

Trinity Church in the City of Boston

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John 2:1-11; II Epiphany (Year C)

In you, O Lord, have we taken refuge; for the sake of your name, lead us and guide us.¹ *Amen.*

According to that new AppleWatch commercial,² we have now summited “Quitters’ Day,” the mark in the calendar when our New Year’s resolutions yield to the steepening resistance of our established routines. Beyond January resolutions, I tend to make lists of my daily tasks, mid-term objectives, and longer-term goals – aspirations that pile into a snowbank of paper scraps at the corner of my desk. Shoveling through those good intentions, I think about the late, great Carrie Fisher, and the goal-setting of her protagonist, Suzanne Vale.³

Postcards From The Edge,⁴ Fisher’s semi-autobiographical – and hysterically funny – novel opens with a series of postcards that Suzanne has written from rehab. Anticipating the vibes of social-media posts, Fisher deploys the old-school, snail-mail medium both to affirm and to subvert our expectations of what we customarily communicate with a postcard. Among Suzanne’s first epistles: “Dear Lucy, Okay, here’s what I think now. Ready? I have to establish an overall plan ... for ... my ... life. When I cross the finish line of my twenties this fall and that thirty flag goes down, I’d like to be closing in on having some idea of whatever it is that my life is about.

“Here’s what I’ve come up with so far: ... I’ll stop coloring my hair and dye it back to its normal color – I’ll artificially go natural ... I’ll only date people I really like ... [I’m going to] get up early every day, keep a journal, talk on the phone less, do less shopping, and, eventually, have a child with someone.

“Obviously, [this] plan is in a really rough[,] early phase, so I’ll keep you posted as [it] gets honed down ... Suzanne.”⁵

Notably, a postcard never paints a complete picture. Rather, a postcard intentionally captures only an emblematic moment in an adventure [or, in the case of Suzanne Vale, reveals a blast of personality]. Therefore, a postcard’s brevity necessarily understates complexity: think of the postcard sent from Disneyland: it’s a photograph of Cinderella’s castle in the early evening, with fireworks exploding in perfect array above its spires. [You know the one ...] In three sentences on the back of the card: “Dear Mom, We’re having a great time! We met Mickey, and tomorrow it’s off to Space Mountain. Tell Dad we love him, and we will see you both soon. Love, Us.”

Now, what we usually *don't* write, is that the airline lost our luggage; that little Suzie puked on Mr. Toad's Wild Ride; and that we've been shelling out \$50/head for mediocre, chicken-finger baskets. By the postcard, we select the story we want to tell.

Fisher's postcards flash: *Cleverness ... Humor ...* and no small measure of *Danger*.

That Disneyland postcard offers: *Magic ... Family ... Love*.

These postcards are not untrue ... and these postcards do not tell the whole story.

Pivoting toward today's lesson, I invite you to open your pew bibles [or to open oremus.org/bible] and turn to the first chapter of John's Gospel. Once you find that opening page, note how after the high poetry of the "In-the-beginning-was-the-Word" prologue [verses 1-18], the Johannine authoring community presents four brief scenes to set the stage for the Cana wedding. Imagine those vignettes as postcards magneted to the larger fridge of the Gospel:

In the first of these, we meet the Baptizer, who testifies to Levites from Jerusalem. The Levites question John – "Who are you?" John answers, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me"⁶ ... and above the freeze-frame of John in the River Jordan, the water at his waist, this postcard reads: *Anticipation*.

The next stories all begin with the transitional phrase, "the next day." So, "The next day," John sees Jesus approaching. John declares, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"⁷ ... and you can see this one, too, John vested in his camel's hair finest and pointing "off screen," as we receive: *Declaration*.

Then, "The next day" John "again was standing with two of his disciples."⁸ And John – again – sees Jesus walking by, and – again – exclaims, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" but, this time, two disciples "[hear] this, and [begin following] Jesus," inviting others to join them"⁹ ... and this postcard delivers: *Invitation*.

Then, "The next day," Jesus "decide[s] to go to Galilee."¹⁰ Finding Philip there, Jesus says to him, "Follow me."¹¹ In turn, Philip finds Nathanael, and says to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth."¹² When Nathanael wonders aloud, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip parrots Jesus' invitation to him from the story immediately before: "Come and see"¹³ ... and the postcard prompts: *Investigation*.

Anticipation ... Declaration ... Invitation ... Investigation

Today's miracle story begins not with "the next day," but, "On the third day."¹⁴ Of course, on the third day after crucifixion comes Resurrection, God's mighty Revelation. On *this* third day, Jesus' mother nudges him, *You know, they're about to run out of wine*. Jesus bristles at his mother's encoded observation and its implication that he should do something; he responds, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."¹⁵

You who have mothers, I suspect you know the look Jesus' back talk prompted.

I mean, I know he's the messiah, but his response would not have made any friends in the house where my parents raised me, and that attitude would certainly not work for the children I am raising: "Son, you better be Jesus Christ" ... see, we have: *Insubordination*.

Even so, Mary knows something Jesus does not ... she still has something to teach her boy about Grace and graciousness. The story offers no details about what Jesus expected of "his hour," but the ordinariness of these events do not match his vision. Perhaps he expected a grander beginning, the toddler Superman lifting the pickup truck above his head. Regardless, his mother speaks on his behalf, saying to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" – which, of course, is more code, a mother telling her son what to do without saying anything at all – and both Jesus and the servants follow their instructions ... and Mary makes room for: *Restoration*.

As the chief steward draws the new wine, the moment brims with significance: Jesus' first miracle; the emboldened belief of his disciples; this transition from the expectancy of John the Baptist to the demonstration of Jesus' divinity. Something new and mysterious and wonderful is now underway in the Gospel and in the world, and the nuptial setting reinforces that gladness ... as the tale begins, the Gospel moves us from *Anticipation* to *Action*.

Tomorrow and in the days to follow, our televisions and telephones will flash with staged images sold to us as iconic. They will have been chosen and cropped to convince. Depending upon which media curator you prefer, you will see: *Inauguration* ... or, *Commemoration* ... *Vindication* ... or, *Lamentation*. And you may feel: *Motivation* ... or, *Resignation* ... *Desperation* ... or, *Determination*.

Whatever their social or emotional or partisan track, I recognize these postcards from the edge of a new political season will not be entirely untrue. Yet, I also know *those posts will not tell the whole story*.

Remember: a postcard intentionally captures only a moment in larger, longer tale.¹⁶ Though its brevity necessarily understates complexity, our fears and our disappointments – our anger – can function like an AI engine and, from only a few details, furiously build an inevitable future. Very personally, this leads us to taking a moment of regret or grief – one of those clips set for replay during low tides – and instead of acknowledging a loss or a mistake and growing from it, we declare *ourselves* a mistake, and we declare *ourselves* lost, and we despair. Collectively, the

same energies will take postcards from the Washington mall and project the inevitability of a fascist dystopia or, more locally, assemble images from the MLK Breakfast and grieve the forever loss of a Beloved Community's righteous dream.

Trinitarians, realize those stories have not, yet, been written! Those endings have not, yet, been scripted! To declare those fates already accomplished should ring with the ridiculousness of Suzanne Vale's preparation plans for her 30s. Consequentially, granting such snapshots that power relieves us of the responsibilities of our faith, the opportunities we *do* have to fulfill God's hopes for ourselves and for the world.

Instead, we return to that great Gospel refrigerator, and remind ourselves of what we have magnetized there – remind ourselves of our larger faith story and its Good News arc from *Anticipation* to *Action*. We shovel a scrap from that snowbank of aspirations, and we resolve to get started ... or to keep going ... or to leave that thing behind, whatever keeps us from sharing in God's hopes and hopefulness.

Then, "the next day," we come to church and gather once more for *Inspiration* ... we go out into the world and offer our Epiphany *Illumination* ... until, "on the third day," we and all people can share in Cana's *Celebration*.

Held in common, we inaugurate God's hope-filled future – tomorrow and always;
Amen.

¹ From Psalm 31.

² "[Quit Quitting.](#)"

³ After the release of *Return of the Jedi* in 1983, Fisher suffered a familiar Hollywood descent into alcoholism, addiction, and depression, as she grappled with the unrelenting power of her on-screen persona, Princess Leia.

⁴ Fisher, Carrie. *Postcards From The Edge*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1987.

⁵ Fisher, 3-4.

⁶ John 1:19, 26.

⁷ John 1:29.

⁸ John 1:35.

⁹ John 1:36-37.

¹⁰ John 1:43a.

¹¹ John 1:43b.

¹² John 1:45.

¹³ John 1:46.

¹⁴ John 2:1.

¹⁵ John 2:3-4.

¹⁶ I picture our life's refrigerator with its mess of magnets. Before long, the postcards from January 20, 2025, will have been long covered with coupons and bill reminders and children's artwork.