



St Marylebone  
*Parish Church*

**Trinity xiii 2019,  
11am Choral Eucharist and Baptism**

What's your story?

I don't mean a potted memoir. I don't mean the plot of your favourite soap, or that comic monologue you learnt off-by-heart once.

I mean what story does your life tell?

C20th author Kurt Vonnegut's potted memoir is the horrors of Dresden and PoW camp, a series of broken relationships, and a generation scarred by the Vietnam war. He looked on the world through those lenses, and did not flinch. Thus the stories he wrote, but more importantly, the story his life therefore told is one of chaos and meaninglessness, but with (it must be admitted) a rather endearing twinkle in his eye.

'His good jokes are bad jokes' as one author has written. There's a moment in one of his novels when a father and son are walking amongst piles of corpses – the result of an outbreak of plague.

‘He was making the flashlight beam dance all over the dead people stacked outside. [Vonnegut writes] He put his hand on my head, and do you know what that marvelous man said to me?’ Asked Castle. ‘Nope.’ ‘Son,’ my father said to me, ‘someday all this will be yours’.

Kurt Vonnegut’s life, like many others, joins the chorus line in those last gasps of Bohemian Rhapsody: ‘nothing really matters...’

The important place for us to start here is to notice that it is not actually Vonnegut’s story. It isn’t Freddie Mercury’ story. It isn’t their story. It is a greater story of which their lives speak. All of our lives are a particular story, a thread, that participates in a greater tapestry.

So, what’s your story? What greater story is your life telling?

You might be thinking that to think of your whole life as simply part of a greater story is just a means of control. Unfortunately it certainly has been, but that is not what I’m talking about.

St Paul, so often misunderstood as a grumpy old stick-in-the-mud, in the portion of his letter to Timothy which is today’s first reading puts us right. St Paul’s life tells the story I’m talking about.

A highly educated Jewish scholar and enforcer of the Law; his whole life becomes defined by a single moment, on the road to Damascus. When Christ appears to him. Every subsequent moment is lived out of that moment of transformation: gift and glory. Today's snippet radiates with this. St Paul's life tells this story: gift and glory. Every moment defined by being bowled over by the greatness of this gift, and irrepressibly living forward into the promise of glory.

Because the story of which this place is a thread, the tapestry which our lives are called to weave is not one of nihilistic smirk. But of gift and glory. You, me, us and God. The greatest of love stories.

JRR Tolkien and C S Lewis and Hugo Dyson are said to have been walking in Christchurch meadows – Dyson and Tolkien devout Christians of course, and Lewis at that time a convinced atheist. 'Can't you see', said Lewis, 'that the Christian faith is all a myth'. 'Yes,' replies Tolkien, 'but it is the one true myth'. It is the Great Story (capital G, capital S).

But it is not our story. We are in it, rather than the other way round. Just as many people, for understandable but ultimately mistaken reasons dismiss such a world view as cynical control, so many people take such an understanding and scribble unreal postscripts like 'and

therefore bad things will never happen' 'and so, it will always be like this'.

If we're doing that, we're still missing the point. It is not our story. We are its.

Gift and glory.

That is the story we are being invited to live.

Today, Flic and Amy are to be baptized. In baptism, we are buried with Christ and when the water falls away we rise to share Christ's unending life. Death has been put behind us. It's sting lost. Gift and glory. In baptism we are made heirs of a promise that is our story, to be lived out day by day. It is not a shackle, but a glorious gift. In Baptism we are given the grace to live in this true myth.. Christ seeks us out, each of us. He is the Good Shepherd, just as the widow searched for her coin. We are woven into the tapestry of this Universal Love Story for no other reason than that we can truly live. Gift and glory.

We for our part, just have to open our eyes, our hearts and our lives, to dare to take up our place in this greatest of love stories of you and us and God. In baptism, in the heavenly Banquet of the Eucharist at the heart of our lives week by week, in growing in a personal relationship with God in Christ. To dare to look on the world, not to flinch, or pretend or lurch for control, but to receive and pass on this gift and glory.