Wouldn’t it be great if, every time we needed a bit more fizz in a party, all we had to do was fill a few barrels with water and then pray for it to be turned into the finest wine? But that’s not quite what this story is about. As John tells us down in verse 11, this miracle is a sign. That is to say, it’s an event which, remarkable though it may be in itself, actually points to something else.

The key to what’s going on here is in the rest of verse 11 as John explains what’s been going on: ‘This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.’

We don’t talk much about people revealing their glory, do we? On ‘Match of the Day’, when a player runs round with his shirt over his head, I suppose it could be said that he is ‘revealing his glory’! That is to say, he is giving everyone a sign that he’s done something special by scoring a goal. Really special, in the case of some teams we could mention...! This is what John means. This is what the miracle of turning water into wine is all about. It shows us what a special person Jesus is. It shows us what he is really like.

Perhaps the most important thing this event shows about Jesus is his power to transform, his ability to bring joy to a place of sadness. Mary presents Jesus with a very bleak outlook in verse 3, doesn’t she? ‘When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”’ That’s it. Party over. We might as well all go home. Especially with a dozen of your lot here...

But no. Jesus restores the fizz and brings the party back to life. Because that’s what he’s like.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is on record as saying that “The Church needs fewer meetings and more parties.” He’s right, isn’t he? The church which bears the name of Jesus Christ doesn’t always give a very accurate picture of her Lord. The challenge for us is that we most authentically reflect what Jesus is really like when we exude the joy, the delight, the fun, the celebration of a party.

Before we leave this great story, let’s just reflect on how this miracle actually happened. The heading in my Bible for this incident is ‘Jesus Changes Water to Wine’. But it’s not quite as simple as that, is it? It isn’t just Jesus... there are other people involved. These amazing servants, for a start!

My experience of staff at a wedding reception is that they work hard to try and make sure that everything goes smoothly. If a guest asks for something rather out of the ordinary, they do what they can to accommodate them. Especially if it’s something they can put on the bill later! But what about this guest? How would you like to have been in the waiters’ shoes for this occasion?

His mum comes up – always a worry. ‘You see that chap over there,’ she says. ‘That’s my boy. Make sure you do whatever he tells you.’ ‘Yes, of course, madam,’ they say. So what is it that he tells them to do? ‘Fill the jars with water.’ Fill the jars with water? ‘Right away, sir!’ Now let’s just remember that this is the first century we’re talking about here. They couldn’t just put them under the tap. Each one holds from twenty to thirty gallons, every drop of which is hard work to pull up from the well or wherever.
It’s a good thing they didn’t know what was to come next, isn’t it? My guess is that they wouldn’t have been all that particular about where the water came from. After all, as verse 6 tells us, the jars were only used for ceremonial washing. So just imagine how they must have felt when Jesus told them in verse 8 to ‘...draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ Not just try a spoonful or two on one of the tiddly guests who created the shortage in the first place and is propped up semi-conscious in the corner. But take it to the main man, the master of the banquet!

Without any fuss, John just tells us that ‘They did so...’ at the end of verse 8. And the thing is that this is what made the miracle possible. Jesus could have done it without them. He could have simply clicked his fingers and filled the jars with water miraculously all by himself. But he didn’t. That’s not his way. He is committed to working with the likes of us in the wonderful things he does. It’s how he worked then and it’s how he works now. Using the entirely ordinary to bring about the utterly extraordinary!

We need to know that this story really is a true reflection of what Jesus Christ is up to in our world now. He’s not about being terminally serious and bringing great swathes of doom and gloom into our lives. Far from it! And just as back then, the key to unlocking the presence and power of Jesus in our lives lies in doing what he says. This is how he works. Indeed, this, in a nutshell, is what church is all about. Our job in gathering together as we do is simply to discover more of what Jesus is saying and to help one another do it.

‘Do whatever he tells you.’ The thing is, of course, that what Jesus tells us may go against the grain. This is what gives the Christian Faith its challenging edge. Putting the teaching of Jesus into practice may sometimes be costly and uncomfortable. Every now and then it may flow against the tide of popular opinion. It may not always make a great deal of sense. Just as it was for the servants at this banquet. But, in the end, it was their trust and obedience that led to this wonderful display of the glory of Jesus.

May this story help us to see afresh what a special person Jesus is and to continue down the path of turning to him as Saviour and submitting to him as Lord. Amen.