



*“This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.”
(Said Peter to the crowd in Acts 2:32)*

One of the most imaginative and poignant song writers of our time died earlier this month. John Prine was 73 years old. His death certificate will say that he died from the COVID-19 virus, but bouts with throat and lung cancer from a life of chain smoking certainly contributed. He sang in *When I Get to Heaven*, that he was going to “smoke a cigarette nine miles long,” so I guess he had a hard time kicking the habit.

I hadn’t listened to John much lately; actually for a long time. And for those of you who know me you probably wouldn’t guess there was much room for John Prine in musical lanes mostly occupied by the likes of Bruce Springsteen, U2, Led Zeppelin, and Rush. You would be right if you said John Prine was a little too “country” for me, but I do like sarcasm and dry wit, a lot actually, and that’s the space John filled for me.

Right after he died I threw on my headphones and pulled up “John Prine Essentials” on Apple Music. I heard some wonderful new songs, but also some songs from the late 70’s and early 80’s that I had almost completely forgotten and made me laugh out loud. These older numbers immediately took me back to a particular time in my life. Music has a way of doing that, of defining a formative period or even a generation. The images of people and places were vivid, and the memories of them came flooding back. I remembered that I learned how to play the guitar on some of John’s songs.

John had a way of making one see into the soul of the common man or woman. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* in 2018 he was asked what lyric he was most proud of. John quoted from *Sam Stone*, a song about a Vietnam veteran returning home. Like many vets of that time, Stone couldn’t find a job, didn’t know how to relate to his wife and kids, and consequently his life disintegrated into a drug-induced downward spiral.

*“There’s a hole in Daddy’s arm where all the money goes.
And Jesus Christ died for nothin’, I suppose.”*

“That’s pretty hopeless,” he said.

No one would judge us if we have allowed some degree of hopelessness to creep into our lives these days, given the circumstances. Even when we’re living “normal lives” (if we can even remember whatever that is) we have all struggled from time to time to maintain a hopeful perspective. Life can sometimes feel overwhelming.

And so let me remind you that we are in the Easter season, and that Jesus Christ did not die for nothing. He died for you and for me, for a very clear purpose, so that all of the things that try so forcefully to drain our hope would be overcome by the unending, powerful love of God. Know that there is always hope. For you, for your loved ones, for the church, for the world. For everyone who opens their hearts to the resurrected Christ. Live this day in that hope, for as Peter testified, *“This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.”*

Peace be with you,

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray. Lord God, let our hope always be grounded in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, like St. Peter, let us also become witnesses to the new, abundant, and everlasting life you have promised through Him. Amen