

## They're Out of Wine

They kicked off their sandals when the dancing began.  
 Everyone flooded the floor. He was there,  
 head thrown back, laughing at the stars.  
 Everyone could see it was joy and hope in the air,  
 the kind of love that makes it impossible not to dance.

So the whole community spun and twirled, jumped  
 and clapped,  
 pushing back the pain of the world for a night.  
 Reveling in the fact that two people could stand to  
 build something beautiful in this fractured world.  
 But before too long, a tug on his sleeve.

I wonder if Jesus stopped dancing when he heard the news.  
 I wonder if he looked out over the crowd of happy people.  
 I wonder if he could see their joy poking through  
 their fragility.  
 And I wonder if he knew, in that moment, that joy was holy,  
 that joy would sustain them, that joy was a form  
 of resurrection,  
 so he turned water into wine and the dancing did not stop.

Poem by  
 Rev. Sarah Speed

## In a Neat & Tidy Garden

ALL THE WAY ("All the Way My Savior Leads Me")

Words: Anna Strickland (2025)

Music: Robert Lowry (1875)



Scan to hear  
 the tune!



In a neat and ti - dy gar - den grows a se - cret ti - ny seed  
 Green and ten - der leaves I har - vest from the mus - tard grow - ing wild  
 O - ther gar - den - ers may strug - gle and pre - tend they have con - trol



There a - mong the plan - ted bar - ley will e - merge a shock - ing weed  
 To en - rich and spice my dish - es that were un - til now too mild  
 O - ver land that God cre - a - ted but I'll tell you what I know:



Grow - ing quick - ly through the so - il to break forth in va - cant spot  
 Un - ex - pec - ted and sur - pris - ing, un - con - trolled by hu - man hand  
 I am not the Mas - ter Gar - dener, just a stew - ard of this place



What a joy when I dis - cov - er God has plan - ted in my plot!  
 See the reign of God is grow - ing, ta - king root through - out the land!  
 God has seed - ed ev - ery a - cre with sur - pris - ing, wi - ld grace!



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Read John 2:1-11; Matthew 13:31-32

Commentary | Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail

### **“Ooh, Heaven Is a Place on Earth”**

People didn’t think Jesus could boogie like that. It took them by surprise—his dance moves, undoubtedly, but also how much Jesus, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God . . . loves a good ol’ fashioned Electric Slide.

Jesus is there, at the wedding in Cana. And the party is at the tipping point: the moment when people are either gonna dip, or the party is about to go to the next level. The shoes will come off on the dance floor, mama is gonna bust those moves she hasn’t used since college—but instead, something terrible has happened.

The host has run out of wine. The servants know it. And for some reason . . . Mary knows it, too.

In John’s Gospel *this* is how we meet Mary. A woman who knows the panicked secret about to ruin the party: there is no more wine. A woman who knows exactly who can fix it, so she goes to find her son.

Maybe Jesus is dangling a solo cup in hand, leaning against a wall and enjoying from the sidelines. Maybe he was doing the Cha Cha Slide and is irked to be interrupted. An embarrassing squabble with one’s mother in front of friends is a seminal human experience, after all. Or maybe this whole conversation is a teasing ruse because mother and son both know what is about to happen—they’re both in on the delightful surprise.

**The good news is a surprise to us, of course, but it’s not a surprise to God.**

However this conversation goes down—sassy or sincere—I picture Mary, unblinking at Jesus’ insistence that his hour has not yet come. She turns to the crowd of befuddled waitstaff as she saunters off with: “Do whatever he tells you!”

**Mary has complete trust in the miracle to come.**

The servants turn to look at Jesus—hopeful, skeptical, bewildered—and Jesus tells them to fill six stone water jars, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. “And they filled them up to the brim” (John 2:7). This is equivalent to *one thousand* bottles of wine! Which is exactly what it becomes. The party tips from good to unforgettable.

Behold: Jesus’ debut act of ministry. It’s not a healing, or an exorcism, or turning tables for justice. Jesus’ first act is to help ensure a party becomes the best party possible. It’s a total surprise.

Because this . . . this is who Jesus is. Jesus doesn’t have to begin with defeating evil because he knows ultimately evil doesn’t stand a chance against a God who loves disco and his mother. Evil doesn’t stand a chance against a God who is not only *not* afraid of scarcity, but laughs in the face of it. Evil doesn’t stand a chance against a God who will never let an empty cistern or full tomb have the final word. Evil is predictable. But our God loves a surprise because God knows the plot twist is the same every time: God’s goodness will overflow. Every single time.

### **Reflect**

Have you ever been surprised by overflowing goodness?



Messianic Secret | T. Denise Anderson  
14"x18" Acrylic on canvas

## First Sunday in Lent

*the good news is...* so good it catches us by surprise

**Read** John 2:1-11

**Artist Statement** | Rev. T. Denise Anderson

The Wedding at Cana is my favorite text because there is a lot of humor in it. There's humor in a mother approaching her son and telling him to do something without ever actually *telling* him to do it. There's his pouty resistance to his mother's non-demand while she completely ignores him and paints him in a corner. There is humor in a raucous wedding reception where the people are so "lit" that the wine has run out. And, for me, it's particularly humorous that there's this huge, beautiful secret of which only a few people are aware.

Those people include Jesus' mother and the select servants who help him pull off the miracle that inaugurates his ministry. Servants are normally meant to be inconspicuous, so I wanted to focus on the servant who goes to the chief steward<sup>5</sup> with a cup full of what, as far as he's concerned, is water.

If Jesus—whose ministry has not started, so there haven't been any wonders associated with him yet—tells you to fill jars with water and draw from the jar to give to the chief steward, what is going through your mind at that moment? I invite the viewer to focus on this servant and all his curiosity and expectation, and think of a time when you were surprised by something God did. What actions preceded the miracle? Did it make sense? What did you know, and what was hidden from you? What "secrets" might God be keeping from you now as God works clandestinely on your behalf?

## Look

*Imagine you are the servant in the image. How do you feel as the chief steward tastes from the cup and realizes it is wine?*

<sup>5</sup> Depending on the translation of this text, the "chief steward" could alternatively be referred to as the "master of the feast," "headwaiter," or "person in charge of the banquet."



We Are Small, We Are Numerous, We Are Deep | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell  
11"x14" Acrylic, mustard seed on paper

## First Sunday in Lent

the good news is... so good it catches us by surprise

Read Matthew 13:31-32

Artist Statement | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell

Loose mustard seeds are nearly impossible to contain. They drift and scatter with the slightest breeze, asserting their own unruly will much like the mustard plants themselves. The mustard plant, dismissed as invasive weeds by some, is cultivated for healing and nourishment by others. Even now, after completing this piece, I am still finding stray seeds in my laundry, my car, my hair.

“They tried to bury us; they didn’t know we were seeds,” a line attributed to Greek poet Dinos Christianopoulos,<sup>6</sup> has become a rallying cry for separated families along the Mexican-American border. More than a century earlier, Toussaint Louverture—the formerly enslaved commander of the self-emancipated army of Black cultivators in Saint-Domingue (colonial Haiti)—voiced a similar belief upon his deportation and imprisonment in France: “You have done no more than cut down the trunk of the tree of Black liberty. . . It will spring back from the roots, for they are numerous and deep.”

From the Corn Mother of Indigenous myth to African women braiding okra seeds into their hair as they were forced from their homelands, many of our ancestors understood the power of carrying life in its smallest form. Seed-carrying is an act of faith. These tiny, unassuming specks hold the audacious hope that wherever we go, we already have what we need to take root and flourish in strange and foreign soils. May our faith and our hopes be just as audacious, resilient, and uncontainable as the seeds which hold the fruits of our faith.

## Look

*Pay attention to the textures in the artwork. Notice everywhere you see mustard seeds.*

<sup>6</sup> Dinos Christianopoulos (1931-2020) wrote the couplet in 1978 (published in his book, *The Body and the Wormwood*) as a defiant statement against the Greek literary establishment, which had ostracized him due to his homosexuality.