

Who Would You Invite To a Party?

In a quiet moment we might compose a perfect combination of characters — known to you or famous, dead or alive. Imagine Winston Churchill sharing one-liners with your favourite uncle.

Not many of us would invite God, perhaps. Do we secretly imagine God as a bit of a kill-joy? Not found chatting amiably over the melon starter at a wedding reception, and certainly not up dancing, shout-singing to Abba songs. Probably not even at the party at all, but having slipped away long before that.



Yet Jesus was at one wedding we know about, along with Mary and the whole village, and the party was in full swing.

Then, despite all the planning, disaster struck — the wine ran out! The thirsty ones noticed first. Mary called Jesus over and told him to do something helpful. He wasn't sure this was the moment to show his hand; in John's gospel, this is his very first sign. And yet, up he stepped.

"Fill those big storage jars with water," he said softly, so as not to embarrass the host. These were not neat one-litre jugs — each held twenty or thirty gallons. "Now," he said, "serve it." The waiters had put the water in themselves. How mortifying, to be asked to start tipping plain water into expectant cups? They needn't have worried. With the first pour of something rich and fragrant, the bubble of social disaster popped and turned to triumph. "This wine is amazing," the guests whispered. Most parties serve the good stuff first, then move to the cheaper bottles once everyone's relaxed. Not this one. Someone had kept the best till last.

Jesus doesn't make a big thing of it. But when Jesus turns his hand to a miracle, he does it properly. From something as ordinary as water, as embarrassing as running dry at a party — he makes something glorious.

We love this story not only because the Son of God turns up at a party and turns out to be nothing like the party-pooper we might have imagined. We love it because God makes something extraordinary out of the simple things we bring him — our ordinary lives. Whatever we hand him, however plain, he pours astonishing richness into it. So maybe it turns out that, as we open ourselves to God, you and I are the water, quietly becoming something amazing, just like the glorious wine.

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