

A MAIDEN'S SONG

PSALM 89:1-4  
LUKE1:46b-55

A SERMON FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT  
DECEMBER 21, 2014  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
MARIANNA, FLORIDA  
TED W. LAND, INTERIM PASTOR

Our psalm this morning sums up all of the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah into the world: God has made a covenant based upon God's steadfast love, and upon God's faithfulness. It is a covenant sworn to King David (and before him to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). And it is a covenant which will be sealed with the coming of the king who will sit on the throne and reign forever.

The story told in the opening chapters of Luke's gospel is the story of how that king came into this world. We know the words of the second chapter. When I read them on Christmas Eve, many of you will be able to recite them along with me, particularly if I read from the King James Version.

The first chapter is what some folks might call the back-story. Or, if we were making motion pictures, the "pre-quel."

As we have spent much of Advent on stories of John the Baptist, so the story in Luke begins with the Baptist. Well, it really begins with an angel, who came to a priest named Zechariah, and told him that his wife, Elizabeth, would conceive. Like Abraham and Sarah of old, Zechariah did not believe the word of the Lord delivered by the angel, for both couples were far beyond the normal child-bearing years.

But miracles do happen, and women in their forties do conceive, and for the first few months of her pregnancy, Elizabeth remained in seclusion.

But at during the sixth month of her pregnancy, a strange thing happened. Her young cousin, Mary, came to visit. Mary, too, was miraculously pregnant. You heard the story. Same angel, different message. All of the prophecies of old will be fulfilled in this baby.

Mary questions, "How can this be, since I have never known a man?" And the angel's answer, a long answer, that included the announcement of her cousin, Elizabeth's pregnancy, concluded with these words: "With God, nothing will be impossible."

And Mary, a teenage girl, maybe no older than 13 or 14, answers, Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word."

I'll bet you thought this sermon was going to be about the "Magnificat", those words of Mary that I read, words that she uttered in response to the baby who would be John the Baptist leaping in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth. It might even be about that great song, "Ave, Maria". That song is based on Elizabeth's words to Mary, as is the prayer usually referred to as the "Hail, Mary."

But somewhere along the way between the text and the sermon, another song came into my head.

It is a Beatles song. Most of us here are old enough to remember the Beatles. And John, Paul, George, and Ringo, have enjoyed a marvelous resurgence. Polly's niece, Montana, has

decorated her room with Beatles' posters, and sings their songs. I think it was Anna Beth Milton I saw with a Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band t-shirt and cap.

Well, one year about this time, I was listening to an oldies station on the radio, and they played a Beatles song, and all of a sudden, the meaning of the lyrics hit me like a ton of bricks!

Remember, those British boys grew up in Liverpool, where there are two cathedrals. One of them was actually being built while they were writing a lot of their music. It was a Roman Catholic Cathedral, and the boys from Liverpool would have been raised up in an environment where Roman Catholic traditions and prayers were commonly heard. They would have known the "Hail, Mary," and might themselves have turned to Mary the Mother of Jesus in prayer.

And so it is not surprising that John Lennon and Paul McCartney, probably the most "Catholic" of the Beatles, should write,

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

And when all the brokenhearted people  
Living in the world agree  
There will be an answer, let it be

For though they may be parted  
There is still a chance that they will see  
There will be an answer, let it be

Let it be, let it be  
Let it be, let it be  
Yeah, there will be an answer let it be

Let it be, let it be  
Let it be, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom  
Let it be

Let it be, let it be  
Let it be, yeah, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom  
Let it be

And when the night is cloudy  
There is still a light that shines on me  
Shine on until tomorrow, let it be

I wake up to the sound of music  
Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

Yeah, let it be, let it be  
Let it be, yeah, let it be  
There will be an answer, let it be

Let it be, let it be  
Let it be, yeah, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom  
Let it be

### **Songwriters**

LENNON, JOHN WINSTON / MCCARTNEY, PAUL JAMES

A maiden had so much faith in God that she could simply utter words of eternal wisdom: Let it be with me according to your word. By that she meant "let it be done in my life according to the word and the will of God."

No one knew, least of all Mary, that this child, conceived of the Holy Spirit, would truly be the Promised One, the Son of God. But Mary believed the word of the Lord, submitted herself to the will of the Lord, and simply said, "Let it be."

When we find ourselves in time of trouble, may the words of Mary come to us: Let it be.  
And in our hours of darkness, may we heed her wisdom: Let it be.

And may all the broken-hearted people living in the world learn to let it be according to the word of God. And may those who are apart from the word of God see it, and may they see that the answer is truly the living word of God, Jesus Christ.

And when our days are cloudy, may the light of the world, Jesus still shine upon us,  
Until we wake up to the sound of the music of the heavenly choir.  
Until then, let it be. Let it be according to the word and the will of the one with whom nothing is impossible, including turning a Beatles song into a Christmas hymn.