

Monday, March 24: The Only Exception

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<https://open.spotify.com/track/7JIuqL4ZqkpfGKQhYlrirs?si=ad39f988057043fe>

*When I was younger, I saw my daddy cry
And curse at the wind
He broke his own heart and I watched
As he tried to reassemble it
And my momma swore
That she would never let herself forget
And that was the day that I promised
I'd never sing of love if it does not exist
But darling, you are the only exception
You are the only exception
You are the only exception
Maybe I know somewhere deep in my soul
That love never lasts
And we've got to find other ways to make it alone
Or keep a straight face
And I've always lived like this
Keeping a comfortable distance
And up until now I had sworn to myself
That I'm content with loneliness
Because none of it was ever worth the risk
But you are the only exception
You are the only exception
You are the only exception
You are the only exception
I've got a tight grip on reality
But I can't let go of what's in front of me here
I know you're leaving in the morning when you wake up
Leave me with some kind of proof it's not a dream
You are the only exception
You are the only exception
You are the only exception
You are the only exception*

*You are the only exception
You are the only exception
You are the only exception
You are the only exception
And I'm on my way to believing
Oh, and I'm on my way to believing*

So let's start with some real talk: this is not a song about God. It's not rooted in any kind of intentional sense of theology or worship or anything remotely intended to guide a journey of faith. But it is a reflection on another kind of journey: one where our lived experience informs our future expectation. Where we have been is where we think we're headed.

Surely this is done from some place of wisdom, if not resignation. "The grass isn't always greener on the other side" or something like that. Invitations to the familiar are the kind of litany that can bind us in our own spaces of repetition and belief that it will never get much better than now or then even if now or then hasn't been all that great.

But darling, somewhere along this familiar journey comes *the only exception*. A romanticized departure from the past and present that allows even the briefest glimpse into what could be, whether or not it will. The implication in the song is that it is hard to believe this exception can be real. The expectation is that it will end poorly.

It's almost as if the failure has already been written. This cannot work because it never has. It doesn't fit the pattern. For a different outcome to occur would mean that a love was risked the might not have been worth it, even though the familiar isn't really worth it either.

All of this makes me think of the scene where many people are preparing to hear Jesus teach in Luke 15. There are several parables in this chapter – a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost person – and these are tools to connect with the wide audience that is present. One could guess that some might be more excited to hear what Jesus has to say than others. Here's Luke 15:1-3a:

"Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable:"

From there, the parables are told. And each one of them, whether it be goods, monies, or offspring, describes to the gathered what it means to receive that which has been presumed lost. To reacquire what was once in our possession. To find that finding is a great gift, a miracle even.

And as this is happening, the people most familiar with the journey are most displeased with what is unfolding. In many senses, it is as if they are saying "we know how this journey goes and what

you are saying isn't how it is supposed to end." They have long rehearsed the songs of waiting, of loneliness, of a wonder that is less about hope and more about apathy.

Instead Jesus offers an exception, the only exception. That which you believed you could not have is before you. And because you have me, you have all you will ever need.

Goodness knows this is something I need a reminder of constantly. It is far easier to rehash the rhythms of disappointment than it is to risk the wonder of hope. And yet, as this journey of Lent meanders on, perhaps we are finding that hope is worth the risk. Maybe for us, that last stanza is becoming all the more real:

And I'm on my way to believing

Oh, and I'm on my way to believing