IMAGINE

Week #2 of a 5-Week "Songs of Life" Series
Rev. Richard Maraj
Sunday, Nov. 8, 2026

LYRICS

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today... Aha-ah...

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace... You...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world... You...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one

MESSAGE

We are in Week #2 of our five-week fall version of the "Songs of Life" series, where I take a famous hit and then used it to inspire a spiritual message. This fall, for some reason, I decided to just do one-word songs. Last week, we started with "Honesty" by Billy Joel.

And today it is "Imagine" by John Lennon, 1971. And it was the highest-ranking song that he ever did. It reached number three on the charts. And in the context of the early 70s, it was marked by political unrest, social upheaval and the Vietnam war. And "Imagine" really touched people in a deep way that brought them a feeling of hope, a feeling of comfort.

And the song really has become an anthem and a timeless classic. You know, the song is a call to action, urging the listeners to envision a world of peace and to work towards making that vision a reality. You know, John invites us to imagine a world without barriers, without things that separate us. No religion, no borders, no possessions, no divisions. And to be as one with no one to kill and no one to die for.

The song suggests a hypothetical world where our priority is kindness and compassion, unity and oneness. A world that isn't driven by greed; where humanity recognizes its shared destiny. John Lennon actually called the song a positive prayer.

In the Book of Psalms 133, Verse 1, it says, *"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."*

And so, we're going to look at the song, "Imagine," and ask ourselves a question: What do you think it would take to create and live in such a world? And so, I want to explore four spiritual invitations that are inspired by "Imagine." So, they are -- I'll tell you in advance -- hope, release, imagine, and embody.

So, let's look at **HOPE**. You know, hope is to believe in the possibility of something better. This is a song of hope. Hope asks us to look beyond what is happening right now and consider what could be. Hope is the ability to believe that our present circumstances do not have to determine our future. It invites us to look beyond war and conflict to imagine peace and harmony; to see beyond division, to imagine unity; to look beyond fear, to imagine love.

And to look at our personal lives and perhaps see a relationship that isn't working. You know, a financial challenge, a health concern, a dream that hasn't come true. Hope is a belief that says things can change; people can change; relationships can heal; communities can become more compassionate. That I can become a better version of myself, and that my future can be greater than my past.

You know, sometimes we all have times where we lose hope. And it is mainly because we keep focusing on what's wrong, what isn't working, what we don't have … and we forget about what is possible. Henry David Thoreau said that *"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."* And it's when we get to a point of believing that life won't get better, it can't get better, and it'll never get better.

And sometimes we feel powerless, sometimes we feel hopeless. But the truth is: we're not powerless. And things are really never hopeless. You know, hope is believing that something wonderful is still possible, even though things don't look so wonderful right at the moment. Because we have the capacity to choose our thoughts; to change our attitudes; to deepen our faith; and respond differently to life.

The Apostle Paul said, *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Knowing he didn't say, *"Be transformed by waiting for someone else to do it for you."* We wish it said that, but it doesn't! Hope begins by stop asking ourselves the question, *"What is wrong with me and what is wrong with my life?"* and begin asking the question, *"What is possible for me? And what is possible for my life?"*

Imagine someone who had experienced a painful divorce. You know, losing hope might sound like this: *"I'll never trust anyone again. I'll never find love again. My best years are behind me."* You ever had a time where things were just tough and you weren't as positive as you could be? Sometimes our mindset gets stuck in the negative. We get stuck in the pain. We get stuck believing that it isn't going to work.

Now imagine that same person being injected with a sense of hope and believing that something is better. They might say, *"This relationship has ended, but my capacity to love has not ended. I have learned something about myself. I can heal. I can grow. I can create a new chapter."*

The first step in a better world is to discover and know and affirm the power of living hope that is in us; that believes that a better life is possible.

So, the question is: Do you believe there is a better life possible for yourself?

The second thing is **RELEASE**. Let go of the attachments that divide us and disturb our peace. So let me ask you: What do you think you need to release and make peace with that is currently disturbing your sense of peace? That is currently dividing yourself inside?

You know the famous story of the rich young man who told Jesus, he said, *"How do I get eternal life?"*

So, Jesus said, *"Well, you've got to live the commandments."*

And the guy said, *"Yeah, yeah; I got all that."*

And then Jesus says to him, *"Then go and sell all your possessions and then come and follow me."*

And so, he was down and he dropped his head and he walked away. And the whole message in it -- you think it's because he was wanting just to hold on to his wealth, which it was in a way. But it is because he identified his self-worth and need and the source of his happiness from that. Nothing wrong with possessions; nothing wrong with wealth at all. But when we cross that thing where possessions possess us, then we have an issue. Because we're believing that that's the source of our happiness. That's our identity of who we are, and believe that's the source. And it tends to distract us from a spiritual life; from a life that looks more towards caring and helping for others.

I mean, sometimes we can get very attached to our stuff, to our wealth, to our money. Anybody remember Jack Benny? So, Jack Benny, in one of the shows, was held at gunpoint with a gun to the back of his neck. And the person said, *"Your money or your life. Your money or your life!"*

And then there was nothing. There was just silence. And the robber with the gun to the back of his head said, *"Hey, I just said your money or your life!"*

And Jack Benny says, *"Yeah, yeah; I'm just thinking. I'm thinking." [Congregants laugh]* We are attached and can be attached to our stuff! Money. Status. Power. But sometimes we're attached to the past.

So, what are the things that create division and conflict and turmoil within ourselves? What are the things that we're holding on to that are really affecting our peace?

You know, we hold on to things like resentment towards someone who hurt us; anger because of the way someone treated us unfairly. We can hold on to the need to be right; the need to control everything; the judgment that we have about people who think differently. You know, regret about decisions that we made years and years ago. Expectations about how our life has turned out, and the fear of losing something we believe we just cannot live without.

And so, these things that we hold on to can really affect our level of peace of mind. We are so attached to them that they suck up a lot of our creative energy, as well as our joy, our peace, and our own happiness.

But wait; there's more! Other things that create separation is when we think things like that, *"There is just not enough."* And when we think that, *"I've got to protect and watch out, look out for number one, and just take care of mine."* Or thinking, *"People who disagree with me are my enemies."* Or, *"If someone else succeeds, it means that I lose." "I will never be able to change."* These thoughts really end up creating an inner world of fear; an inner life of competition and scarcity.

Imagine what would happen if we began to replace these types of thoughts with spiritual truths. Instead of scarcity, we would let it go and practice abundance. Instead of fear, we would let that go and practice faith. Instead of resentment, we would let that go and practice forgiveness. Instead of separation, we would let that go and practice oneness. We may not choose every circumstance in our lives, but we can always choose the consciousness through which we handle and face those situations.

In the Book of Matthew, Chapter 5, Verse 9, it said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."* A peacemaker is someone who actively participates in creating peace. You know, a peacemaker is someone who listens when others are hurting. A peacemaker will never return cruelty when they have received cruelty. A peacemaker is someone who has the courage to apologize, the humility to forgive, and the wisdom to establish healthy boundaries.

And when I would hear, *"Blessed are the peacemakers …,"* I only thought it was someone who was trying to create peace in the family and in the neighborhood and in the world. But what I also believe is that they could only do that by making peace within themselves -- finding their own peace.

And so, we all need to ask ourselves: What am I holding on to? Is it anger? Is it disappointment? Is it fear? Is it the need to be right? Is it an expectation?

And then to say: What is this attachment costing me? Because when we hold on to these things, they are costing us. They can cost us sleep. They can cost us energy or happiness or peace of mind.

And then the big question is: What am I willing to release? And you might say: I'm willing to release my need to control this person or this situation. I release my expectation that the past should have been different. I release the belief that I must carry this anger forever.

And then take a slow breath and imagine placing that burden in the loving, peaceful presence of God. I really think before we go to bed every single night that we should just spend a moment and ask ourselves: What do I need to let go? What is it that I picked up today that is not for my good that I need to consciously release to Spirit and ask Spirit to create in me a clean heart?

The third is to **IMAGINE**. To use the power of vision to see a greater possibility. John Lennon invites us to imagine a different world. And we can also ask ourselves to imagine a different life of our own.

And what if we began imagining a better relationship or a healthier attitude or a more fulfilling future or a more peaceful way of living? You know, what if we stopped imagining things going wrong in our minds and start imagining things going right?

Unity teaches that the imagination is one of the 12 powers. It is a spiritual faculty that we have all been blessed with. Charles Fillmore says that*, "Imagination is the incredible ability to form mental pictures and possibilities that don't currently exist, but to call them forth in our mind to set an energy that will attract it."* Your imagination is not simply daydreaming; it is seeing possibilities before they appear.

In Proverbs 29, Verse 18, it says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* And the beautiful thing about having a vision is that it directs our spiritual energy. It directs our focus and our intention and our abilities. You know, without a vision, we simply react to whatever's happening in life. But with a vision, we begin to participate in the creation of something greater.

So, can you imagine seeing a greater life for yourself? What is the highest vision you have for your health? What is the highest vision you have for your finances? What is the highest vision you have for your relationship? For your career? And for your spiritual life? What are you willing to dare to imagine?

Imagination really channels and directs our creative energies. And that's why it's so important to have one -- is to utilize the great gifts we have to bring forth more love, more light, and more goodness in the world.

"I am a powerful, creative, spiritual being."

"I am a powerful, creative, spiritual being."

Let's say that together: *[with congregants] "I am a powerful, creative, spiritual being."* Take a deep breath into that.

And let's say it again: [with congregants*] "I am a powerful, creative, spiritual being."*

And now just repeat/affirm after me.

"I am a confident creator."

Together: [with congregants] *"I am a confident creator."*

"I am a masterful manifester."

[With congregants:] "I am a masterful manifester."

"I am a powerful producer."

[With congregants:] "I am a powerful producer."

"I am a dynamic demonstrator."

[With congregants:] "I am a dynamic demonstrator. "

"I am a powerful, creative, spiritual being."

Together: [with congregants]: *"I am a powerful, creative, spiritual being."*

And the last one is to **EMBODY** and become the change you want to see in the world. If we want to experience more peace in the world, we all know that we need to be more peaceful within ourselves. If we want to see more love and kindness in the world, we need to demonstrate more love and kindness within ourselves. If we want to see less judgment, we must release our own judgment.

If we want a better world, we've got be willing to imagine one and then show up in a better way ourselves. You know, we can't create a new world while continuing to live in the consciousness that created the old world. Sometimes we think we need to change the government or change the institutions or communities or relationships … and, yeah, there might be some truth in that. But the most important place to start is to begin to change and shift our own consciousness.

The question is not simply: Can we imagine a better world? The question is: Are we willing to become the consciousness that makes that world possible? Every time we choose understanding over judgment, we create a different possibility. Every time we choose forgiveness over resentment, we become freer. Every time we choose kindness over indifference, we help create a world where kindness becomes more natural and normal.

Be the change we want to see in the world.

Father Murphy walks into a pub in Dublin and says to the first man he sees, *"Do you want to go to heaven?"*

And the man says, "*I do, Father."*

And then the priest goes and says to him, *"Well, go stand against that wall over there."*

And then the priest asks another man, *"Do you want to go to heaven?"*

"Certainly, Father!"

And he said, *"Well, then go stand over there by the wall."*

And then Father Murphy walks up to O'Toole and says, *"Do you want to go to heaven?"*

And O'Toole says*, "No, Father, I don't."*

And the priest says, "I don't believe this! You mean to tell me that when you die, you don't want to go to heaven?"

And O'Toole says, *"Oh, when I die? Yes! I thought you were talking about getting a group together to go now." [Congregants laugh]*

You know, this is a powerful and touching song on many, many, many levels. And so, I believe it really -- at the root of it -- is calling for all of us to bring forth hope; to bring forth release; to bring forth our imagination; and embody so we can create a better world for ourselves … not only here right now, but a better world for all people everywhere, now and in the future.

Hope. Release. Imagine. Embody. That is the powerful message for a better life and a better world for all of us from the song, "Imagine." God bless you all.

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