

**Sermon Preached by The Reverend Jonathon W. Jensen, Rector  
at Calvary Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
on The Fourth Sunday in Advent, Year B  
December 24, 2023 at 11 a.m.**

*Luke 1:26-38*

“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; *let it be* with me according to your word.”

When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be  
And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be  
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

Paul McCartney wrote those words for the twelfth and final Beatles’ studio album in 1970. The group spent about ten years at the top of the world. By that time, the band was breaking apart. The long-time friends were heading in different directions. There is sadness in the awareness of an impending end of something great and uncertainty about the future.

“Let it Be” was the last single released by the Beatles before Paul announced he was leaving the band. His song was, in part, a way of dealing with the grief and preparing for a new Advent.

Where did it come from? As he tells the story, Paul’s mother died from breast cancer when he was a teenager. Her name was Mary. As the band was breaking up, one world ending and another beginning, his mother came to him in a dream at his hour of darkness. She told him no matter what happened, everything would be alright. Let it be. That is, don’t be afraid and embrace your future. When Paul woke up, he went to the piano to start writing.

Any story or piece of art worth anything has lasting value through generations. It could be a song or painting or story from the Bible. They speak at many levels over time. They endure.

The inspiration for this song came from a dream with his mother. Another Beatle hated the song because of its obvious Christian overtones. Mother Mary sounds like the Blessed Virgin Mary. Surely, today’s Gospel story was echoing in the back of Paul’s mind as he composed. He said he wanted to leave the song open to interpretation. It can have more than one meaning.

Mary from the Bible was probably a teenager, and engaged to be married, when she had her own vision. The angel Gabriel visited her and told her not to be afraid. She would bear a son from God even though she wasn’t married yet. Her response was to point out the practical impossibility of this birth because she was a virgin. That’s not how things work, Mr. Angel.

Gabriel told her that the child would be from God. His evidence that such things could happen was her cousin Elizabeth who was old, past child-bearing years, had also become pregnant. The angel told her, “For nothing will be impossible with God.” For nothing will be impossible with God. If only we believed that.

Later, her husband Joseph received a vision from the same angel Gabriel in a dream encouraging the future husband not to lose heart. He was afraid and humiliated that his soon-to-be wife was pregnant with someone else's child. He had resolved to divorce her quietly and save everyone embarrassment.

The angel told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife and raise the child as his own because the child is from God. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel commanded him caring for his new family.

In the Bible, God or an angel often appears in dreams or visions. The arrival comes most often at the hour of need... at a time of trouble or moment of transition... when one thing is ending and another beginning.

The world and everyone here is going through virtually constant transition and face times of trouble even as we look forward to tonight for hope to be born. I don't know how the vision of God will manifest for you, but believe it to be real if we have faith to see. Seek it out always. I believe that Mary shows us the way to be faithful in our own time.

Mary's response to the news from the angel was what?... "***Let it be*** with me according to your word." Let it be. Accept what is happening and look for God leading your through.

What might not be readily obvious is that the phrase "let it be" is a literal translation of a word we say all the time at church. The word "Amen" means "let it be." However God appears to you this season of hope, let it be with you according to your word. Let it be. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Inspired from an idea in a sermon preached by the Rt. Rev. Matthew Cowden, Bishop of West Virginia