

## **Thursday, March 6: Dear Theodosia (Reprise)**

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<https://open.spotify.com/track/0EPhiIcssW3jLKcGL8zYfl?si=1734c4267f2d4df9>

Recently, I've been thinking a lot about Chance the Rapper's *Dear Theodosia (Reprise)* from *The Hamilton Mixtape*.

*Dear Theodosia* is a song from the Broadway musical *Hamilton* (I'm a little obsessed with Broadway musicals – in fact, there's another entry based on a song from *Hamilton* coming from me later in this devotional). In the play, this song begins a transitional moment. The first act of *Hamilton* tells the story of the American Revolution (and Alexander Hamilton's role in it). When the first act ends, we move from the frenetic energy of fighting for freedom to the second act's story about the complicated work of building a new nation and figuring out how to govern it (along with the tragedies of the second half of Hamilton's life). As the revolution ends, just before the end of the first act, Hamilton and Burr sing to their newborn children (Burr's daughter's name is Theodosia) about their hope for the future. In the play, the music brings a hopeful energy, which gives these lyrics a sense of real optimism:

*I'm dedicating every day to you  
Domestic life was never quite my style  
When you smile, you knock me out, I fall apart  
And I thought I was so smart  
  
You will come of age with our young nation  
We'll bleed and fight for you  
We'll make it right for you  
If we lay a strong enough foundation  
We'll pass it on to you, we'll give the world to you  
And you'll blow us all away  
Someday, someday*

It's a great song about the hope that comes with new beginnings and a parent's longing to leave a better world to their children.

In 2016, a variety of artists contributed to *The Hamilton Mixtape* – an album that used the musical *Hamilton* as source material for new and innovative musical work. I love many songs on that album, but I find myself particularly haunted by Chance's *Dear Theodosia (Reprise)*.

Chance doesn't change any of the lyrics to the song. But he changes the mood. The music goes from hopeful to mournful. Instead of confidently proclaiming that "we'll pass it on to you, we'll give the world to you," those words sound more like a question – more like a prayer.

In essence, this song asks the question: **what if we don't leave a better world to our children?** What if our generation doesn't build a stronger foundation for the future, but instead makes things harder for the people who come after us? I listened to this song on repeat that first year it came out, and I find myself listening to it in much the same way over the last several months. In a society full of division and demonization, in a world where the future seems uncertain, in a nation that refuses to do anything about the epidemic of gun violence that is the leading cause of death for children and teens, with spiraling violence and conspiracy theories, with immigrants and the marginalized being increasingly targeted by the powerful, with hatred and retribution being amplified over love and grace, I find myself sometimes wondering if my children's life will be spent rebuilding a world that we have destroyed. I look at my children and I sometimes wonder, will they know a world that is far less safe than the world I have known for most of my life? Will they know more suffering than I have known? Have we, as a society, failed them and their generation? Chance's version of this song gives voice to these concerns and more. It helps me lament the ways in which we, as a society, have failed our children.

But Chance's *Dear Theodosia (Reprise)* doesn't stay with lament. It doesn't leave us in despair.

*We'll bleed and fight for you, I'll make it right for you  
If we lay a strong enough foundation  
We'll pass it on to you, I'll give the world to you*

Instead of optimism, Chance's version of the song finds a way to balance both lament and hope. It's never sappy or saccharine, but it doesn't leave us in the valley of the shadow of death. There is much that makes us doubt, but there is also reason to hope, there is reason to keep working. There is pain. There are reasons to lament. And there are also reasons to hope. We will bleed and fight for our children. We will continue to work for good. Many folks who have come before us have fought for a better world, and they made real progress – and as much as we grieve what is broken, we know that there are many people working to bring healing.

For me, the ultimate hope I have for my children is not in my willingness to “bleed and fight” for them, but in the Jesus Christ who has bled and died for them. My children's hope is not that I (or anyone else) can “lay a strong enough foundation” for their lives, but that Jesus Christ is the firm foundation, that in his death and resurrection, everything shall be made new.

I don't say that as pie in the sky escapism. I don't mean to say that “just believe in Jesus and everything will be OK.” I mean to say that, when things feel hopeless, I don't know what else to do but cling to the Christ who is my ultimate hope. When I feel defeated, I don't know what else to do but remember that Christ has won the ultimate victory. When the world seems dark, I remember that Christ is the true light – and that he has been at work in and through his people across the generations. Things have felt dark before. Human beings have long wondered whether we will actually leave a better world to our children – or if things are just getting worse. Jesus Christ does not call us to save

the world – that’s his job – but he does invite us, as he has always invited his people, to join him in the work of embodying love, standing up for justice, loving our neighbors, reflecting his light for a world in need. We can’t eliminate all the hatred we see, but we can make our little corner of the world more loving. We can’t defeat every injustice on our own, but we can work to embody justice and advocate for goodness in our own communities, in our day-to-day interactions. The promise that Christ is our true hope enables us to join in his work – because we don’t have to do everything (that’s Jesus’s job) we are empowered to do something.

What *Dear Theodosia (Reprise)* does is give voice to our fear while also inviting us to hold onto hope. That’s the only way forward that I know. I do worry about the future. I do grieve over the harm we have done to our world and the mess we are handing on to our children. But I also trust that God is faithful and that God is still at work. I believe that the love that Christ has given to us is a love that we are called to share. I see all the people who are speaking the truth, resisting evil, working for good, and I give thanks to be part of a world with other people who refuse to give up, who insist on being part of the work of love. I know that even the little contribution I can make to this world matters – not because I can save the world by myself, but because my work is bound up within the work of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is making all things new.

As the song ends, Chance repeats the word “someday” over and over, and it almost feels apocalyptic, it almost feels as if he is pointing towards the biblical “Day of the Lord.” In the end, someday, God will make all things right. In the meantime, we grieve what must be grieved, and we join in the work of love, and we trust that the God who has always been faithful will continue to be.

And the reason we can trust that the someday will come – the reason we can cling to Jesus and it’s not simple escapism – is because the God who promises things will be put right “someday” is also the God who has entered into our world, in all its brokenness and despair. God chose enter into – and to be for and with – the world of Chance’s *Dear Theodosia (Reprise)*. God chose to enter into and love a world full of violence and oppression. God chose to be one of us in Jesus Christ, and to enter into this world via childbirth, which was one of the leading causes of death for women in the ancient world. God chose to be born among a people that was living under foreign occupation, oppressed and brutalized by the unjust government of Rome. God chose to die the death of a criminal in order to save us. When God enters the world in Jesus Christ, it isn’t with the blind optimism of Hamilton and Burr singing the original version of this song. It’s with the sobering mixture of lament, realism, and hope of Chance in his remix. But only a God who chooses to do that can possibly deal with the brutal realities we face in this world. Only a God who chooses to be with us in the real world – in all its pain and hurt and complication – could possibly blow us all away with universe-changing love and give us real, lasting, hope for a “someday” when all shall be put right. God, in Jesus Christ, has walked through the darkness. Therefore, we can trust that, someday, God will lead us to the light.

Because this world belongs to the God who is faithful in Jesus Christ, in the end, the world will be safe and sound, for our children, and for all of us.

Someday.

Someday.