

2011, *Rolling Stone Magazine* published what it called the “definitive list” of the 500 greatest songs of all time. Jay-Z wrote an introduction for the list: /

“When you hear a great song, you can think of where you were when you first heard it, the sounds, the smells. It takes the emotions of a moment and holds it for years to come. It transcends time. A great song has all the key elements: melody; emotion; a strong statement that becomes part of the lexicon...” (pause) /

There are 23 Beatles songs on the whole list, which means that their work takes up almost 5% of the top 500. It won’t surprise you to hear, not only that “In My Life” is on the list, but that, along with six other Beatles’ songs, it’s in the top 50 making up 14% of the top 50. /

John Lennon had some thoughts about the song saying, “‘In My Life’ was, I think, my first real, major piece of work. Up until then it had all been glib and throwaway.” /

The *Rolling Stone* intro to the piece continues, The ballad reflects the serious turn the Beatles took with *Rubber Soul*, but it specifically arose from a journalist's challenge: Why don't you write songs about your life? The original lyrics put Lennon on a bus in Liverpool, "and it was the most boring sort of 'What I Did on My Holidays Bus Trip' song," he said. So Lennon rewrote the lyrics, changing the song into a gorgeous reminiscence about his life before the Beatles. /

*There are places I remember*

*All my life, though some have changed.*

*Some forever, not for better.*

*Some are gone, and some remain. (pause) /*

There is no one in scripture like King David. There is no one else, aside from Jesus, whose story is told with such scope, detail, and nuance. We meet David when he is a young man, probably about eighteen years old, a shepherd and the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem. We meet him when the prophet Samuel is on the hunt for a new king because God's favor has turned away from King Saul. (Saul disobeyed God's direct commandment to, not only wipe out an entire

people, but also to destroy all the property confiscated from them. This is that troubling, bloodthirsty God we sometimes come across in scripture, and that is probably for another time and another sermon.) /

Jonathan, a warrior, is the king's son. The prophet Samuel travels to Bethlehem, on God's instruction, and a kind of beauty pageant takes place: Samuel knows the next king will be one of Jesse's sons, but he doesn't know which. First Samuel meets the oldest, E-Lie-Ab (Eliab), but immediately God speaks to the prophet, to give him some advice: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). E-Lie-Ab (Eliab) is not the one. /

One by one the sons of Jesse are paraded before Samuel, but each time, the Lord whispers, "No." Finally, when it appears Samuel has met everyone, he asks, Is there no one else? Well, there's this kid, but he's out minding the sheep. And someone is sent out, and in comes David. And he's beautiful. Samuel can see that. Apparently, everyone can see that. But that is not why God tells Samuel to anoint him. God has

already told us why David is chosen: God can see his heart. And this is the heart God wants on the throne. Don't you just love that, here's this guy who throughout the Bible makes all kinds of mistakes and missteps and God is like, "Nope, this is my guy." (pause) /

David is anointed king, but for the time being, it's a secret. This is incredibly important to the story. Saul has lost God's favor, but because God, at one-point, anointed Saul king, David will not attempt to harm him. So, he waits. /

The next part of David's story is about his military prowess. He is young, he is still not grown, so armor borrowed from the king hangs off him ridiculously. But there is this Philistine giant named Goliath, and David... well, you know. He has a sling and a couple of rocks, and an extraordinarily brave heart, not to mention fantastic aim. And he kills this terror whom no one else has been able to touch. /

After the battle, David is brought before Saul, still holding the giant's head in his hand. They exchange two sentences: *Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."* ~1 Samuel 17:58 /

Apparently, Jonathan has been standing right there, observing his father's meeting with the young warrior. And this is what happens next:

*When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. ~1 Samuel 18:1-4 (pause) /*

*All these places have their moments*

*With lovers and friends I still can't recall.*

*Some are dead and some are living.*

*In my life I love them all. /*

There is maybe one other love story in scripture that begins with anything like the description of the meeting of David and Jonathan: that would be the moment when Jacob meets Rachel at a well, and he weeps and kisses her, and knows that his heart is home. /

When David and Jonathan meet, each man's heart finds its home. Their souls are bound together. Jonathan loves David as his own soul, and makes a covenant with him, and marks that covenant by giving David the armor and the clothes off his back. /

There is no other human love story in scripture that takes up as many verses as the story of David and Jonathan. It takes place over fifteen chapters in First and Second Samuel. /

In 1 Samuel 20, David is on the run from Saul, who has become angry and jealous of how much the people love David. He sees him as a political threat, with good reason. David and Jonathan meet, and Jonathan promises to find out whether his father is, in fact, out for David's hide. Before he leaves, he and David reaffirm their covenant—not only to one another, but to both their children, a covenant of mutual protection and loyalty, whatever the outcome of this power struggle. Jonathan returns to David the next day. The intention of Saul is very, very clear, and David must run. These may be their last moments together. /

*David rose from beside the stone heap and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He bowed three times, and they kissed each other, and wept with each other; David wept the more. Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants, forever.'"* He got up and left; and Jonathan went into the city. 1 Samuel 20:40-43 (pause) /

Many chapters and many skirmishes and battles later, David learns later that Saul and Jonathan have both been killed in battle. This means that David is king, which was God's intention from the outset of his story. But it also means that the man to whom his heart was knit is dead. David composes and sings the lament. It contains the beautiful and well-known refrain, "How the mighty have fallen!" And it continues, much like any other biblical lament ... until we reach verse 26:

*I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me;*

*your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. (pause) /*

*But of all these friends and lovers,*

*There is no one compares with you*

*And these memories lose their meaning*

*When I think of love as something new. /*

As he mourns the death of Jonathan, much life lies ahead for David. There are more battles ahead, and more alliances: political and personal. Ahead of David lies a full forty years as king, the king who united all the people of Israel. Also ahead of David is what scripture describes as the great sin of his life, the one which resulted in God sending another prophet, Nathan, with an oracle of condemnation and punishment: David's taking of Bathsheba, a married woman, and his murder of her husband as a way to cover his crime. Ahead of David lies the curse resulting from that sin: that the sword would never depart from his family, and the traumas of seeing one daughter raped by her brother, a son kill another son, and attempt to kill David himself. Ahead of David lie old age, and the choice of Solomon as his heir, and at last, the moment when he sleeps with his ancestors. /



////// But scripture bears witness to these things: that David was the choice of God, who looks upon the heart; that Jonathan and David's souls were knit together at first sight; that they professed their love for one another time and again; that they swore a covenant to one another, and reiterated it time and again; that they wept together; and that, upon Jonathan's death, David composed an exquisite lament, declaring that Jonathan was beloved and lovely, and that his love surpassed that of women. This lament is David's gorgeous reminiscence about this life-altering love, before he was king. (pause) /

*Though I know I'll never ever lose affection*

*For people and things that went before,*

*I know I'll often stop and think about them.*

*In my life I love you more. /*

This story of David and Jonathan isn't very well-known among most Christians, there's evidence that, throughout the ages, it has been noted by at least some. Images of this relationship have graced churches throughout the centuries. There is a little church known as St. Mark's Portobello in Edinburgh, Scotland with a stained-glass window depicting

the meeting of David and Jonathan, that moment when their souls were bound together. It is absolutely gorgeous, but I am a lover of stained glass. The window was created in 1882 and was dedicated “In loving memory of George Frederick Paterson of Castle Huntly who died at Portobello, 30th Sept. 1890, aged 33.” Paterson was in the army, and he was not married. The window was paid for by “a friend.” (pause) /

*In my life, I love you more. /*

Thanks be to God. Amen. ////