

I wonder what Victor Meldrew would have said if he had heard that reading. Do you think he might have said ‘I don’t believe it!’? Are you tempted to say the same thing?

It is a bit of a strange story - Jesus says to his mother ‘My time has not yet come’ and then responds anyway. The amount of water apparently turned into wine is suggested to be at least 120 gallons - enough for quite a few weddings. Even filling the jars with water would have taken a good long time. And this sort of miracle seems to me a bit out of keeping with the picture we have of Jesus in the rest of the gospels. It seems a little too much like magic. In fact ‘turning water into wine’ is often used as a shorthand description of something that is impossible, as if that’s the only thing that matters.

At the very end of the story we are told the following: ‘Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.’

‘His disciples believed in him’. What sort of belief is this? I don’t think it is just belief in miraculous powers. In fact we often see the disciples struggling to believe that Jesus will do anything miraculous - for instance, when they are when faced with a hungry crowd.

But they did believe in Jesus himself. There are different ways that we use the word believe. If we say ‘I believe in

God’ it usually means ‘I think that God exists’. That is head belief, if you like - we are saying that we think something is true or real. Sometimes this sort of belief is treated as if it is what really matters, but our head belief can easily be fooled - just look at the way Derren Brown controls people. And our head belief tends to come and go - or at least mine does. Most of us have times when we don’t find it easy to hold on to our head belief that God is really there.

But there is another sort of belief, which we might call ‘heart belief’. If we say, for instance, ‘I believe in David Cameron’ - or ‘I believe in Jeremy Corbyn’ we are not saying ‘I believe that they exist’. We are saying ‘I believe in what they stand for’, ‘I believe in them as a leader’.

There is a sense of ownership and belonging attached to that belief. And that can be really shape our life. I might say, as a fan, ‘I believe in Kenny Jackett’ - so I won’t be joining those protesters who hold up placards saying ‘No Jackett required’. But if I am a player - if I am part of his team - and I say ‘I believe in Kenny Jackett’ that means that I really listen to what he says and play his way - I follow his lead.

That’s the sort of belief the disciples had in Jesus. They saw the person he was - what he said, what he did, how he lived - and they put their trust in him and followed him.

Their heart belief led to what you might call 'life belief' - a belief that is lived out day by day.

What was it that made them put their trust in Jesus in this way? I don't think it was just his miracles. We might be impressed by a miracle worker - we might even clamour for them to do a miracle for us. But what we look for is something deeper - something with a more profound significance for our lives.

John tells us that what happened at Cana was 'the first of Jesus' signs' - it signified something about him. What it showed was the difference that Jesus made. In this story, Jesus transforms that situation, and he did it in a particular way. Old Testament religion was often about people messing things up, and then saying sorry, and being forgiven. That's the significance of the stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification. We mess up our lives, and then we are washed clean.

That in itself is a good thing, but this story is telling us that Jesus offers something more. He doesn't just offer forgiveness - getting back to how things were - he offers new life. The water meant for washing becomes wine - and wine brings joy, and blessing, and celebration. We are not just baptised with the baptism of John for repentance, we are baptised by the Holy Spirit, and lifted out of the water with Jesus into a new relationship with God.

The disciples didn't just experience the transforming presence of Jesus in this miracle. Jesus offers the paralysed man not just forgiveness but a new life, on his feet. Jesus invites himself to the house of Zacchaeus and turns his life upside down.

Jesus is special, not just that he can do things no-one else does, but because he can make a difference to our lives in the way that no-one else can. That's why the disciples believed in him - and why we believe in him now.

I love the words of our collect today. They are a prayer, and they are also a statement of trust: Almighty God, In Christ you make all things new - transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory. That's what God does, through our relationship with Jesus - and that is why we believe in him.

I wonder if you can remember when you first became aware of this - when you first began to believe in Jesus in this way? I think for me, it may have been when I went on a Pathfinder camp. I had gone the first year when I was about 12 - to a lovely place called Sandsend, near Whitby. I was the only one from my church in Nottingham to go, and I had a great time. The second year I remember catching the train again at Sheffield, and finding some of

the same leaders and boys on the train as the previous year. They were so pleased to see me - one friend in particular. There was something lovely and accepting and welcoming in the way they were - something I didn't always experience in my school life. And I think that in their love and friendship I sensed something of the life of Jesus - the one they put their trust in. His love was at work among them and I wanted to be part of it, so I began to put my trust in him too.

I wonder if you can think back to when you first started to believe in this way - heart belief and life belief - belief that changed you. What was it that spoke to you? And what difference did it make?

Soon we will have the chance in our Lent Groups to spend some time thinking about some difficult questions - including how we can believe in God at all in today's world and why we ourselves believe. It's good sometimes to remind ourselves - and trying to put it into words can help. But like the disciples it's also through our lives that we show how we too believe in Jesus.

I still remember one song that we used to sing in my Pathfinder Camp days, which expresses something of what heart belief in Jesus means - the sort of belief that we can't help but live out in our lives. It was a bit corny - like a lot of the songs in those days - but it spoke to me:

He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today.
he walks with me, and talks with me
along life's narrow way.
he lives, he lives, salvation to impart.
You ask me how I know he lives -
he lives within my heart.