A Lenten Devotional

Tell me something good

Grounding ourselves in the good news this Lent

Art, reflections, & poetry for the season of Lent

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Lent was originally a season for new converts to learn and prepare for their baptism on Easter. During that time, they would study what was central to Christianity. As we crafted this Lenten devotional, we studied what was central to Jesus' life and ministry: radical welcome, love for neighbor, care for the vulnerable, nourishment for the hungry, nonviolence in the face of injustice. At the heart of Jesus' teachings, we find liberation, love, mercy, and grace—all of which are meant to be very good news for us all.

Jesus' ministry can be described as "radical" which comes from the Latin word "radicalis," meaning "root" or "ground." Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots. Emulating Jesus and embodying his teachings should ground us in who God created us to be. Can we be "good news" people in a world too often burdened by bad news?

This Lent, let us remember that the good news really is good news. It is joyful—like fine wine saved for celebration. It grows like a mustard seed and smells like perfume poured from an alabaster jar. It tastes like bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. The good news is alive in the world.

We invite you to journey through this devotional at your own pace, as each week offers art, reflections, poetry, and hymns to ground you in the good news. This Lent, let the teachings of Jesus lead us forward. May the good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.

Artfully yours,
The Sanctified Art Creative Team

Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed
Hannah Garrity
Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman
Rev. Anna Strickland

About the SA creative team

Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Founder | Creative Director of SA

Lisle Gwynn Garrity *(she/her)* is a Pastorist (pastor + artist) and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. She founded A Sanctified Art with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.

Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Director of Branding | Founding Creative Partner of SA

Lauren *(she/her)* is an artist, graphic designer, and theologian. She uses paint, metallic inks, and Apple pencil to image the layered complexity she experiences in scripture texts. As the Director of Branding, she visually packages, designs, and formats all of the Sanctified Art materials.

Hannah Garrity *Founding Creative Partner of SA*

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Rev. Sarah A. Speed *Founding Creative Partner of SA*

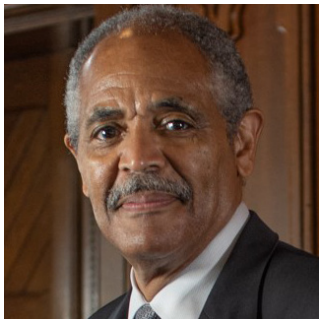
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Rev. Anna Strickland

Creative Partner | Operations Support

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About our guest contributors



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Rev. Nicolette Faison

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Tell me something good

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Tell me something good

Throughout the season, return to these prompts to log all the ways you have experienced, enjoyed, & shared the good news of God.

Good news I have heard and received:

Moments when I have enjoyed the goodness of God:

I have shared the good news by:

Everyday rituals that ground me in goodness:



Ash Wednesday

the good news is... all are invited

The Gospel According to Mrs. Farnell's Pre-K Class

In Pre-K the whole class gets an invite to Tommy's birthday.
He places the paper invites in our cubbies. There's a helter-skelter sticker sealing each one, proof that tiny hands did the work. So we,
the members of Mrs. Farnell's Pre-K class, arrive at the park on Saturday.
We arrive whether or not we've ever built a sandcastle with Tommy.
We arrive whether or not we've ever shared half of our PB&J at lunch.
We arrive at the park on Saturday, with pigtails and balloons,
because we were *invited*.

And together we play tag, and we eat birthday cake, and we run barefoot in the grass.
Together, we sing *Happy birthday to youuuuuu*, so excited we can barely stand still.
Together, we momentarily forget that Chloe never gets picked for Red Rover and that Quinn cried in class last week, because the park is not the playground and everyone was invited.
And when we load into our cars at the end of the day, with grass-stained knees, chocolate frosting on our faces, and the awareness of inclusion, we say to our parents, *This was the best day of my life.*

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Ash Wednesday the good news is... all are invited

Read Luke 14:15-24

Commentary | Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

Let Go of the Ordinary

"Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the reign of God" (Luke 14:15). For the man who makes this proclamation, "anyone" is more expansive than he knows. He is thinking about people like himself—the well-positioned and well-to-do who invite peers to their parties. Persons self-important enough that when they enter they seek the highest seat so that they can be appropriately recognized. This is ordinary social behavior. This is why the householder in Jesus' parable starts out by inviting people like himself. He, too, does the ordinary. And all is well. Until his people decline his fabulous invitation in order to tend to their mundane affairs.

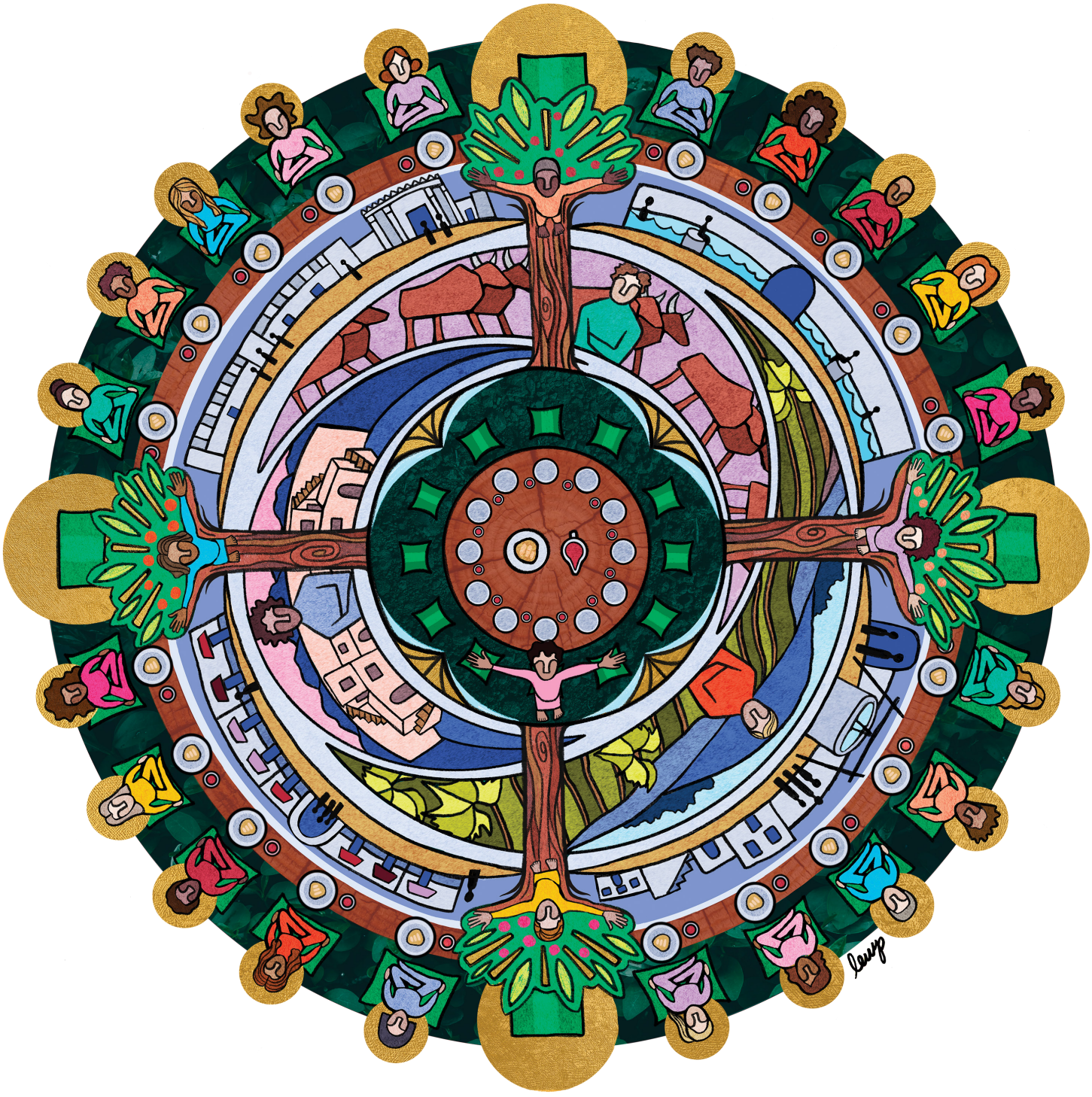
Humiliated, the householder repents of his ordinariness and leans into the extraordinary. He does not invite another lateral group of socialites, or those the next level down on the social ladder. Instead, he extends his welcome to those who have nothing. He declares his intent to share his feast and his company with those whom life has broken: "the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame." The paupers who have been banished from proper community will inherit the bounty that the high and mighty reject.

The reign of God is like that! It redefines the meaning of communal belonging. Ordinarily, the host of a banquet invites and serves the very people who have no need of the banquet's bounty. The extraordinary people who hope to emulate God's transcendent love invite into their company not just those who have, but those who need. They make the broken ones socially whole and physically welcome.

The season of Lent reminds us that God has extended such an extraordinary welcome. To us. In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God, holy beyond all human standing, invited us, in all of our brokenness, into the community of divine presence. Not because we earned a place, but because God created space. Lent offers us the opportunity to remove all the distractions and focus on the invitation. We are the broken. God is the householder. Jesus is the invitation. All we have to do is say "yes."

Reflect

How are you responding to God's invitation this Lent?



There is Still Room | Lauren Wright Pittman

Digital drawing with collage

Ash Wednesday

the good news is... all are invited

Read Luke 14:15-24

Artist Statement | Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

This image is meant to be viewed from the center, moving outward. The host sets a table,[1] with arms stretched wide in welcome. Surrounding this initial invitation, the first invitees form a ring of rejection around the host—arms crossed, closed off, and distracted by their material wealth and status. One surveys their vast vineyard, another counts their livestock, and the third navigates the economics of joining two households.

Trees, rooted in the central scene of the guestless table,[2] break through the ring of rejection. The next layer includes four figures—with the host's same open-armed posture—extending welcome to people in neighborhoods, markets, and communal spaces. In the parable, the initial invitation is cast more broadly; everyone is welcome despite any status or condition that might typically isolate them from community. The invited reject, but the rejected are embraced. In the art, the welcoming branches of the tree bear good fruit.[3] The invitation continues to grow and flourish despite all the worldly barriers that would keep us apart and isolated. In the final ring, a crowd is gathered around an even larger table, one that still has open seats.[4]

It can be easy to focus on what feels negative in this text, but in order for the invitation to truly be an invitation, it cannot be coercive. There must always *be* the option to decline the invitation, and even that is good news. Still, the deeper good news is this: the host never stops inviting, and when all is said and done, there is still room at the table.

Look

Look closely at all the people in the outermost ring of the image. What do you notice about the empty seats?

---

1 The center of the table holds Communion elements, which serve as a nod to the storyteller of the parable and an allusion to Christ's ever-expanding welcome.

2 I placed a photograph of soil as the ground upon which the central table sits. This crumbly dirt texture represents how this open invitation is fertile ground for the good news to take root.

3 The tree is also a visual reference to the *Tell Me Something Good* logo, which includes abstract people forming the branches of a tree.

4 The final green ring holds the texture of the leaves of a healthy, thriving tree.

First Sunday in Lent

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

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 (Are) Speed

the good news is...

so good it catches us by surprise

In a Neat & Tidy Garden

Scan to hear the tune!

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

Words: Anna Strickland (2025) Music: Robert Lowry (1875)



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!



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!

First Sunday in Lent the good news is... so good it catches us by surprise

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 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,[5] 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?

5 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,[6] 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.

6 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.

Second Sunday in Lent

the good news is... great love for God & neighbor

If God Lived Next Door

If God lived next door,
I'd drop off a loaf of bread.
I'd use my mom's best recipe.
I'd wrap it in parchment and ribbon
and place it on the front stoop.
If God lived next door,
I'd leave a note with my phone number.
Call anytime you need anything!
I'm always happy to help!
If God lived next door,
I'd keep sugar on the shelf,
just in case she needed a cup.
I'd put a picnic table in the front yard
and begin taking my coffee there.
Whenever God passed by with their gaggle of rescue dogs,
I could say, *Want to sit for a moment?*
Want to rest your legs?
I'd keep a jar of dog treats and water by the mailbox
and change my doormat to one that says:
All are welcome here.
I'd invite God over for dinner.
She'd bring bread and juice.
I'd host a block party,
so that everyone could meet her.
I'd start a community garden
so that the kids could run between rows of squash and tomatoes
while we adults put our hands in the dirt.
We'd share stories while we weeded,
and eat harvest meals at the end of the season.
If God lived next door,
I'd want to build something beautiful.
Then again,
who says she doesn't?

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

the good news is...

great love for God & neighbor

I Come With My Devotion

ANGEL'S STORY *("O Jesus I Have Promised")*

Scan to hear the tune!

Words: Anna Strickland (2025) Music: Arthur H. Mann (1881)



Second Sunday in Lent the good news is... great love for God & neighbor

Read Luke 7:36-50; Matthew 25:35-40

Commentary | Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

Fierce Love

How fiercely does God love? Let me tell you a Galilean story.

Simon, a Pharisee, a religious man who lives his life according to God's laws, invites Jesus into his home. Customarily, such a host would greet a guest with acts of hospitality: the washing of feet soiled by dusty roadways; an anointing of oil for respite from the heat of the day; a kiss of welcome. Though Simon receives Jesus, he provides no such greeting.

Impertinent and audacious, having heard that the great teacher is in Simon's house, a woman, an unsolicited sex worker, invades the space. Immediately, the Pharisee, a man tasked with conveying God's love to God's people, distances himself from her. From his perspective, the love in which she trafficks, commercially but not virtuously intimate, prohibits her presence. But Jesus graciously allows her to draw near. When she is close, ironically, she offers Jesus the hospitality that Simon had neglected. She washes. She anoints. She kisses.

Scandalized, Simon rebukes Jesus for letting this woman touch him. Disappointed in Simon, Jesus responds with a parable about the extravagance and ferocity of God's love: two people are in debt to a man, just as every one of us is in the debt of sinfulness before God. One debtor owes the man little. The other debtor owes the man much. Ridiculously, the man forgives both of them their debts. Which debtor, Jesus asks, will be the most grateful, will respond to the man with the most love? Of course, it is the man who owed the most.

Simon believes that he owes God much less than this disreputable woman because he has lived a life of holiness and righteousness. Just so, Simon can never know the ferocity of the woman's love for the God who loves her. According to Jesus, God loves her with an extravagance of grace that cancels all her sins just as surely as the creditor expunged his lender's massive debt.

Jesus tells the woman to go in peace. How can she, though, without help? Living on the streets, she finds welcome among those who struggle like her. Forgiven, she now needs the welcome she has shown Jesus to be extended to her by a community of Jesus people—people who recognize that they, too, have been graced by the extravagance of God's fierce, unrelenting love.

Did not Jesus say in Matthew 25 that to welcome him is to welcome those whom the self-righteous have rejected? The hungry. The immigrant. The homeless. The convict. Jesus' church can show Jesus' fierce love by inviting into the intimacy of their faith fellowship those whom others are scandalized by.

By recalling Jesus' journey to the cross, the season of Lent reminds us of God's extravagant love. May this season inspire us to love others just as extravagantly, just as fiercely as God, through Jesus, loves us.

Reflect

Describe an example of extravagant love.



LL Cool J | Nicolette Faison
12”x24” Acrylic, Marker, Paper on Canvas

Second Sunday in Lent

the good news is... great love for God & neighbor

Read Luke 7:36-50

Artist Statement | Rev. Nicolette Faison

Ladies love Cool Jesus. For real. Women absolutely loved Jesus, and the woman with the alabaster jar is a great example of that. Who else shows up to an event unannounced with expensive oils to not only anoint someone's feet but to then offer their tears and use their hair to wipe the feet clean? I don't think people comprehend the drama within that part of the story. This was an act of love, admiration, and prophecy. To me, this interpretation of the story gives the woman the attention she deserves.

When I thought about the theme, *Tell Me Something Good*, I realized I had spent much of my year guest preaching at classic church buildings with stained glass windows which told the parishioners the good news of Jesus. It felt most appropriate to bring the concept of stained glass into my art. Instead of the maximalist collage approach that I often use, I chose to let the paint tell the story. The color choice is both bright and vibrant yet softer than other pieces. I selected the yellow purposely to contrast the purple hair. In an attempt to clearly separate the blue sky glass from the rest of the piece, I layered patterns with a red/pink color scale to make the art pop, emphasizing the distinct glass shapes one could find on a church window.

Several aspects of the piece are deconstructed, such as the woman's head and the foot of Jesus, both detached from bodies. I intentionally emphasize these elements to not distract us from the core of the story. The woman was intimately entwined with the feet of Jesus, her hair entangled with his leg. She released tears that would nourish his toes as the rich oil replenished his skin. To be cared for, to be seen, to be loved, that is something good.

Look

In the artwork, notice how deconstructed details are entwined together. What parts of the image draw your attention the most?



See You | T. Denise Anderson
14”x18” Acrylic on canvas

Second Sunday in Lent

the good news is... great love for God & neighbor

Read Matthew 25:35-40

Artist Statement | Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Throughout Matthew's Gospel, Jesus uses diminutive language to refer to people of importance[7] and describes small, humble things (like sheep, lilies, and sparrows) as precious. He uses a mustard seed in a parable about faith,[8] and tells his disciples to be like children.[9] For Matthew's Jesus, little is a big deal!

For that reason, we should pay attention to Jesus' use of the word "least" in this text. In a book where Jesus talks about little things being loved, the word "least" here takes on new meaning: most loved. Indeed, God loves everyone, but there are certainly those for whom God has a special affinity. As the Confession of Belhar states, "God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged."[10]

As I meditated on this scripture, the image of a doorway kept emerging, perhaps because the text wrestles with the notion of who is in and who is out. This piece shows an excerpt of the text and the word "least" is, ironically, the largest. Next to it is a door that is partially open, and there is some ambiguity intended in that. Is the door being opened or closed? For whom is the door opening or closing? From the viewer's perspective, on what "side" of the door do they find themselves? Are they being invited in or kept out? Are they doing the inviting or the excluding? In the same way Jesus asks the nations to consider where they will be in his eschatological vision, I invite the viewer to consider where they are relative to where God is. Where does the Savior see you? Where does your neighbor see you?

Look

Contemplate the paint drips in the artwork. What meaning or feelings do the words convey to you?

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7 For example: Matthew 11:11, 11:25

8 Matthew 13:31-32

9 Matthew 18:1-14

10 The Belhar Confession is a statement of faith originally professed by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in 1986 during the struggle against apartheid. It has since been adopted by several churches and denominations globally. Read the confession here: pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession



Third Sunday in Lent

the good news is... together, the impossible is possible

Surely, This Must Be It

Everyone has a job. I wash the potatoes, filling the sink with slivers of potato peel. You brine the turkey, hovering by the oven all afternoon. Someone sets the table, taking care to fill a vase with asters and marigolds, sprigs of holly and shoots of evergreen. We play music while we prepare. *"What The World Needs Now is Love"*[11] comes on. We can't get it out of our heads. We whistle along to Dionne all afternoon. And eventually, the doorbell rings.

You've invited the neighbors, the grad student who sits on the second row at church, the widower in the choir. We add seats to the table. We go around the room and share one thing we're grateful for. Eyes prick as we create a laundry list of beauty. The kids get squirmy, but we're grateful for that too.

And then we eat! We scoop whipped potatoes and crisp green beans with fresh garlic. We pass the bread basket, leaving crumbs all over the table. They are tiny reminders of communion in our midst. And at the end of the night, when we walk our guests to the car and carry sleeping children to their car seats, our neighbors say, *What a holy moment it all was.* Surely this must be what heaven feels like. Surely we *can* create it together.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

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11 "What the World Needs Now is Love," lyrics by Hal David, music by Burt Bacharach (Imperial Records, 1965). Dionne Warwick recorded the song in 1966 on her album, *Here Where There Is Love*.

the good news is...

together, the impossible is possible

Human Minds Just Can't Imagine

Scan to hear the tune!

AUSTRIAN HYMN *("God Whose Giving Knows No Ending")*

Words: Anna Strickland (2025) Music: Joseph Haydn (1797)



Third Sunday in Lent the good news is... together, the impossible is possible

Read Mark 6:32-44; Ephesians 3:20-21

Commentary | Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

God Doesn't Start with the Problem

The early days of planting my church, Jubilee,[12] and the early days of motherhood were one and the same for me. They were days when my dreams were coming true—but I wasn't sleeping much.

My call was clear: start a new faith community. In my living room. With the expectation that we would grow to need a bigger space, soon. (*Where would said bigger space be?* Yeah, that was the million-dollars-we-didn't-have question). Every little thing felt so impossible because it was so new. I cannot tell you how many late nights I spent fretting, not just about the liturgy, but how I could make a bulletin for the first time. . . ever. . . and how we'd get it printed, and how to know how many we would need, and where I could get affordable altar linens. We were growing too fast for me to keep up—a wonder! A gift! And! It was all so depleting, this dream-come-true business.

I wonder if that's how the disciples felt. The dreams were coming true! And, a God who makes all things new means. . . *a lot* of new. I picture their eyes popping when Jesus tells them to feed the crowd. I feel my stomach curdle on their behalf as they do the mental math for that much food.

But God does not start with the problem: How do we feed all these people?[13]

God starts with what God has—which is everything, held in her hands. And God also starts with what God has given us—**five loaves, two fish.** With God, all things are possible because God knows that God is always. . . God. It's us who break faith, it's us who listen to scarcity, it's us who fear our own hunger. **Our God is a God of abundance.** However loud the scarcity of the world grates, God delights in feeding the hungry, in accomplishing what we dare not imagine.

I remember one of the first abundance interruptions that salved my scarcity-frantic brain in those early motherhood-and-church-planter days. My in-laws were moving to town (grace upon grace) and my mother-in-law was a lifelong church pianist. Thus far, as much as I wanted music—music, after all, was what nourished *me* most in prayer—we had just done some simple, a cappella, Taizé songs for worship. *It would be so wonderful to have her play*, I thought. *If only I had a keyboard*.

I kid you not. *The moment* I said this half-prayer, half-hope, my neighbor posted on our local "Buy Nothing" group that he was getting rid of a keyboard and needed it gone ASAP.

God doesn't start with the problem. God starts with what we *all* have. That Sunday, we sang "Amazing Grace" while the rafters shook. Turns out, nothing really is impossible with or for God.

Reflect

When has God interrupted your life with abundance?

12 Jubilee Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, founded in 2022. jubileeatx.org
13 With gratitude for the stewardship work of the Rev. Dr. Steven Tomlinson for this idea.



Scarce Abundance | Hannah Garrity
18”x18” Paper lace and watercolor

Third Sunday in Lent

the good news is... together, the impossible is possible

Read Mark 6:32-44

Artist Statement | Hannah Garrity

In this account from Mark, Jesus had compassion.[14] This word, *splagchnizomai* in Greek, comes from the root *splagchnon* (meaning "bowels") which has a sense of a visceral, gut-level form of compassion. It intrigues me that this deep, embodied compassion prompted Jesus to teach.

Leading up to this moment, Jesus is trying to get away, to rest. His disciples row him toward the people; however, he is compelled by compassion to teach. As he is teaching, I imagine the crowd turning to one another—*What did he say?*—repeating his words, passing them along.

In this artwork, the elements of the story are framed in a stained glass window design. Centered, the people gather in circles, passing the scarcely abundant food to one another. Waves encircle the crowd, representing the twelve disciples. The outer architectural elements portray the twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and fish—a representation of abundance from scarcity, powered by collective belief.

Jesus did not have a microphone. It was the people in the front who passed the still, small voice of God back to those behind them. It was the people in the front who passed more than enough food back to those who were hungry. In our propaganda-filled global information system, we must remember: God is not holding the mic. God is present in the still, small voice and in the smallest offerings, multiplying one by one. The message, the compassion, the corners of bread, and the pieces of fish all return in abundance.

Look

In the artwork, waves represent the twelve disciples. Why do you think the artist rendered the disciples this way?

14 Mark 6:34



Far More Abundantly | Lauren Wright Pittman

11”x14” Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper with gold leaf detail

Third Sunday in Lent

the good news is... together, the impossible is possible

Read Ephesians 3:20-21

Artist Statement | Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

I read this Ephesians text alongside the feeding of the five thousand. I placed Jesus at the center of the image,[15] but he did not feed the crowds alone. He asked his disciples to offer what they had. They responded with meager resources, yet those small gifts were enough.

Through the lens of Ephesians, if Jesus were to ask us today what we have to give, our answer would be: *We have the power you have given us to do the impossible.* The same power that turned five loaves and two fish into a feast for thousands—*with leftovers*—empowers us "to accomplish far more abundantly than all we can ask or imagine." Do we allow this truth to settle into our bones and animate our actions?

I'll admit, I tried to avoid this passage because it felt overly optimistic in light of today's world. People still go hungry. Wars rage. The earth groans under our misuse. Yet if we reimagine the systems we created, studies show it is possible for every human being to have what they need.[16] That would require massive restructuring, international cooperation, and the reallocation of resources—but not more than we already possess. We don't need a miracle of multiplication. We simply need to use what we've been given.

In a world convinced of scarcity, this is astonishingly good news. We already have enough. And as my mentor used to say, *"Enough is abundance."* What will we do with this abundance? Is it too lofty to dream of a world that sustains all of life? Perhaps. Yet I believe it is God's own desire that all may have life, and have it abundantly.[17] This is the work before us, accomplished through the power at work within us, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Look

Consider the archway and what it could symbolize. Do you see a table, a tablet, a boat, a door, a tomb—or all of these things or something else?

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15 In the center of the image, Jesus raises his arms and breaks bread. Above Jesus' hands is a mustard seed. Surrounding the baskets are thin line carvings of mustard flowers. Like the seed, we may be small, but we hold so much potential inside of us. Surrounding the archway are twelve baskets of seven loaves or fish which take on the shape of flowers. The number twelve represents community, and seven represents wholeness. When everyone has what they need, the community is whole.

16 globalcommonsalliance.org/news/new-research-reveals-path-to-prosperity-for-planet-and-people-if-earths-critical-resources-are-better-shared/

17 John 10:9-11

Fourth Sunday in Lent

the good news is... protection & care for the vulnerable

Unwritten Agreement

We have this unwritten agreement,
us members of humanity.
When the toddler at the coffee shop runs round the corner,
when her mom, at the register, looks up in panic,
we, the adults in the room, will pledge,
with quick smiles and silent head nods, to keep watch.
We will lean out of our seats.
We will put down our phones.
We will stand at the ready
to scoop up,
to offer words of comfort,
to make silly faces,
to keep an eye on the door.
And we will do this,
because we cannot ignore the instinct to care.
We will do this,
because we cannot ignore the child right in front of us.
We will do this,
because love always includes the least of these.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

the good news is...

protection & care for the vulnerable

See the Precious Children

Scan to hear the tune!

BEACH SPRING *("As We Gather at Your Table")*

Words: Anna Strickland (2025) Music: B. F. White (1844)



See the pre-cious chil-dren seat-ed on the lap of Christ our Lord
See the pre-cious wi-dowed wo-men glean-ing har-vests from the field
See the pre-cious for-eign stran-gers as they car-ry all they own
See the pre-cious dis-poss-essed ones ask-ing for some food to eat
See the pre-cious world im-pov-erished by our ma-lice and our greed



Called the great-est in the king-dom, held so gent-ly and a-dored They
Then re-turn-ing to their kit-chen to pre-pare their dai-ly meal They
To a land that's full of dan-gers for the pow-er-less and prone They
Sleep-ing un-der star-ry heav-ens, dai-ly liv-ing on the streets They
Hu-mans, a-ni-mals, and pla-net cry-ing out for some re-lief We're



are pre-cious in the sight of God who made each ti-ny toe In their
are pre-cious in the sight of God who holds their bro-ken hearts In their
are pre-cious in the sight of God who made their home-land, too In their
are pre-cious in the sight of God who loves them as a child In their
all pre-cious in the sight of God who made each ho-ly thing In our



weak-ness they're held by love as each day they learn and grow
sor-row they're held by love that re-deems each fra-gile part
jour-ney they're held by love as they start each day a-new
hun-ger they're held by love as they guard their hu-man pride
liv-ing we're held by love as we care for ev-ery being

Fourth Sunday in Lent the good news is... protection & care for the vulnerable

Read Matthew 19:13-15; Deuteronomy 24:17-22

Commentary | Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

For the Children

For children, we would do anything. Children are the closest thing to a miracle in most of our modern human lives. They are blessings we indulge with the best of our energy, support, protection, attention, and acceptance. We not only welcome them into our company—we make them the center of our attention. We watch what they do. Marvel at how they grow. Attend to what they say.

It was not always so. In Jesus' time, in the company of adults, particularly adults with a sacred agenda, children were an invasive distraction. Humble in both physical stature and emotional maturity, children occupied one of the lowest rungs of social status. Leaders like Jesus were not expected to climb down to their level, and parents ought not to presume lifting them up into his presence. That was the attitude of Jesus' disciples. They mirrored the ethos of their time when Jesus so desperately wanted them to challenge it—by treating children the way they would treat him.

Earlier, Matthew 18:1-5 records an incident where Jesus warns that only those who humble themselves like children will receive entry into the reign of God. He follows up that startling revelation with the even more striking declaration that in welcoming the lowly child, one welcomes Jesus himself. Just a brief time later in Matthew 19:13-15, the disciples attempt to bodyguard Jesus, pushing away every child in range of Jesus' sacred space. In rejecting the children, they are rejecting Jesus.

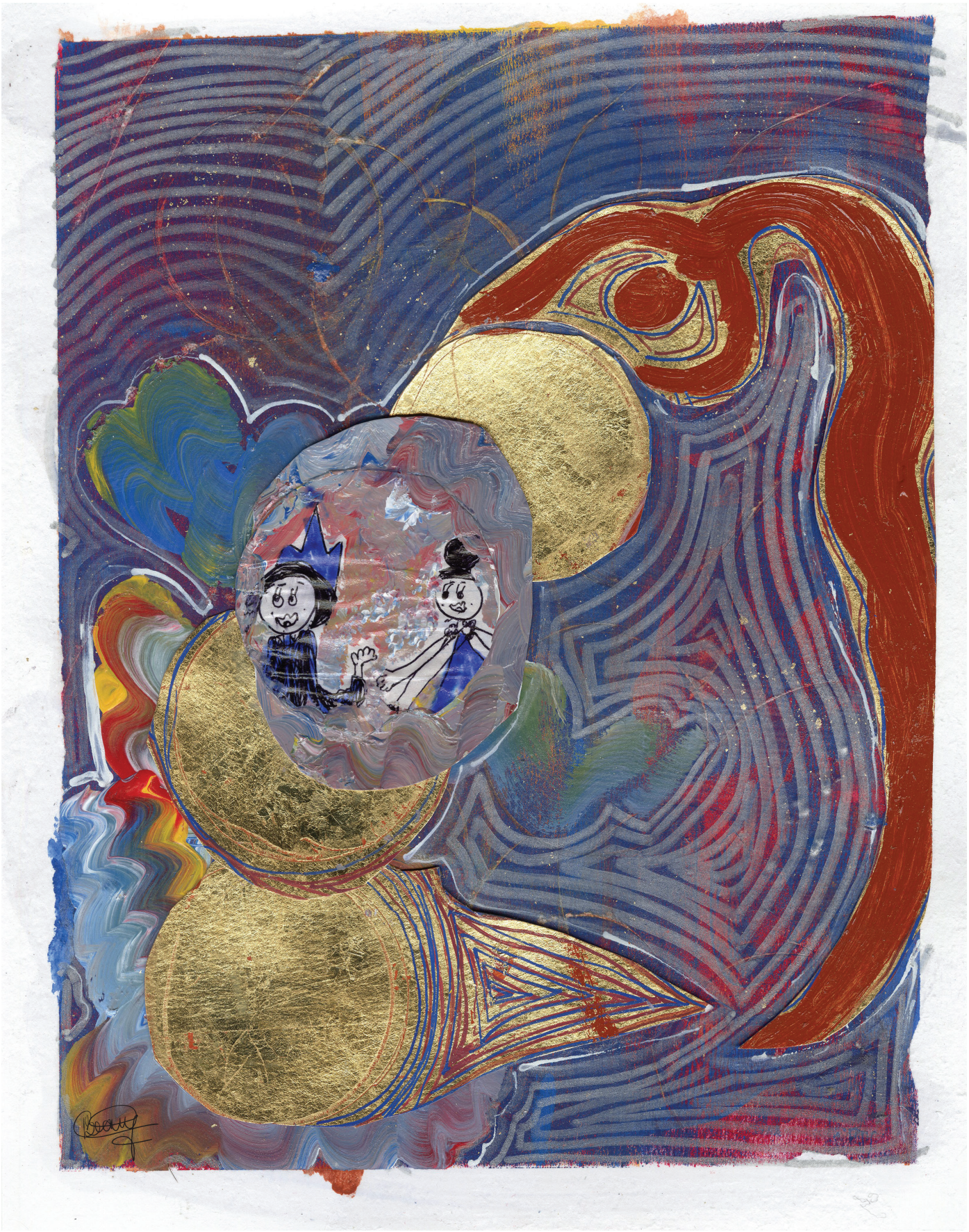
So Jesus rebukes, not the parents and their children, but his dull disciples. They refuse to entertain the radical truth about God's reign that Jesus is trying so desperately to teach them. The reign of God belongs to children and everyone who, like children, is not granted polite society's respect and acceptance.

The children, then, are a metaphor for all who lack societal status, who so-called decent folk find distasteful and undesirable. The migrant worker. The immigrant. The alien. The homeless. The powerless. The undocumented. Harking back to Deuteronomy 24:17-22, where God commands the people to care for the socially downtrodden because they themselves had been beaten down in Egypt, Jesus issues a clear, if not controversial, command for his followers. They are to live as an *ekklesia*, a "church." And this church is to exist in this world as a refuge of radical welcome.

In this season of Lent, the good news is that God, through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, extends the same radical welcome even to us. Because we are all lowly sinners, we are all unworthy of acceptance in God's reign. And yet, God promises to receive us as if heaven is our home. Jesus wants his church to offer the same hospitality—to greet those of the lowest stature with the grandest welcome.

Reflect

What's one way your church or community can extend radical welcome?



Let the Little Children Come | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell
11”x14” Acrylic, gold leaf, pen, on paper

Fourth Sunday in Lent

the good news is... protection & care for the vulnerable

Read Matthew 19:13-15

Artist Statement | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell

For my little niece, Angelina, whose art rests at the heart of this composition, and in whose joy we glimpse the Kingdom of God—alongside her sisters, Angelika and Ariana.

At the center of this work is a drawing made by my five-year-old niece, Angelina. I watched her joyfully scribble it in under three minutes, churning out drawing after drawing and handing each one to me with an eager smile. In this piece, she first drew a self-portrait (her wearing a crown), then graciously decided to include me (taking some creative liberties in giving me a third arm!). I imagine the scene in Matthew 19: toddlers wailing, little ones slipping from their parents' arms, parents offering apologetic glances toward the frowning disciples as the scene around Jesus grows increasingly disorderly and loud. Those of us who've participated in group infant baptisms and baby dedications (when one cries, the chain reaction begins!), have led children's sermon moments with restless kids squirming about, or had the joy of watching our little ones participate in a kids' choir performance that goes delightfully rogue, can easily relate.

The disciples, feeling the weight of being seen as serious leaders alongside their rabbi, Jesus, may have tried to preserve a sense of reverence by shooing away the parents bringing their children to him. Yet here, Jesus reorients his disciples (and us) away from the illusion of control and reminds us that it is the joyful, unruly, sincere presence of a child to whom the kingdom truly belongs. Just a chapter earlier, in Matthew 18, Jesus tells his followers that unless they become like little children, they will not even enter the kingdom. Surely the disciples thought Jesus couldn't mean that literally—right?

While I've been busy making art, Angelina has been busy *being* an artist. I surely could learn a thing or two from her about inheriting the kingdom.

Look

Contemplate the gold shapes in the image. What do they represent to you?



Fuera ICE | Nicolette Faison

16”x20” Acrylic, marker, paper on canvas

Fourth Sunday in Lent

the good news is... protection & care for the vulnerable

Read Deuteronomy 24:17-22

Artist Statement | Rev. Nicolette Faison

They keep taking my neighbors. Chicago and other cities associated with the Democratic party are going through a humanitarian crisis under a fascist regime. Cars are being left vacant on random blocks and parking lots. People are being disappeared while their children are being zip-tied at 3 a.m. We clergy and religious leaders have been shot with pepper spray and rubber bullets while demanding the freedom of our neighbors. No one deserves to live like this. This piece does not truly capture the pain I hold every day, between keeping track of what is happening in Gaza, resisting fascism, and dealing with yet another economic collapse under capitalism.

But let me tell you something good. . . I still believe in humanity. When I watched people in Gaza prepare basic meals to break their fastduring Ramadan during a genocide, I saw something good. When local neighbors saw our public vigil for disappeared people and chose to join us for a time of lament, I saw something good. When Colin Kaepernick paid for the independent autopsy of one of the Black men recently lynched,[18] I saw something good. The good is people still choosing to be empathetic and compassionate in times of crisis. That is what Christ calls us to be.

The stranger who enters foreign land is often forced to flee their own home. It is rare for people to risk their entire livelihood and their family for anything other than necessity. For that reason, each portrait has a halo deeming them holy, sacred, and divine. I used sparkling gold paper to break up each distinct image. Look deeply at these portraits. The top left is inspired by the Maasai people, a nomadic group that dwells across borders. The top right image is an indigenous woman and her child, a nod to Mary and Jesus. She has a red palm across her mouth which is a tribute to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and "Two-Spirit" people. The bottom left is a slightly aging man from Mesoamerica. The bottom right is a woman in hijab, which is commonly targeted in Islamophobic spaces. Look at the people some consider to be a threat. Look at our neighbors. Migrants are sacred. Fuera ICE.[19]

Look

Look deeply at each portrait. What do you feel as you study each face?

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18 usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2025/09/19/colin-kaepernick-independent-autopsy-trey-reed/86244594007

19 "Fuera" can be translated to "out" or "away." ICE is an acronym for the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, whichbegan enacting raids in US cities at the time these resources were created (2025).

Fifth Sunday in Lent

the good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, & faithfulness

The Things That Matter Most

I wrecked the family car, an old gold minivan
that had traveled every inch of I-95. It had worn cushions
and an old school map in the glove box.
It held a folder full of mix CDs under the passenger seat
and every memory of every family trip,
and I wrecked it.
I called the tow truck while the engine
hissed and smoked. I called my dad,
my own apologies tripping over themselves
to get to the front of the line.
I expected to be grounded.
I expected a *"How could you?"*
But when I got home that night,
my dad held me close and said,
"A car is just a car, but you are my child.
The only thing that matters is that you are okay."
And I knew it for what it was.
It was mercy. It was love.
It was the thing that mattered most.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Let Us Remember

ADELAIDE *("Have Thine Own Way")*

Scan to hear the tune!

Words: Anna Strickland (2025) Music: George C. Stebbins (1907)



Fifth Sunday in Lent the good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, & faithfulness

Read John 8:2-11; Matthew 23:23

Commentary | Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail

The Inconvenience of Mercy

The inconvenience of mercy is that it's hardly ever merited.

But good grief, does Jesus talk ad nauseam about mercy in the Bible; perhaps most famously telling his disciples—to their great chagrin—they must forgive their siblings seventy-seven times for the same sin (Matthew 18:21-22). He calls the merciful blessed in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:7). And then there are his words as he is dying, on a cross, surrounded by criminals and his weeping mother and the mob that lynched him: "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). In John 8:2-11, he embodies mercy with a woman whom I am rather inclined to think has received little mercy in her life, but that's my own protective instincts kicking in for women in patriarchal places. It's entirely possible she "deserves" little of what Jesus is offering her.

Mercy—unmerited, inadvisably offered, and brimming with foolish hope—is the making of a Christ-follower.

It's not that I think practicing mercy is particularly easy.

I doubt Jesus would talk so much about forgiveness and mercy if it were easy—God tends to repeat what we struggle to listen to. No, mercy is brutal.

Mercy is what we ask for when we have messed up so mightily in our relationships, our marriages, our parenting, our friendships, that we face either the death of that relationship or the death of who we thought we were. Perhaps this is the kind of death this woman had experienced in her home, and the anger of the crowd was merely reflective of how hurt they were to see a home torn apart. Maybe she had been dealt a death-dealing marriage and was looking for escape. How dare she, then, receive. . . mercy?

And yet, mercy makes no sense. It is not logical, or equally beneficial. Mercy does not make us money or make us look good. But mercy is what makes us God's own.

The receiving and extending of mercy in the most awful and improbable of places is what makes me know that God is still at work in this world. **Mercy is a practice of hoping and knowing that there is *more* than the thing that hurts us—more than the thing that haunts us.**

This, too, is how mercy is part of God's justice, for God's justice is God's joy. God's

justice does not align with our human metrics of justice and punishment. God's justice is the delight God feels at the lost sheep coming home, the coin being found. God's goodness is not retributive. God's goodness is rooted in goodness propagating in the face of death.

Which is, perhaps, why Jesus tells her: *Go. Sin no more. And live.*

Reflect

Recount a time when you received mercy. How did it feel?



Epilogue | T. Denise Anderson
14”x18” Acrylic on canvas

Fifth Sunday in Lent

the good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, & faithfulness

Read John 8:2-11

Artist Statement | Rev. T. Denise Anderson

I often wonder about the backstory of the woman from John 8:2-11. What were her circumstances? How did they "catch" her in the act of adultery? *In flagrante delicto?*[20] Was it less graphic than that? Was she allowed to explain herself? Did she protest? If she was about to be stoned, what happened to the person with whom she was accused? Was this a loving relationship? Was it even consensual?

Whatever her story, the Pharisees bring her to Jesus expecting him to uphold the law's punitive prescription. Jesus knows it's a trap. If he concurs with the law, he initiates and must bear witness to an act of extreme brutality that would traumatize anyone who had to watch. If he counters the law, he's a heretic and should probably be stoned himself. But he outsmarts them and turns their self-righteousness and rage back onto them.

In what should have been the end of her life's story, this woman now finds herself standing. Whole. Alive. Freed to a new future. And through it all, Jesus is just drawing on the ground—like you do!

I wanted to show this woman standing in her wholeness, right after the crowds have dispersed and right before Jesus rises to meet her as an equal. She's backlit in a way that suggests the sun has set, indicating the end of a saga. What will she do at the end of a nightmare with a new life ahead of her? What decisions do we face at the dawn of a second chance?

Look

Contemplate the woman in the image. What do you imagine is her backstory? What do you dream for her future?

20 This is a Latin phrase often used in legal contexts that can be translated to: "in the very act of committing an offense."



There is Good | Hannah Garrity

18”x18” Hand-dyed and collaged newspaper with paper lace overlay

Fifth Sunday in Lent

the good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, & faithfulness

Read Matthew 23:23

Artist Statement | Hannah Garrity

In this series of scriptures, gathered crowds drew my attention.[21] Jesus always drew a crowd, but so did the voices of hate in his time. In our current historic moment, this dichotomy of crowds for justice and crowds for injustice confounds me. Are all crowds worthy of joining? In the background of this piece, I dyed and collaged together torn newspaper, representing the fabric of the world, to portray the cacophony of crowds gathering. What is drawing them in? Is everything that compels us to gather right and good? No.

The clarity comes in this scripture: "For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23). Most especially, in the context of Jesus denouncing the scribes and Pharisees, the crucial point is that gathering to enact justice *is* good and gathering to enact injustice *is not*.

The crowd depicted in this artwork is inspired by the 100,000 who gathered strong in Budapest, Hungary, in June, 2025. The Hungarian parliament had outlawed Pride as part of a larger systemic effort to take away the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community in Hungary, and a "wider effort to curb democratic freedoms ahead of a hotly contested national election next year."[22]

In the four corners of the artwork, symbols of justice, mercy, and faithfulness echo the clarity of Jesus. Gathering for justice *is* the work of the gospel.

Look

If you could place yourself in this image, where would you be and why?

21 In Matthew 23, Jesus is preaching to the crowds and disciples, denouncing the hypocrisy of many religious leaders.

22 Rutai, Lili. "Tens of thousands defy Hungary's ban on Pride in protest against Orbán." *The Guardian*. June 28, 2025. theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/28/tens-of-thousands-defy-hungarys-ban-on-pride-in-protest-against-orban.

For the Sake of Tiny Resurrections

We took the kids to the beach,
a herd of children lathered
in sunscreen.
We spent most of the day building
sandcastles,
swimming in the shallows,
wiping sand off their eyelashes
and noses.
Things changed
when a small fish washed up
on shore.

The children saw it first—
a little body gasping to survive.
They cried out—
Quick! We have to save it!
We grabbed our buckets.
We sprinted to the waterline.
We scooped up the dying fish
and returned it to the waves.

The kids sagged with relief
as the fish jolted to life,
a tiny resurrection in front of
our very eyes.
Full of pride, I said to them—
You did something good.
Today, you saved a life.
A seven-year-old with
sun-kissed cheeks
took the bucket from my hands
and said,
I'd like to save some more.

He spent the afternoon patrolling
the waves,
hoping to dole out mercy to any
shore-washed fish.
He carried his bucket around
all day, because
love inspires love.
Love will make you want to
patrol the shoreline,
sing *Hosanna,*
witness a resurrection,
save some more—
one bucket of water at a time.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Palm / Passion Sunday the good news is... inspiring us to act

Read Mark 11:1-11

Commentary | Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

You Better Recognize!

You better recognize! You better pay attention and respond as if lives depend on it.

Attend to the truth: Jesus is Lord. The prophet Malachi (3:1) declares that the Lord whom the people seek will suddenly come to the Temple. As Jesus does. Entering Jerusalem, in word and deed, he identifies himself as Lord. He has prophetic foreknowledge about the location and state of a colt. He possesses the regal authority to requisition that colt for his royal purpose.

At Passover, pilgrims were expected to walk into the city. No doubt Jesus' followers expected him to do exactly that, since he always walked wherever he went. This time, he chooses instead to ride the kind of colt a king in a processional would ride, one that had never before been ridden. In so doing, he brings to realization the prophecy of Zechariah: *Your king, Jerusalem, comes to you triumphant, riding on a colt* (Zechariah 9:9).

Appropriately, the people respond. The disciples throw their cloaks onto the colt. Their draping is a makeshift throne. The people suddenly crowded around Jesus follow suit. Jettisoning their cloaks onto the ground along with leafy branches, they lay before him a makeshift red carpet. And they sing the Hosanna of the Hallel Psalms[23] (see Psalm 118:25) that celebrates the coming of their Davidic King.

Jesus is that King. But in an astonishing way. We know that he is ultimately on his way to the cross. His kingship, symbolized by his station upon a humble colt, is one of sacrifice and service. And yet, as Lord, he is not a helpless victim. He is in charge. He is working out God's plan in this demonstration of royal authority. Even in the process of letting go of his life, he is in charge of the liberation of God's people. He puts our lives before his own life.

Our calling, having recognized Jesus' Lordship, is to emulate his regal imperative. To live our lives as he lived his, in service to—and perhaps even in sacrifice for—the lives of God's people.

Reflect

How might we emulate Jesus through acts of service and sacrifice?

23 Psalms 113-118 are known as the Hallel (meaning "praise") Psalms. They are often recited for significant holidays like Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, and Hanukkah.



Palm Sunday Was a Protest | Nicolette Faison
12”x24” Acrylic, marker, paper on canvas

Palm / Passion Sunday
the good news is... inspiring us to act

Read Mark 11:1-11

Artist Statement | Rev. Nicolette Faison

Palm Sunday Was a Protest is a sister piece to *LL Cool J* in that the inspiration was also stained glass. Unlike *LL Cool J*, *Palm Sunday Was a Protest* contains a bit more detail emphasizing the hectic energy that is found in movements. Each segment is meant to capture the eye but the central subjects are in black and white, contrasting the brilliant color palette.

The order of colors is intentionally a rainbow as a nod to the Queer community. The piece contains a sunrise behind the iconic Palm Sunday donkey, which is an ode to the Sunrise Movement.[24] Accompanying the donkey are crowds of people with fists raised in the air, a common sight at any protest. The phrase, "No Justice, No Peace" sits around a "power to the people fist" symbolizing resistance. This symbol was first utilized by labor and liberation movements in the early 1900s. I personally associate the fist with the Black Power movement of the 1960s. Along the bottom of the piece, the grassroots of the image, are palms, a nod to the biblical story.

Palm Sunday Was a Protest is an ode to modern movements. This piece visually aligns how Palm Sunday is talked about with the active work happening today. Resist fascism. Resist occupation. Do justice.

Look

As you scan the image, notice the contrast between vibrant colors and black and white. What does this contrast convey to you?

24 The Sunrise Movement received increased attention at the end of the 2010s into the 2020s as a movement for young people committed to stopping climate change. sunrisemovement.org

Maundy Thursday

the good news is... even Judas gets his feet washed

If You Hear Nothing Else, Then Hear This:

You can make a fool of yourself.
You can bet on the wrong thing,
lose it all, unravel people's trust.
You can laugh at a funeral,
curse in a church, say the wrong thing
at the wrong time, *every time*.
You can lose yourself in a bottle,
a relationship, a false sense of security.
You can uncover prejudice
and wrestle with the shame of it all.
You can withhold an apology,
blame it on someone else,
tell yourself it's not your fault.
You can trade in love
for a bag of coins.
And even then,
even still,
even now,
Jesus will love you enough to
wash your feet.
If you hear nothing else in the gospel,
hear this.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Maundy Thursday the good news is... even Judas gets his feet washed

Read John 13:1-35

Commentary | Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail

He Loved Them to the End

"Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). Jesus' mercy is not just unmerited—it is *scandalous*. I would much rather reflect on how Jesus is with us in times of trial. How Jesus walks with us when we are in the valley of the shadow of death. It's not that I relish being in said valley of the shadow of death. It's that, when I am grieving, or struggling, or clearly a victim, the mercy of Jesus feels. . . soothing. But Jesus' mercy is not just confined to clean, easily identifiable victims. Jesus steps right into the traumatic muck of betrayal, and sin, and corruption, and says: *Even here, at the end, I love you.*

Judas should have been cancelled.

Instead, Jesus says clearly: "One of you will betray me" (John 13:21). As Judas knows he is the traitor, Jesus kneels at Judas's feet and washes them clean.

There is some theater to this, of course; it calls to mind the work done by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the students who participated in sit-ins at Woolworth's during the US Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 60's. They would strategically select places known to be the worst for racist violence, invite the public eye to watch, and wait for the absurdity of this evil to play out—so that all could see it for its absurdity and evil. I have no doubt God is the original architect of this kind of Theatre of the Oppressed.[25]

Jesus is not just performing; he is extending genuine mercy. All confrontational nonviolence done in Jesus' name invites the oppressor to be human again, not through dehumanizing power, but through the humility of our interdependence on each other. It is both unsurprising and devastating that, after his feet have been washed, Judas still runs to betray his Lord—just as it remains unsurprising and devastating when our enemies and oppressors do the same. But Jesus—truly human, and truly God—knew this would happen.

And he washes Judas's feet, anyway.

Reflect

Imagine you are Judas; how does it feel to have your feet washed?

25 Theatre of the Oppressed uses theater as a tool for social and political activism. Originally created by Brazilian theater director and activist Augusto Boal, it is a participatory art form intended to inspire transformation.



Flow | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell
11”x14” Acrylic on paper

Maundy Thursday

the good news is... even Judas gets his feet washed

Read John 13:1-35

Artist Statement | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell

The last time I washed another person's feet was ten years ago while interning at First United Methodist Church of Miami. For more than thirty years, First Church has hosted the Breakfast Club—a ministry of shared meals, fellowship, and worship with the unhoused community in downtown Miami. One of its most meaningful traditions is the Breakfast Club's annual foot washing event, a practice that has become a radical act of faith and service. It has drawn local attention, not for its novelty but for its reciprocity—modeling a kind of fellowship that resists the tendency to "other" those who express need.

Knowing what would come next, I often wondered what it must have been like for the disciples to watch Jesus wash Judas's feet. None of us is too great or too small to receive grace. Even the water—swirling with dust and surrender—becomes a witness to transformation.

To wash one another's feet—even those whom society deems "untouchable"—is an act of profound grace. There is deep vulnerability and intimacy in holding someone's feet in your hands, and in allowing another to hold yours. The practice of foot washing remains, for me, one of the most meaningful expressions of Christian faith I have ever participated in.

Look

What do the red lines in the image represent to you? How do you feel seeing the water flow over them?

Good Friday

the good news is... revealed through nonviolence

Love & Love & Love Again

If you back a cat into a corner
she'll arch her back,
show her teeth,
hiss in your direction.
If you back a human into a corner,
we'll raise our fists,
raise our voices,
throw words of hate in your direction.
But when we backed Jesus into a corner,
he said, *Forgive them, for they know not what they do.*
He turned and looked at Peter, love in his eyes.
He offered grace to the criminal hanging beside him.
When we backed Jesus into a corner,
he loved and loved and loved again.

In this war-torn world,
we could do the same.
We could ground the bomber planes,
empty the gun cartridges,
unclench our fists, soften our jaws.
They say it can't be done,
but don't believe them.
In this war-torn world, we could try—
love and love and love again.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Good Friday the good news is... revealed through nonviolence

Read Luke 22:47-53; Luke 23:33-38, 44-46

Commentary | Rev. Dr. Brian Blount

Nonviolent Resistance

The Son of Man is on a mission—to resist the powers, human and otherwise, that foment injustice and tolerate brokenness. He speaks for the poor, advocates for release of the imprisoned, grants vision to the blind, and champions the oppressed.[26]

Judas betrays Jesus, and his emancipatory mission, with a kiss that signals to the authorities: *he is the one you seek!* He is the one whose ministry resists the human inclination to legitimize the diminishment of society's most vulnerable through laws and glorified traditions. Consistently, defiantly, furiously—but always nonviolently—Jesus challenged those laws, even the Sabbath law,[27] and reframed many traditions[28] whenever those laws and traditions were treated as more important than delivering wholeness, healing, and liberation to shattered human lives.

Jesus' defiance made him a marked man. The authorities sought his arrest, but feared apprehending him publicly lest the people he fought for rise up in his defense. So, with Judas's treachery, they seize him secretly. In the chaos of the moment, forgetting the nonviolence Jesus has modeled, his disciples ready their weapons. One even swings his sword and cuts off the ear of an arresting official. Immediately, Jesus reminds his people that they fight with words, ideas, and vision. To press the point, he touches the wounded officer and heals him. The power of God that Jesus represents shows care even for the oppressor—even as Jesus uses God's power to overturn systems of oppression.

Dying on the cross, Jesus reinforces his message of nonviolent resistance in the most heartbreaking of ways. As the authorities crucify him for proclaiming and prosecuting the hope of liberation for all God's people, Jesus asks God to forgive them. To the end, he fights them by loving them.

Our calling is to go and do likewise.[29] Fight: Consistently. Defiantly. Furiously. Nonviolently. Whenever and wherever we encounter brokenness, injustice, and oppression. To do otherwise is to betray everything for which he lived and died.

Reflect

What might it look like to fight injustice with "words, ideas, and vision"?

26 Luke 4:16-21
27 Luke 6:1-11
28 Luke 5:12-39
29 Luke 10:37



Revealed through Nonviolence | Lauren Wright Pittman

11”x14” Gouache & colored pencils on paper

Good Friday
the good news is... revealed through nonviolence

Read Luke 22:47-53; Luke 23:33-38, 44-46

Artist Statement | Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Creating this image[30] was overwhelming. I sought to capture Jesus' nonviolent response to relentless violence. As I considered each moment of his journey to the cross, I felt despondent. I know how hard it is to resist the reactive urge that courses through me even experiencing mild forms of violence. How much more difficult then for Jesus to endure such dehumanizing acts? Was he stripped so completely of his humanity that only divinity remained—and even that restrained from retribution?

Begin at the center with Judas's kiss—intimate, subversively violent. Follow the sword behind Judas[31] to the top left: a disciple fiercely defends Jesus, while to his right, the high priest's slave screams after his ear is cut. Jesus reproves the violence and heals the servant.

Moving clockwise, a man—representing the chief priests and temple police—points an accusatory finger, wielding the authority to kill an innocent man. To his right, a man crafts Jesus' cross, quietly sustaining the violence of the status quo. Below him, an opportunist casts lots for Jesus' clothes, while a leader laughs at the impossibility that the Messiah will save himself. Finally, in the bottom left, a man offers Jesus sour wine in a moment of deep thirst—physical and spiritual.

At the heart of it all is Jesus, tearful, looking at us. His halo shines, revealing the many faces of violence around him. From the foundation of his steady posture grows an olive tree. Its branches extend beyond his clothing, reaching out to embrace those around him.

Through his nonviolent stance, the truth of a violent world is revealed. And in that truth, the good news of peace finds soil in which to take root, to grow, and to flourish.

Look

Allow your eyes to follow the olive tree as it weaves through the composition and touches each figure. What meaning do you glean from the olive tree?

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30 This composition is inspired by *Vivir en Comunión* ("Living in Communion") by Maximino Cerezo Barredo (1932-), a mural in La Paz, Granada, Spain. View the art here: instagram.com/p/DLFqUWgxx-i/

31 The sword references Judas's backstabbing act of betrayal.



Easter Sunday
the good news is... alive in the world

Birdsong

Every morning the sun rises,
majestic and steady.
She is greeted
in all her strength
with the joyous cacophony of birdsong.
I like to believe
this holy chorus
is the birds telling each other—
I'm here.
We made it through the night.
You're not alone.
What good, good news.
I think the resurrection is a bit like that.
God is here.
We made it through the night.
We are not alone.
What good, good news.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Easter Sunday the good news is... alive in the world

Read Matthew 28:1-10

Commentary | Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail

How Can We Trust Resurrection?

I wonder why Jesus told them not to be afraid.

He's here, he's *here*! He is alive and death is vanquished—except, of course, the ones who killed him are. . . also here.

Jesus saunters out of that tomb, revealing anew and again and for the first time all at once what it means for God to defeat death. He tells his beloved friends, Mary, and "Mary the Tower" (Mary of Magdala),[32] to go to Galilee. To tell his brothers he's coming, to go back to where it all started, where the sea is salty and blue and the fish are fresh, and the waters can wash away these terrible, haunting dreams of whips and cock crows.

And yet, Jesus says: "Do not be afraid,"—just as God has said more than any other phrase in the whole Bible. Maybe Jesus says this because he knows his friends are afraid of God, of all God can do—they were, after all, fleeing the tomb with excitement and fear. Maybe Mary and the women know now more fully *their* Jesus really is. . . Emmanuel. Really *is* God—whose feet they have washed and dinners they have cooked, a friend they have teased.

But perhaps, too, they are afraid because the people who scorned Jesus and told him to save himself are still here, too. The soldiers who mocked him with vinegar, taunting to call down Elijah are here, too. Pontius Pilate still reigns.

How can we trust resurrection when death is on the world's throne?

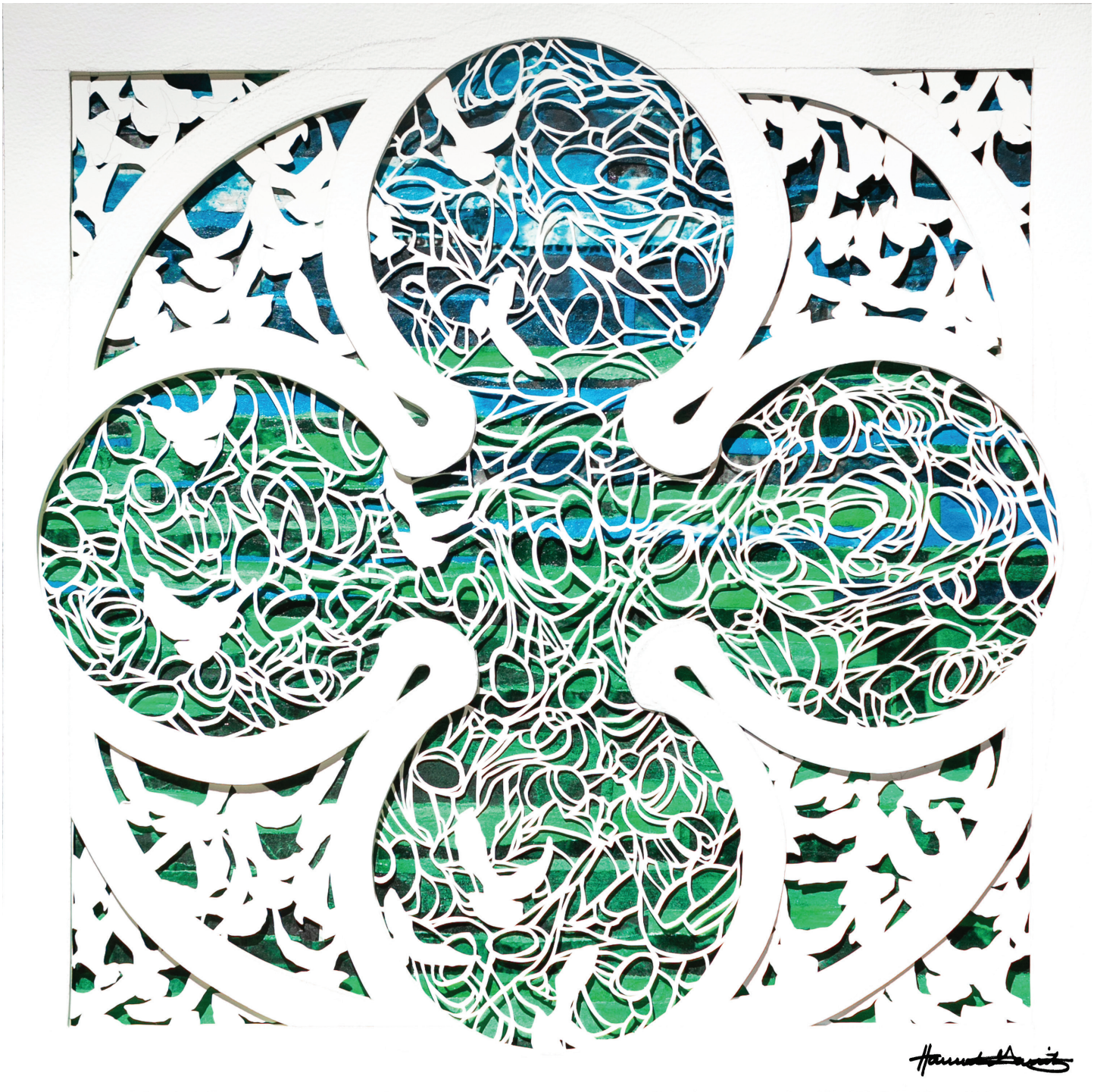
Because Jesus knows what we will always need to be reminded of: the good news is greater than any tyrant. **The good news of God is more alive than anything that tries to kill God, more alive than anything that tries to kill the *imago dei* in all of us.** Kings come and kings go, and we may tremble still—but God? God shakes the earth with power and might so tender and so fresh it can make a tomb bloom with new life.

Amen, alleluia.

Reflect

What might it look like to fight injustice with "words, ideas, and vision"?

32 American Biblical scholar Elizabeth Schrader uses the name "Mary the Tower" for Mary Magdalene. You can learn more about her research in this sermon by Diana Butler Bass: dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/mary-the-tower



Meet Me in Galilee | Hannah Garrity

18x18" Hand-dyed and collaged newspaper with paper lace overlay

Easter Sunday
the good news is... alive in the world

Read Matthew 28:1-10

Artist Statement | Hannah Garrity

The good news is alive in the world. Do not be afraid. Go back to Galilee. Go back to Galilee where it all started. Go back to Galilee and celebrate like we did at the beginning when we were not afraid, when these words of liberation had not yet drawn the trappings of imperial execution.

Here in this artwork, the crowd is celebrating. Figures are dancing and dancing and dancing. Doves fly among the dancers, breaking borders, Holy Spirit. This throng is in the vacant space of the empty cross. The cross here is mirroring the traditional, four-petaled, stained-glass window design element, which has long represented the cross in European architecture.

The crowd dancing within the cross celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, fearlessly awaiting his arrival in Galilee. The Roman weapon of oppression, the cross, inflicts but a pause in the steadfast and abiding ministry of revolutionary love offered by Jesus in his public ministry. It is fitting then that we should go back to the place it began, when fear was not such a lethal factor. God has overcome death. Hallelujah!

Around the dancing figures in Galilee, patterns of doves disperse outward. The good news, the *euaggelion*, is alive in the world. Do you remember? The cross is empty, yet full. Overcome. Go and you will find Jesus, free in the world in the faces of strangers and neighbors.

Look

Study the figures in the crowd. What postures and expressions do you see? What emotions do you feel?

Start With a Wedding

Inspired by the Gospel of John's celebratory beginning.

When it comes time to write my obituary for the local paper, please do not start with my résumé. Do not start with my career or my worldly accomplishments *(however small they may be)*. Do not take up space writing about my alma mater or outlining the *entire* family tree *(we know who we are)*. Instead, spend your precious little word count on how beautiful it all was. Write about the dinner parties and the fireside chats. Write about the evenings we spent on the front stoop counting fireflies. Write about summers in the mountains and the garden that we grew. Write about the seasons we cried out to God, and the prayers that God answered. Write about the nights we danced, and the days we laughed. When it comes time to tell the story of my life, please take a lesson from the Gospel of John, and start with a wedding. Start with a miracle. Start with the fact that all of it held joy.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

"Go to Galilee" Journaling Prompts

In Matthew's Gospel, the resurrected Jesus tells the women at the tomb: "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matthew 28:10). Looking back, we began the Lenten season in Galilee with Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana. As you reflect on the Lenten season and move into Eastertide, use any of the following prompts to journal:

- What *good, good news* do you cling to today?
- What feels alive in you?
- Where is God dancing, creating, and moving us toward goodness in the world?
- Read the poem, *Start With A Wedding*, by Rev. Sarah Speed. What memories and stories would you want included in your obituary to tell a story of joy?

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

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