

FINDING GOD IN POPULAR MUSIC



SUN | NOV 13 | 7 PM
 SAINT RAYMOND
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LINCOLN ST & ELMHURST AVE | MT PROSPECT

Join us as we explore how faith and spirituality can be echoed in the music from many styles & generations.

FEATURING SONGS BY

Olivia Rodrigo | Shawn Mendes
Stevie Wonder | Banners | U2
Lenny Kravitz | Doobie Brothers
...and many more!



FINDING GOD IN POPULAR MUSIC

WHO ARE WE?

NOVEMBER 13, 2022

For those of you who missed Finding God in Popular Music on Sunday, November 13, here is a link to the script along with YouTube links to all the songs, so you can read the reflections and listen to the songs.



Welcome to Finding God in Popular Music
ONLINE. This has been an ongoing series here at
St. Raymond where we take a deeper dive into
some of the themes that can be heard in popular
songs from across the ages that intersect with
the messages found in scripture and in our faith.

As you reflect at home, open your hearts and
minds to hear God's voice in the music around us.



This year's theme is a fundamental question. Who are we? What defines us? Is it our achievements in work, school, or family life? Is it what others think of us? Is it a significant event or a painful experience in our lives that had an impact on us? Or do we believe that we are more than all of this, that each of us is a unique creation of a loving God, created to reflect that love, and that we are strengthened and brought together as a community of faith to bring light into the world around us?



This is a reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians,
Chapter 3, verses 14 through 21:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.

Amen.

A large, abstract graphic on the left side of the page features a dark grey background with several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes. These shapes include a large circle with a red and orange pattern, a smaller circle with a purple and yellow pattern, and various other angular and curved forms in shades of red, orange, yellow, and purple. The overall effect is a modern, artistic, and somewhat abstract representation.

You and Me – The Moody Blues

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TlMebMCru9s>





In today's world, there are many, many voices clamoring for our attention, telling us who we should be, what we should buy to make us happy, who we should follow, who is for us, who is against us, or what cause we should get behind. Amidst all of this is the image of Christ on the cross, showing us the way of love. As the first letter of John says, "The way we came to know love was that Christ laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our sisters and brothers."



Every day, we have a chance to reflect on the words and life of Christ and ask ourselves, who will I follow today and what way will I choose? In 1993, “Are You Gonna Go My Way” was a breakout hit song for Lenny Kravitz. In talking about the song, he said “I thought the subject matter was really interesting because it’s coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ. So basically, ‘Are you gonna go my way?’ meaning ‘my way of love.’



In a time when the world seems overrun with division, judgment, misunderstanding and people at war with one another, the words of Christ in the Gospel of John resound over the discord. “Love one another as I have loved you.” By his life of sacrificial love, Christ has shown us the way. The question still stands, every day. Will we follow?



Are You Gonna Go My Way- Lenny Kravitz
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_nq12hONbs





In his book “The Holy Longing”, Ron Rolheiser begins with these words: “It is no easy task to walk this earth and find peace. Inside of us, it would seem, something is at odds with the very rhythm of things, and we are forever restless, dissatisfied, frustrated, and aching. We are so overcharged with desire that it is hard to come to simple rest. Desire is always stronger than satisfaction.



As one person put it, “Many nights, I’m tired and I know it’s time to go to sleep, but I stay awake feeling like there is something I missed, and somehow, I never quite find it.”

What is that “something more” that we are always striving for but never quite attain? Can we live in the moment and find beauty, joy, contentment, and purpose right where we stand, with what and who is right in front of us?



(There's Gotta Be) More to Life- Stacie Orrico
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwxNFlvj5Dw>



An abstract, colorful geometric portrait of a woman's face, rendered in a low-poly style. The portrait is composed of various colored triangles (red, orange, yellow, purple, pink) set against a dark background. The features of the face are implied by the arrangement of these triangles, creating a modern and artistic representation.

The quickest way to rob ourselves of peace and contentment is to compare ourselves to others and to measure ourselves by what they appear to be, to have, and to have achieved. These days more than ever, we can easily get completely immersed in images on social media that leave us feeling we can never measure up. And maybe we ourselves strive to put forth an image that will impress others.



Somehow, whatever we have and whoever we are isn't good enough, because someone else appears to have it better, though without getting to know who they really are, we have no idea if that is even true. Ultimately, we find ourselves wanting what others have that we now think we lack and resenting them for having it. Deep inside, we feel less than; we feel inadequate. No amount of "likes" ever seems to be enough. Someone will always have more.

The more we engage in comparison and envy, the more we isolate from others and reject and lose touch with the beauty of who we are and the many blessings we have been given.



Jealousy, Jealousy- Olivia Rodrigo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL1qSHDeYT8>





From Psalm 139:

You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my
mother's womb.

I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works!



Got it In You- Banners

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oepMn3binxQ>





When we are experiencing something inside of ourselves that seems overwhelmingly bigger than us, whether it be fear, anxiety, depression or any other debilitating thoughts and emotions that stop us in our tracks, the urge to find a way to escape it can be great. It doesn't solve the problem and tends to make things worse. Another temptation is to give up all together. Something deep inside us tells us this is not who we are, and that there is a person inside of us that has the resolve and the will to live, but in this battle, we also discover that we can't overcome our struggles alone. The breakthrough happens when we step outside of our own head and call out for help.



In My Blood- Shawn Mendez

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlMoONnuJes>





Have you ever had something happen to you and no matter how long it's been, you can't seem to move on from it? Maybe it's to the point where you are unable to fully live and exist in the present and it's as if you are trapped in a moment in time, a moment which appears to have defined you.



But we are more than the events of our lives, no matter how much pain or trauma they have caused, no matter how much we have lost. If we are still here, there is a reason. We are meant to live in the here and now and there is a voice that urges us to take a step toward hope and healing, toward acceptance of life on life's terms. The darkness of night always gives way to the light of a dawn of a new day.

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Stuck In a Moment That You Can't Get Out Of- U2
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pSvpamrClw>





From Psalm 126:

When the LORD restored the captives of Zion, we thought we were dreaming. Then our mouths were filled with laughter; our tongues sang for joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The LORD had done great things for them.” The LORD has done great things for us; Oh, how happy we were! Restore our captives, LORD, like the dry stream beds of the Negeb. Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed, will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves.



The last few years have been difficult for many of us. When something happens to us that leaves us broken, either as individuals or as a community, we can be overwhelmed with sadness for what was lost that we can never get back. The onset of Covid 19 brought about separation and isolation unlike anything we have seen in our lifetime, and both individuals and institutions have experienced much loss as a result. How do we move forward from here? Being alone and distancing ourselves became habit, one that can be difficult to break. The good news is that through it all, each of us has still has a gift inside of us that cannot be taken away, a piece of the whole, and if we are willing to come together and share those gifts, we can join those fragmented pieces together and become something new- most likely not the same as what we had before, but a wonderful and beautiful new creation.



Pick Up the Pieces- Average White Band

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUX_ll6OdJM





When a small child feels unconditionally loved and secure in their environment, they appear fearless and confident in who they are and it seems that there is no stopping them. As we get older and are more aware of the world around us, we begin to listen to different messages, telling us who we are and what we should be. We are never enough and never have enough of what we think will satisfy us. We can become incredibly insecure, without even knowing it, constantly judging ourselves as less than or having less or accomplishing less than those around us.



Ultimately, none of these things define us. When I identify myself as a child of God, who I am is rooted in the rock solid, unwavering, unconditional love of my creator, nothing more, nothing less. This is where true peace and security is found. This is where purpose and meaning in life is discovered, for when we know even a fraction of the depths of the love of God for us, we will be less likely to look to take from this world and from others what we feel is missing inside, and instead radiate, reflect, and share that love and make a difference in this world. This can be a very elusive thing. We need all the reminders we can get!



From the First Letter of John, chapter 3-
“See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God. Yet
so we are.”

And from chapter 4-
“There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives
out fear. We love because he first loved us.”



From the book of Isaiah, chapter 54- “Though the mountains fall away and the hills be shaken, my love shall never fall away from you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the LORD”.

From the book of Zephaniah, chapter 3- “The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior, who will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, who will sing joyfully because of you.”



From the book of Jeremiah, chapter 31-
“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have
drawn you with unfailing kindness.”

From the Gospel of John, chapter 15-
“As the Father loved me, I too have loved you.
Remain in my love.”



From the letter of Paul to the Romans, chapter 8-
“What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will
anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or
nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these
things we conquer overwhelmingly through him
who loved us. For I am convinced that neither
death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor
present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor
height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be
able to separate us from the love of God in Christ
Jesus our Lord.”



As- Stevie Wonder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlkcdoOEIWE>





From the Gospel of John: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way.” Thomas said to him, “Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

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Somewhere- from “West Side Story”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSlLNSWAXpo>





There are times in our lives when we feel defeated, when we feel lost, or when we feel the pain of loss that hits us so hard, we don't think we can get back up and carry on. But the darkest moments in our lives can be incredible moments of grace as well. As long as we are still breathing, we have hope for something that will never be the same as what we once knew, but could be beautiful in its own right.



Our struggles and our pain are real and a part of us that we can't deny, but they need not define us, and can help us become stronger, and ultimately lead us to the next point in our journey of becoming who we are meant to be.

A stylized, abstract portrait of a person's face, rendered in a geometric, low-poly style. The face is composed of various colored triangles (red, orange, yellow, purple, pink) set against a dark background. The features are minimalist and symmetrical.

I Believe- Christina Perri

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckJpZZYI7qw>





When we believe in God's steadfast, unconditional love for us, that love compels us to want to love God in return and share that love with the world around us. Jesus not only shows us the way of love but has made it clear that he is the way. When we put our faith and trust in him, we are empowered to live a life of love and service and follow in his footsteps as his disciples. The path may be winding and have its peaks and valleys, but as we have heard throughout this evening, nothing can separate us or keep us from the love of God.



What voices will we listen to today? Who will we choose to serve? From the book of Joshua: “Choose today whom you will serve, the gods your ancestors served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” But the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods. For it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our ancestors up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. He performed those great signs before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among all the peoples through whom we passed. Therefore, we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”



I Will Follow Him- arrangement from “Sister Act”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aUB_E3Ojh4





At the very root of who we are is not something that we have done or accomplished, but what has been done for us. At the end of the movie "The Wizard of Oz", the Tin Man is told by Oz to remember that "a heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others". None of us is perfect; our church is not perfect. But we are loved perfectly by God. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross not only is the ultimate demonstration of that love; it empowers us to live a life of victory over the selfishness, divisiveness and emptiness of sin and live in peace and unity together.



The call to be a disciple of Christ begins with the choice to humbly accept that love into our hearts and allow it to transform us into the people we are meant to be, made in the image of an all-compassionate God. The difference we can make in this world is a result of that incredible, unfailing divine love.



It may not always be cool to call oneself a believer out in the world, but the message of the cross is the very hope that this world needs. The apostle Paul in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans says "For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous by faith will live.’"



In the words of Psalm 96 let us "Sing to the Lord, bless his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Proclaim God's marvelous deeds among all peoples."



Jesus Is Just Alright with Me- The Doobie Brothers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBwlr65TbJA>





Thank you for joining this event online.
Brian Fife