

“So Much to Celebrate”
Isaiah 62:1-5 John 2:1-11



God's story speaks of the passionate, yearning love that God has for you, for me, and for all the created order, and in it is the invitation to celebrate with awe and wonder.

Isaiah spoke words of promise to the Israelites when they were in exile in Babylon. His words paint a picture of God being delighted with God's people. The Lord is speaking to the exiles and is declaring the promise that God will not rest until Israel has been pardoned and restored, until the proffered salvation has been accepted. In the first verse, God says, "I will not keep silent, ... I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch". "I will not keep silent." These words must have brought bewildering hope as they struggled to be faithful in exile.

To underscore the promise, God gives Israel a new name. Once she was called "Desolate", "Deserted" but now she would be known through the world and in every age as "Married". God is promising to marry his errant children, not out of pity but delight.

What a marvellous story of the intimacy for which God longs - an intimacy between the Creator and the created, between God and you, between God and me. Here we have the assurance that not only will God keep on loving us no matter how unlovable we may be. In fact, God loves us because God sees us as lovely. God always sees us in a way that we may not always see ourselves. "As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you." [Isaiah 62:5b]

In John, we find that Jesus' ministry begins with eating and drinking and the celebration of a community - a wedding feast. This is our Lord's first miracle. It is a story about the lavish, excessive generosity of God. Where human provisions fail, God provides abundantly - more than the guests could have imagined or foreseen or expected.

A new name is bestowed upon a beleaguered, beaten, despondent people - a people who had forsaken the God who had led them out of bondage into the promised land. Regardless of their transgressions, they will no longer be called "Desolate" or "Deserted". They will forever be claimed and named, "Married" because they are the delight of the Almighty.

In Jesus, the incarnation of God, God made flesh to dwell among us, the image of the intimacy of marriage is revisited. By attending the wedding in Cana of Galilee and ensuring that the party, the celebration could continue indefinitely, perhaps Jesus is announcing that you and I have also been given a new name by our God. Perhaps, despite our failings and wanderings and brokenness, God takes great delight in us.

In the Talmud, it is written, "in the world to come, each of us will be called to account for all the good things God put on earth which we refused to enjoy." [Rabbi Harold Kushner, When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough, Simon and Shuster Pocket Book, New York, 1986, p. 82]