

**Sermon for Christ & Grace Church Petersburg, VA  
Advent 4, Year B, December 24, 2017 [8:00 a.m. service only]  
The Rev. Bill Queen  
“Let It Be”  
Luke 1:26-38**

**“When I find myself in times of trouble, mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom, ‘Let it be’”; “Let It Be”; certainly this Beatles’ song from 1970 ranks as one of the great anthems of a generation; I’d heard it for many years, probably sung along with it a thousand times, and thought often about its meaning, but I never gave any thought to it having any particular religious significance; perhaps I had heard that Paul McCartney had written the song about his own mother, who was named Mary, who had died when he was a young teenager, and who had visited him in a dream, speaking those words of wisdom to him; so I was quite surprised, in another parish, when the choir director informed me that she had made an arrangement of “Let It Be” for the choir to sing on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, because of its tie-in with the Gospel reading**

**only then did it hit me that, whether Paul McCartney intended it or not, the Mary in the song was voicing the same words that Jesus’ future mother Mary says at the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel tells her what is about to happen—if she will accept to go through with it; and she does; Mary’s words of acceptance are “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word”; and, by the way, that choral arrangement of “Let It Be” was well received in church that day, and it led many of us to listen more carefully to many other popular songs whose religious messages we may have otherwise overlooked**

**that choir director is not the only person to have recognized the wisdom in these three simple words, let it be; *A New Zealand Prayer Book* of 1989 is the most recently updated of the prayer books throughout the worldwide Anglican Communion; this book contains a service of “Night Prayer” which is comparable to the service called “Compline” in our *Book of Common Prayer*; it is a service meant to be prayed near the end of the day, or as a final act of devotion before going to sleep; “Night Prayer” has in it a prayer which includes this simple reflection: “It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be.” I have used this prayer as part of my own end of the day devotions and have**

often found those to be words I needed to hear; if the worries of your day trouble you, or keep you from easily falling asleep, maybe this prayer could help you be more at peace with yourself and with God; it seems that what both this song and this prayer are doing is taking the Biblical Mary's words of acceptance from her particular situation in time and place, and from her important role in the unfolding of the salvation story, and moving those words into a more general and universal situation; one that applies to our time and place; one that invites you and me to be aware of our important role in the unfolding of the salvation story

we are all aware of the things which might distract us from the true meaning of Christmas: tacky lights, an excessive focus upon gifts, gluttonous eating, and a man in a red suit; but there is another distraction from the true meaning of Christmas which may not be quite as apparent to us: when we become too enrapt in the sweetness and beauty of the Christmas story itself; of the babe in a manger, of the star in the sky, of the wise men and their gifts; if we become so enrapt in the sweetness and beauty of the story that we think of this only as a touching moment from history, then we may forget that you and I have an important role not only in retelling this part of the salvation story from the past, but also in enacting the salvation story anew in the present

we enact the salvation story in our lives when we can say, along with Mary, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" and then go on to live out something the Lord has put into our hearts and minds to do; think: is there a way I can open up my life so that Christ can come into the world for someone or in some place where he is not yet known?; we come to church to encounter Christ; it is our job then to take Christ out of the church to others

saying "let it be" does not mean passive acceptance; saying "let it be" means that we trust God to guide our actions, we trust God to guide our words, and we trust God to guide our understanding; not just by saying the words "let it be," but by living them, making us participants in the ongoing salvation story; Christmas is upon us, but remember the important lessons we've been hearing throughout the Advent season: keep awake and keep doing the Lord's work, for we do not know when Christ's Second Coming will occur; prepare the way for the Lord by allowing the Holy Spirit, given to us in Baptism, to work powerfully through us; and let be what God wants to be