiration and promise!**

**What is the main thing for you this year?**

**Inspirational speakers might urge us to: ‘Keep the main thing, the main thing.’**

**The main thing might be an aspect of the work you do, or studies you are completing. The main thing might be family, or a special relationship. It might be some special time of vacation, or heading towards something you have always wanted to do. It might be facing an illness, yours or someone close to you. It might be making and carrying out a decision.**

**This might loom large in our lives, and appear to be the main thing, and in terms of sticking to the highest priorities in our lives, keeping the main thing the main thing, has merit as a phrase to keep us focussed.**

**But today we consider that the main thing might actually not be the main thing. It might be a matrix thing, there might be two realities going on. The reality we know of waking, eating, doing stuff, and sleeping. To us this is real, to us this is life and we want to do best we can. But consider that God’s involvement in our lives might be in quite a different way. Consider that no matter how good or bad this year is on a personal level, God’s agenda is that we be shaped into the image of Christ, to pick out a phrase from Galatians – that Christ might be formed in us.**

**Does God care if we holiday in the North Island or South Island? Does he care if we choose this course at university or not, or this job or that, or choose this retirement village over another? Well at one level of course he is interested in all we do, but in terms of God’s main thing, the big picture, no God doesn’t care where we study or work or holiday. This is because wherever we go and whatever we do, God can work with it to transform our lives. In all things God is at work to make all things new.**

**Look at the beautiful imagery in Isaiah 62. Written as a promise to the people of Israel, but considering that we by faith have been grafted into the same vine and adopted into the same family, these words apply to us as a church and to each individual.**

**God’s work is seen as Vindication – salvation shining like a burning torch.**

**You shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.**

**You shall be a crown of beauty and a royal diadem in the hand of the Lord.**

**No longer called forsaken or desolate, but called my “delight is in her”, one rejoiced over.**

**Through the joys and struggles of everyday, God is at work validating our lives, taking from us the names we’ve been called and been hurt by and giving us a new name; giving our lives value and beauty like a precious crown or a royal diadem in the Lord’s hand.**

**So when I get up in the morning and stumble towards the coffee pot and cereal bowl, I think my life adds up to one thing, but God is at work for a different purpose. God is at work to take the forsaken and desolate parts of our lives and make them into places of delight and rejoicing.**

**In the account of turning water into wine, we see this theme carrying on. The main thing in the minds of the people was the celebration of a wedding. But the mind of God was to launch the ministry of Jesus with a beautiful picture of transformation.**

**Now, just a comment - making water into wine – this is not a good story I know for those struggling with alcohol addiction However, this is not a narrative which encourages drinking in excess. As best, go with the metaphor.**

**On the third day there was a wedding – three days in a tomb, on the third day he rose: maybe there is something here about resurrection and the power of the resurrection to transform lives.**

**A wedding is always a gala occasion and in a village like Cana it would be a community celebration. And the presence of Jesus and his family there meant the invite went out wider than just those in the village. “Refreshments” were provided for all the guests. Of these wine was very important. Failing to adequately provide for the guests would be a social disgrace. In the closely knit communities of Jesus’ day, such an error would not have been forgotten and would haunt the newly married couple for the rest of their lives. The situation prompted Mary’s urgent plea to Jesus. (Merrill Tenney)**

**Here’s a point about the transformation God works in our lives. Jesus removed the disgrace by providing for the family and the community, quietly and efficiently.**

**Jesus did not just remove the disgrace, he made it something to talk about for weeks and weeks even generations – you know that wedding – yeah I remember it, the wine was ok wasn’t it, but then instead of getting the poorer wine, the dregs of the barrel, the best wine is made available. There would have been considerable wine left over for the community and so they would have been the toast of the town for several weeks.**

**Water to wine: Jesus turns the ordinary and mundane into something fit for a celebration, and not just any old plonk, it is the best. Is this where we get the phrase saving the best for last? And a lot of it! 6 \* 20 gallons = 120 gallons, at about 3.75 litres per gallon, that’s 450 litres that’s over 500, 750 ml bottles of wine!**

**We don’t know of the exact amount in first century measurements, but the point is it was lots. Jesus blessed the mundane – Jesus validated the normal rites of passage in the community, but within that, he acted to transform. To remove disgrace and honour the couple.**

**The other phrase which we can gloss over is six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification. For cleansing, it was customary to provide water which was set aside for cleansing and so the people attending the wedding would have customarily washed their hands, as they came into the wedding celebrations. This obviously had a practical purpose, they had clean hands for eating their food, but also it had a ceremonial purpose, indicating cleansing from sin, from the dirt and grime of life, not just from the day’s activities, but from the sin which so easily entangles and dirties one’s life.**

**Jesus used this ceremonial water to make the wine. It is the purification of our lives, the cleansing power of God’s forgiveness of us which truly transforms. No longer do we walk in condemnation, by faith we are justified and have peace with God.**

**Can we see our ordinary lives as sacred? We go to work, we go about our ordinary lives, but Jesus comes in a transforms them. We have various aspirations for ourselves and our families, but our aspirations are taken over by the promise of new life. God’s agenda in our lives to take what is disgraced and desolate and to make it honoured and fruitful. To take what is damaged and to make it beautiful.**

**The question is, will we submit to this process of transformation? It can be resisted, we do have that choice? Are we prepared to see the difficult colleague as someone who God can use to bring out in us, patience and self-control? Can we see a medical challenge as an opportunity to see and know God’s love in different ways? Can we see holiday times as space away from home where God can speak to us afresh? Can we see the mountain top experiences as opportunities for looking up and giving praise to our Creator and Lord?**

**Mostly we want life our way and so we resist the hound of heaven who pursues us to make us new. But, little by little, piece by piece as we risk trusting our lives into the hands of a good God, God fulfils his promise to restore all things to himself and make all things new?**

**Response in prayer.**