

A Sermon Preached by

Fr. Ralph Osborne for the Last Sunday of Epiphany, Year C

February 14, 2010 at [St. Thomas Church](#), Menasha, Wisconsin

Exodus 34:29-35 | Psalm 99 | 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 | Luke 9:28-36, [37-43a]

I don't get many things right the first time In fact, I am told that a lot.
Now I know all the wrong turns, the stumbles and falls brought me here.
And where was I before the day that I first saw your lovely face? Now I see
it everyday. And I know that I am I am I am the luckiest

What if I'd been born fifty years before you in a house on a street
where you lived? Maybe I'd be outside as you passed on your bike, would I
know? And in a white sea of eyes I see one pair that I recognize. And I know
that I am I am

I am the luckiest

I love you more than I have ever found a way to say to you.

Next door there's an old man who lived to his nineties and one day
passed away in his sleep. And his wife; she stayed for a couple of days and
passed away. I'm sorry, I know that's a strange way to tell you that I know
we belong. That I know that I am I am I am the luckiest.

(“[The Luckiest](#)”, Ben Folds)

That’s been my favorite love song the last few years. You know you have a
good one, when you play it on your car radio and your wife asks you, “What’s
that?” You also know you picked a good one when you play it on your car radio
and your children turn it up.

When a song hits me like that, I start to think about it. What makes it strike
me the way it does? Is it the tune? Is it something about the lyrics? The tune to this
one is simple and haunting, so that’s a part of it. I think it’s the lyrics that really get
me on this one. It starts out so human. I don’t get many things right the first time. I
am human and I do make mistakes and cause hurt. Is love still possible for me? It
seems that all the falls, wrong turns and stumbles got me here. Love goes beyond
all our human failings. Love is so big, we can’t even express it. Can we even
imagine it?

Well, love can reach beyond our humanity, what about time? Is love more
powerful than time? We want it to be. What if we hadn’t been born when we were.
Can love be bigger than that? On Valentines Day, we hope so. It’s the last verse
that asks the tough question though. Is love stronger than death? Does it last
beyond the grave? It seems that the older we get, the more we ask that question.

Songs are important to us. I have songs I listen to when I'm driving, songs I listen to when I'm happy, when I'm angry, when I am sad and when I want to remember people. Some people have "their" songs. Some couples have their songs. Valentines Day is a day when many couples listen to their song. The words and lyrics open a path to our hearts and minds.

The gospel lesson for today is one of the events in the life of Christ that the church has written songs about. We write songs about the important things that happen to us. Sometimes the songs are not literally musical songs, but they are sung in our hearts and communicate the joy or sadness or excitement that we felt.

The disciples are having a mountain top experience with Jesus. It is the stuff of songs. Jesus is having a meeting with Moses and Elijah. We are all learning about the importance and power of Jesus Christ. It is a power that reaches everywhere and every time. It can't be limited to a mountaintop. The reality of Jesus has to go everywhere and be given to everyone. This kind of love can't be limited to a few men in an isolated location. The disciples wanted to write a song about it that stayed on the mountaintop and was reserved for themselves. The song of Jesus can't be reserved. It needs to be sung wherever we go. Jesus told them no, you can't build your shrines here.

An old organist friend of mine said that a musical piece has a key moment that is most important. He called it the fibanache moment. In our gospel lesson this is when God the Father breaks into the scene and says to the disciples, "This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him!" Do what he says. Sing the song he has given you to sing.

We are in the midst of a song right now. It is the song that the church has sung for centuries. We sing together the song of how God became flesh in Jesus Christ and gave His life for us. I will invite us to literally sing part of the Eucharistic prayer together. Today, once again, we become part of the song. Our service is filled with music and song to lead us into the presence of God. When we sing, we connect with God and each other.

It is a joy to be here today on my first Sunday at St. Thomas. I appreciate the wonderful welcome I have received from so many of you. You are writing the song of beginning here. It makes me dance. I look forward to the future that we have with God and each other.

You have all sorts of songs that I have not heard yet. I am glad that is it impossible for you to forget them. I look forward to hearing them. I want to know your stories and songs of love, heartbreak, joy and your songs about how God has worked in your lives. You don't know my old songs. I look forward to sharing them with you so that we can get to know each other and get to know how God has worked in my life. Together we can weave our songs into the song of God's love for us.

There is another love song that has affected my life. It is not a secular song, like the first one. It is much older and luck is not involved. Grace and mercy are the vehicles of God's love in this song. "You may ask me how I know, my Lord is real. You may doubt the things I say and doubt the way I feel. But I know he's real today he'll always be. I can feel his hand in mine and that's enough for me. I will never walk alone. He holds my hand. He will guide each step I take and if I fall I know he'll understand. Till the day He tells me why, He loves me so. I can feel His hand in mine, that's all I need to know." I thank you for your prayers and welcome and I am thankful to God for leading me here.