

**We arrive where we first started**  
**Revelation 22 & Genesis 1 & 2**  
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Yesterday—was one of those days— one of those sneaky holy days. It began with baptismal counseling—meeting with the parents of the children we'll baptize next week. Then I was off to do a graveside memorial service—for a family I did not know—but who called and said they needed a priest. Then off to a going away party for parishioners who are leaving, then to a parishioner's birthday party and then to a parishioner's fund raising party. It was one of those days—where I could have gone from one event to the other—checking them off my list—one down four to go. But something happened—on my way through the day. The out of town folks for the graveside service—got caught in Cubs traffic and were late. So I spent some time—some wonderful time with a man named Rudy—who for the last 30 years has dug graves at Graceland Cemetary—the cemetery over on Irving Park and Clark.

It was—as you will recall—a beautiful day—Graceland is, is you'll pardon the pun, drop-dead gorgeous. So Rudy and I began our conversation—we talked about his 18 year old son who is a wonderful guitarist. We talked about his girlfriend of 14 years—“Rudy when are you going to marry her?” Done that once he said, don't think I'll risk it again. We talked about his girlfriends dog, Sarah, the yorkie who has nerve cancer and lost the use of her left front paw.

We walked around the cemetery—she showed my gravesites he had dug. We talked about the lives of the people chilsed into stone. The famous ones—the rich ones—the ones that receive a wreath every Christmas—for perpetuity.

Then when our family arrived—Rudy got Gettrurde Jaques cremains—92 years old—died Christmas day. He put her flowers in the flatbed and we wound around the graveyard three limos, a kayak racked station wagon and a pick-up truck. A procession – that I wonder if Getrude Jaques ever could have pictured.

I didn't meet the family until they got out of the limos. I talked the son on the phone—he in Manhattan—me in Chicago. We'd never laid eyes on each other. They climbed out—a lot of sunglasses and a lot of black dresses. Gertrude didn't really do church—wasn't really very religious—but as her son Willard said, “It seemed right to at least say some prayers at her grave.” So I was there—ostensibly to bear the word of God. And yet—as we gathered—as they spoke of their mother, their grandmother—it was me—who heard the word—heard the word that I spoke—as if for the very first time.

*“I am resurrection and I am life, says the Lord. Whoever has faith in me, shall have life, Even though she die. Everyone who has life And has committed themselves Shall not die for ever.*

*Continue—with—the prayers.*

As I read those words—that I was overcome with God. Tears just came to my eyes—heaven knows what they all must have thought of the priest crying at their mother’s funeral—crying over the love of God for a woman I’d never met. And yet—that gift—that eternal gift of God’s eternal love—no matter what—hit my heart, hit my soul—hit my tear ducts and would not relent.

What is that wonderful TS Eliot Quote, “We will arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”

So it is with life—as it is with scripture—  
Our passage this morning—from revelation is the last passage of the bible—it ends in revelation—much as it began in Genesis

Tree of life—river running through it  
Move from darkness to light  
If we lucky—if the cubs are playing and traffic is bad—  
We might wind up stopping, cooling our heels—listening to people’s story  
Just long enough to remember that God is all around  
The tree of life is here—  
We might see and hear of our faith—God’s love for us—once more—as if it were the very first time.