

Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, February 22, 2026

“The Good News Is... So Good, It Catches Us By Surprise”

Young at Heart Message

As most of you know, I have been sick for the past couple weeks.

I'm feeling much better now, but sometimes illness can linger for quite some time and things can take a long time to fully heal.

About a week ago, I was having a little pity party for myself because I was feeling so miserable.

I took my dogs for a walk, but I didn't have a lot of energy to go very far.

I was feeling guilty that I didn't have enough energy to take them on our usual route.

Usually, I walk my dogs on the paved biked path along the river until we reach a bridge. We cross the bridge and walk through a huge dog park.

But this time, as I walked along the paved path, I realized I wasn't going to have energy to make it to the dog park.

I pondered briefly just turning around and taking the same paved path back to my apartment.

But I noticed a little unpaved footpath that winds along even closer to the river.

I decided to take the dogs on that path because at least it would give them something new and different to sniff.

I quickly realized as we walked along this new path that it was like a sanctuary in the middle of the city.

Suddenly, I could no longer hear the hum of Deerfoot or the noise of construction.

All I could hear was the river.

As often happens when I walk my dogs, I was having a conversation with God and was lamenting about being sick.

Now, God doesn't usually talk back to me, at least not in the way a person would.

But on this day, I suddenly realized that God was right there – in the silence, in the running of the river, in the muddy path, and in the joy of my dogs exploring something new to them.

Despite my feeling crummy, I was able to notice God in something quite mundane.

Even though the reason I ended up on that path in the first place was because I wasn't feeling well and needed to shorten my walk, it ended up being exactly what I needed in that moment.

And, I think it ended up being exactly what my dogs needed in that moment, too.

God caught me completely by surprise that day.

Like the tiny mustard seed that grows unexpectedly into the largest plant, God often catches us by surprise.

The Message

It also may catch us by surprise to hear the reading from the Gospel of John today about Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding.

The other three Gospels all have Jesus's ministry beginning not with a miracle like this, but with a temptation story instead.

So it's surprising that we are starting on the first Sunday of Lent with this story of Jesus at a wedding – a place of joy, rowdiness, and exuberance.

This story is another example of the ways in which God can catch us by surprise.

Jesus doesn't seem to plan for this to be his first miracle.

In fact, he initially says to his mother when she tells him they have no more wine, "Mother, my time hasn't yet come!"

I wonder if even Jesus was caught by surprise?

He didn't plan for this, so why does he change his mind?

Of course, in true biblical fashion, the passage doesn't really give us this level of detail into why Jesus does what he does.

But perhaps he realized that it's worth demonstrating that God works in ways we least expect.

Jesus could have said to himself, "these people don't need more wine – they are already having enough fun. *Too much* fun, if you know what I mean..."

But he didn't. Instead he provided so much wine that the attendees at the party could likely have enjoyed it for days.

There were six stone water jars, and the passage tells us that they each held about 100 liters.

That's a tremendous amount of wine. 600 liters of wine!

Jesus could have just turned one of those jars into wine and it would have been plenty.

Again, he catches us completely by surprise.

It's also surprising to think about Jesus enjoying a party – letting loose, maybe dancing, maybe being silly or even drinking wine himself.

But this story reminds us to find God in the everyday happenings of life.

It can be easy to forget that God is present at a wedding reception, on a walk with our dogs, on the couch with us when we're sick, and in all the other everyday aspects of life.

But Jesus reminds us in this moment. In a moment that we might think Jesus doesn't approve of.

But he does. He keeps the fun going, and he proves who he is at the same time.

He earns himself some "street cred," in a manner of speaking.

And in doing so, he reminds us that we can find God in **all** things.

He encourages us to see God in the mundane, in our joy, and in our discouragement. In little moments and in big moments. In the stars in the sky and the dirt under our feet.

In the tiny mustard seed, full of potential to spring forth new life and in the fully grown plant that produces life-giving nourishment.

He encourages us to see God not just in the peace and tranquility of the footpath where all we can hear is the river, but also along the paved path where we can hear the city noises and encounter other people, too.

This passage about a miracle offers Good News that surprises and delights.

So, may you notice God in all things, in all moments of your life – the big, the small, the mundane, and the extraordinary.

May you find joy and potential in the tiniest mustard seed and the heartiest plant.

And may you see the Good News all around you, even as it catches you by surprise. Amen.

Let us pray:

God of delight, we are so grateful for the reminder that you often catch us by surprise. We take great joy in noticing your divine work in our lives when we least expect it. You continue to work in mysterious and delightful ways, and we pray that you would help us to see your beauty and your presence in the small things on a daily basis. In your Holy and loving name, we pray. Amen.