

OPENING:

Since the music does so much of the heavy theological lifting during this service, I hesitate to introduce more musical references, but here goes.

The story behind the Beatles' song "Let It Be" is a famous one: Paul McCartney's mother, who died when the musician was 14, came to McCartney years later in a dream, during a difficult time in the singer's life, and, in the dream, she said simply "Let It Be"

From that came the immortal lyrics:

*When I find myself in times of trouble,
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom,
Let it Be.¹*

McCartney's mother was named "Mary";
so was Jesus',
there is a lot there.

It's the Feast of the All Souls and there is a lot here to consider:
souls of those we have lost, our loved ones for whom we mourn, the promise that
Christian hope provides, and yet the grief of this broken world.

And then it all depends on where you are in the grief journey, whether the words
"Let it Be" can be remarkably assuring, or infuriatingly simplistic.

ESCHATOLOGY

A few years ago, Paul McCartney was doing that bit with James Corden, called
Carpool Karaoke; you know that late-night talk show segment where Corden drives
around with a celebrity singer, and together they sing their songs.

They did theirs driving around Liverpool, talking about music and singing the
Beatles. They drive by Penny Lane and all the Beatles' landmarks. Paul even points
at the Anglican Church where he was a choir boy and was first exposed to music.

Eventually, together they sing "Let It Be" at which time Corden starts to tear up.

¹ [Lyrics for Let It Be by The Beatles - Songfacts](#)

Through his tears, Corden explains to McCartney:

"I remember my granddad, who was a musician, sitting me down and telling me, 'I'm going to play you the best song you've ever heard,' and he played me that (Let It Be)...

If my granddad was here right now he'd get an absolute kick out of this."

And McCartney replied simply, without making a to-do, without skipping a beat, "He is."² (He's here)

GOSPEL

"The hour is coming and now is."³

I don't fully know what that means.

With apologies to you, and to the writer of John's Gospel, I can't quite wrap my brain around it.

But I would say that that interaction, between Paul McCartney and James Corden, is a fairly close expression of what Jesus is saying about the nature of time and place, about life and death, and about how God experiences it all.

And how we sometimes get a glimpse of it.

I don't understand the mysteries of the next world and the perennial questions of this one.

I can understand, though, how singing "Let It Be" with Sir Paul McCartney while driving around Liverpool, England,

and realizing that you are the luckiest human being alive,

and that somehow your grandfather IS there,

and how all that can allow you to understand what 1st Corinthians means when it says "we will all be changed, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet."⁴

Mind you, I am not saying that the grandfather's "memory" is there, or that you understand him through a feeling or something like that.

I am not using the word "spirit" or even "soul."

But he is actually there, however you want to define that.

Now if you say that sort of thing, and you are not Paul McCartney, or you are not sharing in the psychedelics of that era.... Then people will look at you kinda funny.

² [Paul McCartney's Carpool Karaoke Leaves James Corden In Tears | HuffPost Entertainment](#) (around 7 minute mark)

³ John 5.25 (also John 4.34)

⁴ 1 Corinthians 15.51-52.

But I think you are proclaiming, emphatically and unrepentantly, what Jesus was saying about the Kingdom of God drawing near *in this world* and about the hope of the Resurrection *in this world*.

Like I said, there is a lot here going on today on the Feast of All Souls.

ESCHATOLOGY:

Now, we can talk about it in terms of GRAMMAR... how Verse 24 uses the perfect active indicative to say that “anyone who has heard my word... *has passed* from death to life.”

That that moment of salvation has happened, and is continuing to happen right in front of our eyes, how it’s not contained in a moment on the cross outside Jerusalem, or is a pie-in-the-sky promise for tomorrow, but it’s now.

Right in front of us.⁵

Or, we can talk about it in terms of HISTORY: how the ancients knew right along with us what happens when a body dies, you stay dead. They knew that. They knew what a hallucination was, they knew what a dream was too. Those are all accounted for in the Bible and other literature... They knew what symbols and metaphors were, but that’s not what they believed happened in the New Testament, but rather that the Resurrection was not only a historical event, but nothing less than the reality of God...⁶

Or for the Techie types, we can talk about it in the language of SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY. Cambridge Physicist and Anglican Priest, John Polkinghorne says at that “twinkling of an eye” (quote):

“God will download our software onto his hardware, until the day comes he gives us new hardware, on which to run our own software.”⁷

But, again, I am actually not sure if arguments and words can get us there. Even John and Paul’s best efforts (the author of our readings for today, not the members of the Beatles) are just really HARD to understand.

Music might though, poetry might, shared experiences might, however, get us closer to that understanding.

⁵ Jessica Tate. “Pastoral Perspective” (John 5.19-24) in Cynthia Jarvis and Elizabeth Johnson, eds. 2015. *Feasting on the Gospels-John (Volume 1)* Louisville: John Knox Westminster: 150.

⁶ N.T. Wright Interview, (January 3, 2019): [NT Wright: Resurrection of Jesus, Reliability of the New Testament, and Virtue Ethics - YouTube](#)

⁷ N. T. Wright, 2011. *For All the Saints? Remembering the Christian Departed*. London: SPCK, 72.

ALL SOULS

So a journalist was interviewing Paul McCartney a few years back in London and they stepped outside and were walking to a nearby restaurant, when a man came up to them abruptly and thrust something into McCartney's face to autograph.

The journalist was startled by the interaction but McCartney was unmoved. The journalist said that could have been dangerous, that that man could have been the next Mark David Chapman, the assassin of John Lennon.

And McCartney replied: "Or it could have been Jesus, come to give me a blessing..."⁸

God shows up in our lives through the dead, I think, because it's the one thing that we might admit we have not quite figured out.

So we are looking intently for God in those moments, or at least we are just enough outside our realm of comfort to allow it to pierce our armored shell.

We try to deny it, we try to privatize it, try to put it off, but there it is: the seeming finality and gut-wrenching pain of death. We are at our worst...

And then what happens?

God shows up.

God appears in our lives.

The theological scholars often use the word "invasion" to describe what is happening as time and place get upended, as past and present and future collide.

God shows up, our loved ones even show up, and disrupt our lives with that mystery that "the hour is coming and now is."

CONCLUSION:

So, what happened to the Beatles after the song "Let it Be" came out?

Well, they broke up. That was their last single to be released.

It's not my era, but I have watched enough retrospectives of Boomer Nostalgia that that moment was something... like... a death.

The greatest band of all time, broken open for all the world to see.

What happens though, when a heart is broken?

Something about their being more room.

Hearts broken open to the reality that Resurrection and new life is happening all around us. **AMEN**

⁸ John Colapinto. "When I'm Sixty-Four: Paul McCartney Then and Now." *The New Yorker* (May 28, 2007)
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/06/04/when-im-sixty-four-2>