

‘Woman, what concern is that to you or to me?’

A couple of weeks ago we went to see *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*. It's the fifth Indiana Jones film that Harrison Ford has made and, given he's now 81, many would argue that it's time he put down his hat and his whip and embraced retirement. Whatever you might think of the film however, the *first* Indiana Jones film – *Raiders of the Lost Ark* – released over 40 years ago, is considered to be one of the greatest films ever made. The film follows Jones, a globetrotting archaeologist, as he searches for the Ark of the Covenant, a Biblical relic from the Old Testament said to hold the key to human existence.

There's a wonderful moment in the film where Indie is underground in the Map Room in the Lost City of Tanis. He knows that one of the last resting places for the Ark of the Covenant is possibly the Well of Souls but he doesn't know where to find it. With the Staff of Ra in his hands and its beautifully crafted headpiece attached, he holds it just as the sun rises and streams through a hole in the roof. As the sun hits the headpiece, a beam of light marks the spot in a model of the city where the Ark is buried enabling it to be found.

What has *that* got to do with Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding you might reasonably ask. Well let's look at the miracle.

Jesus' first miracle is arguably quite a strange one. It isn't to do with healing, or restoring of life, or feeding the hungry. And it's not just a few bottles of plonk, but several enormous vats, providing 800 bottles of the finest wine for a village wedding in the backstreets of the Roman Empire.

However, as the text tells us, Jesus, was reluctant to become involved in this potential social disaster, of wine running out at a wedding. The provision of the wine appears to have been the bridegroom's duty, and you suspect that running out so quickly wasn't going to get this marriage off to a good start. Jesus asks Mary, his mother: *'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?'* Jesus did not want to get involved, claiming it wasn't their responsibility, but Mary knows better - and she knew Jesus knew. Mary saw that the absence of wine was a problem only Jesus could solve. So she told the servants to do whatever he asked. Her answer to the question Jesus asked her was clear: this problem had a *lot* to do with them.

But for whose benefit was the miracle performed? Only Mary, the disciples and the servants saw it. The servants were told by Jesus to fill six stone jars to the brim with water, which they did. And then they were asked to draw some out and take

it to the *master of the banquet*, the host – most probably the bride’s father. He doesn’t have a clue about what had just happened so when he tastes this choice wine, he cynically thinks ‘*Cunning so and so, kept the good wine back!*’ Of course, perception is everything and those who knew different were full of awe at the miracle they had just witnessed. So, who *did* benefit from this miracle? What *did* it achieve?

Clearly the miracle benefitted the host, whose honour was saved, a big deal in ancient Galilee. But the text rather implies that this was a miracle aimed at Jesus’ disciples. Verse 11 reads: ‘*This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*’ This act of changing water into wine was the disciples’ first glimpse of his glory and, as a consequence, his disciples believed in him.

The glory of Jesus is a theme that runs through John’s gospel. John is always pointing to the glory of Jesus, the Christ, the chosen one: ‘*The light shines in the darkness ... and we have seen his glory*’ we read in John 1, verses 5 and 14. In John 11, verse 40, at the tomb of Lazarus after raising him from the dead, Jesus tells his disciples: ‘*Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?*’, and in John 17, verse 1, just before Jesus’ arrest, he prays: ‘*Father ... glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.*’

For John, Jesus is the point where divine lightning strikes the earth and the world is scorched with his glory. In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, a beam of light reveals where treasure, the Ark of the Covenant, is to be found. In Cana, at a first century ordinary wedding, this first miracle, unnoticed by all but a few, reveals the glory of Jesus, the Messiah, the chosen one.

With this first miracle came the realisation of who Jesus was. From then on, the disciples saw everything that Jesus touched spring to life: people are healed, bread is multiplied, lives are changed, and water becomes wine. And because the Word has become flesh, flesh can become Word in any one of us. We can share that glory. The offer is always on the table for every one of us, just like the wine at the wedding.

But what about the question Jesus asked Mary: ‘*Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?*’ If we ask ourselves that question today, the answer is - a huge amount! *We* are called to be part of a church that’s hard at work metaphorically changing water into wine, through the countless acts of love and generosity that pepper the world every day. For example, through the dedicated work of Christian

charities such as Tearfund and Christian Aid giving hope to millions; in the work of hundreds of foodbanks run by local churches; through the many Street Pastors offering care and support to the nightlife in our cities; in the 50,000 communities of grace (individual churches) offering God's unqualified love to all; and in the saints we sometimes stumble over who leave us humbled. As Jesus said, the kingdom of God is already among us. If we open our eyes, the glory of God is shining all around.

And each and every one of us is equally called to shine.

Today, the light will be shining on our baptism and confirmation candidates. This afternoon, two members of our church family will be baptised and six will be confirmed. This is a key moment in the lives of Lucy, Abi, Naira, Ben, Lisa, Michelle and Ken where they are publically putting their faith in Jesus. Yes, the light will be shining on them but they, in turn, will be expected to shine with Christ's light. At the end of the service, the Bishop will say to the candidates these words:

You have received the light of Christ;
walk in this light all the days of your life.

And we all say in reply to our brothers and sisters in Christ [and worth saying to one another here this morning]:

**Shine as a light in the world
to the glory of God the Father.**

As the baptised people of God, we're all called to shine as lights, through what we say and through what we do, so that others may see the glory of God. Light is attractive – ask any moth! But we pray that *our* light may draw people to *Christ's* light, because it's through Christ's light that everything is transformed. Earlier we sang [In that wonderful hymn are the words]:

I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'I am this world's dark light.
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise and all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus and I found in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk, till travelling days are done.

May that be our prayer today. Amen.