

NAME

The Camden 28 - Sunday Service for August 9, 2020.mp3

DATE

August 12, 2020

DURATION

28m 55s

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:01]**

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation.

[00:00:11]

Good morning, everyone, welcome to this week's message. Um, I'm very happy to be here with all of you. I wish I could see you in person. There's nothing like seeing everyone's face and being able to connect that way. But this is where we are and this is what we have. When I was a little kid, I was raised Catholic and right from the beginning I was baptized and confirmed and even did a year at Catholic school. By the time I was around maybe seven, I begin to understand who Jesus was and what he was about. And it was one particular Easter that I remember so clearly watching the nineteen twenty seven black and white film The King of Kings. And when it came to the end of the film, when Jesus was on the cross, I began to weep so hard. And I remember sitting in my parent's living room and crying all the way through the end of the film. And if you haven't seen the film before, here's a little clip from it that I'm showing. As I'm talking to you, you can see how the sky becomes dark and God has wrath on the people who killed his son. At the time, I didn't think so much. It wasn't so much about I didn't think much about God's wrath at the at the end of the film, I was so taken by this guy, this person who is so gentle, so loving, so caring about everyone. And I wanted to know more. I was hungry for more. And I became a ferocious reader of the Bible.

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I like those of you who know me, know I tell these stories all the time, fourth and fifth grade at lunch time, I would hold little sessions where I would read from the Bible and counsel my fellow classmates on challenges that they were having in their lives and.

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I. I was really struck by.

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The.

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This person's ability to be with anyone. To be with the weak, the poor, the sick. There's something about it that deeply. Touched my soul.

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And, you know, by the time I was 12 or 13, know the time I was 11 or 12, I had a shrine in my room right under my Beatles poster, oddest thing. And I read the Bible every. Every day.

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And then it was about right around 12 or 13 that I began to become discouraged with the Catholic religion. Some things just didn't add up to me and I there were so many things that I didn't understand. Again, those of you who know me always hear me tell the story of when I was in the one year I did a Catholic school at St. Francis DeSales where I would ask the question to the teachers, you know, Jesus Rose.

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From the dead on the third day and the first person he came to was Mary Magdalene and teachers say, yeah, well, how come she's not an apostle since she's the.

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First person he came to and immediately it would be down to the office, so there was always this rebel thing in me and, you know, right about that time when I was 12, 13, 14, and I felt my. Disillusionment with the Catholic religion. I began looking at all the religions of the world, this is when I started reading I think it's the first time read Martin Luther King's biography and so many other spiritual leaders that I found to be compelling and interesting. And one

of the things that always struck me was their ability to be nonviolent in the face of. Unbelievable adversity. Anyone else would have lashed out in anger and. They did not, and that was another thing that just really spoke to me. Today, spirit flicks film. Is the Camden twenty eight.

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And I have a special relationship to this film, as I did the closing music credits for the film and also sound design and the sound mix, the film, The Camden tape was directed and produced by Anthony Gugino in two thousand seven. It was aired as part of the POV series on PBS. And it was met with high critical praise and received an eighty eight percent fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes. It also won an award nomination from the Writers Guild of America for Best Documentary Screenplay.

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This is how the film starts.

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What do you do when a child's on fire? We saw children on fire. What do you do when a child is on fire in a war that was a mistake? What do you do, like write a letter?

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So Father Doyle's question there, what do you do? What do you do, the story of Camden twenty eight is about the story of twenty eight deeply devoted Catholics who believed in the teachings of Jesus, particularly the teachings of the New Testament.

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And were committed, deeply committed to helping working with the poor in Camden. And through the course of the film, you you meet some of the the key figures, Father Doyle is very well known. I recommend you check out some of his writing. He has a book of poetry read by Martin Sheen. And it is very powerful. And the Baragon brothers are well known in this area as the keepers of the faith, if you will.

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But back in the late 60s, early 70s, they were on the front line of protesting the war in Vietnam. And that question that Father Doyle asks, what would you do when children are on fire, what would you do when every day there's caskets coming back from the war and it's mostly poor black and brown?

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And what strikes me about this story is these deeply religious and spiritual.

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People. Decided to do. An act of violence, an act of destruction that we're going to break into the draft board and not only destroy, but take.

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And destroy all of the draft cards and.

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Save a grouping of young men from. Being drafted into the war, at least that was the idea.

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So a little bit of history in the late eighteen hundreds.

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Certain Christian theologians, particularly Catholics, found the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament and the left leaning political movements of the time had shared goals, issues of social justice, economic inequality, poverty, alcoholism, crime, racism, sexism, universal health care.

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These were also the same. Causes of the labor movement and the socialist movement, the communist movement that all started to take shape around the late eighteen hundreds in the United States. I strongly recommend, if you're interested in this, to look into the some of the writings on the social gospel and later in the 20th century, the liberation theory. These are the foundations for the actions of the Camden twenty eight and and the and the Christian left.

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But there is a question that is so weighs has been weighing on me the past couple of months as we are in this pandemic and as there is so much civil unrest. And that is the question of when and if do we cross that line into being Violent into Destruction.

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I can't tell you how many people friends of mine have been calling me, asking me, what do you think of BLM? What do you think of the violence and the rioters in the streets?

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And I am torn. I understand. What do you do when you're not heard? What do you do when you say, take your foot off my neck? What's not on your neck? Take your foot off my neck. You're crazy. OK, I'm going to kneel. I'm going to protest. You're un-American. What do you think you're doing? Please take your knee off my neck. No. You become enraged. It's understandable. So this question, when do we cross this line, so I look for.

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Examples, of course, there's the example of Jesus in the temple fashioning a whip, and he forces those doing commerce in his father's house out, flips over tables in a in a rage. The secular history of America is full of stories like this from our beginning, the Boston Tea Party in today's dollars, they did over a million and a half dollars worth of destruction that night.

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And, you know, that is an act of violence.

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And yet. We find that to be OK now I have noticed a level of fear and unease in some of my cisgendered male friends that he have confided in me and said they're thinking of buying a gun. These are progressive, left leaning, sensitive, emotional men who are feeling a sense of fear and unease. That's. Unprecedented. The women I know don't seem so inclined. I don't know if it's because they're more evolved or just used to living with fear and uncertainty. Or maybe they have embraced universal love.

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Not sure. But it further raises that question, should I be preparing to take up arms? So, again, I am struggling. And on this.

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I feel like I'm teetering on the edge of a pen or which way.

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Is the answer where where do where do I look, where do I find this answer?

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A couple of weeks ago, I talked about I mentioned when I was worship leader, I mentioned spending some time with John Lewis and I know I played it a few weeks ago. I want to play this quote again.

[00:14:14]

So people could light a cigarette that in a hair. Down our Backs. Spit on us. We're going to still adhere to the way peace to the way of love we're nonviolence. I never, ever dream. That hating someone or putting in some one down. Because of their race, their color of what he did to me, what they said to me, the way of love is a much better way.

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So. I love that love is more powerful than fighting, than lashing out, that love is so, so powerful a way of understanding and expressing that love that John Lewis and Jesus embody.

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John Lewis told me this amazing story, of the police officer that beat him. Came with his son. And he wanted his son to see him apologize to John Lewis, and when John Lewis was telling me the story, I had tears in my eyes.

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Again, I'm an emotional guy. It's not that unheard of for me to cry.

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But what was striking about it is that he was not bitter, angry. He welcomed that guy in and accepted his apology. And there's very few people like that that you meet that are that much at peace with themselves, and I think it does speak to that that discipline of.

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Holding the space for.

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That kind of love, you know, many of us know the story of the the Sermon on the Mount and where Jesus talks about turning the other cheek, but there's so much about that story that is there is that is not communicated without knowing the culture of the time. So when he talks about turning the other cheek, it's not to say, oh, let that person hit you again. It's more about it has to do with the culture of the time. If someone strikes you, they most likely struck you with their left hand and it would be a backhanded slap if you turn the other cheek.

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They are.

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Forced to strike you with the right hand and an open hand, the left hand is always used for unclean purposes.

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It's a challenge for that person to punch you, and this is seen as a statement of equality, thus turning the other cheek.

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It's persuading, it's demanding equality.

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And I want to tell you a story about myself, and again, I want to be clear, this is not to make myself out to be some perfect person. It's just an example of the power of what Jesus is talking about here and also what John Lewis is talking about and.

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That is when I was in eighth or ninth grade, I would be able to leave science class early and leaving science class early because I had to finish the entire course for study for that year. I would I had finished it in January. And interestingly enough, a little side note, my science partner who sat with me for both seventh and eighth grade, is actually a rocket scientist. He worked on the. He works on the Mars mission. And if he's watching hey mike and so we would be done science class. So it was a one day the teacher wasn't in the room. And one of the tough guys in my class, he was on the football team and very big dude. Oh, by the way, when I was skinny, I mean, when I was younger, I was very skinny.

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I was like a 80, 90 pound, scrawny, skinny, awkward, gawky person. So I wasn't this big bear of a guy that you see before you now. And so as I got up to leave the class, the kids stood up to go sit back down. And I'm when I was younger, I was so naive and stupid. I was like, no, it's OK. We can go. I'm going to go play chess. I'm done my work. Go sit down. No, no, no, it's all fine. Teacher knows it's great. We go every week. It's OK. We're going down to the library and play some chess and it's cool. I said Sit down, if you don't sit down, I call you out. Now, there's no reason to fight. It's all good. I can go to the library. And so he slapped me across the face and. I. I was afraid and enraged, but I stared him in the face for what felt like.

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An hour was maybe a minute. Maybe 90 seconds. And then.

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I walked past him and went. To do what I was planning to do, it went down and go play chess. He never, ever bothered me again, ever.

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And.

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It really spoke to me about the power of standing in your convictions. In love. In.

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That there is a power. That we can tap into. If we are strong enough. That is stronger than any. Violence or.

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Anything that we are afraid of that comes at us now, this is not easy, and I know for myself that in this particular time when I am when I am torn, it is because I'm afraid is because I want to control what's coming at me.

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I want. To know that I am safe. And. We're never safe.

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We just aren't. Anything can happen at any time, but I have seen time and time again with people that I've met personally and that I know who are so deeply committed to this love, and it really is inside of them that they walk through the world. And it's not that they're not aware and it's not that or not they're not stupid or uninformed, but boy, are they walking with the angels.

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I've been lucky enough with my work when I ran a nonprofit working in the inner city, working with at risk youth and also various people I met over the course of the years of my life, and they are very, very clearly protected by this.

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This thing, that is.

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Not easy to see, but, boy, when it's enacted, it is more powerful than a gun, more powerful than a fist and really hard to do.

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So what happens in the Camden Twenty eight Bob Hardy, one of the members of the group who was opposed to the war plan, he was having trouble with this, breaking the law and with the action, and he was feeling torn between that and his loyalty toward his friends. And so he approached the local FBI. So he was now sort of an inside informant for the FBI. Now, the tricky thing that happened was, you know, here's this group of very conscientious Catholic priests and people who are deeply devoted to the the cause and the faith and belief in Jesus and the Beatitudes. How do they know how to break into a federal building? So the FBI ends up handing them everything that they need. And the night of the raid, they're caught and. There's a trial and at the trial.

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Something happened. Something shifted and the Camden, 28 were acquitted, and it was the first time that the.

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Anti-war movement had a victory in court. There were groups before maybe you've heard of the Chicago Seven and there's other groups just like that who were all.

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Took up.

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Violence against, in some way, civil disobedience, protests, and they all went to jail, but this time was a turning point and.

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It was so powerful in that they were freed and the war ended shortly thereafter because the tide had turned.

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What is amazing to me is that to me, in some ways, them getting caught was actually more powerful. Then if they had succeeded in destroying everything and ripping it apart and taking the draft cards, because if they had succeeded in that, I think the sentiment would have been very similar to how some people feel now about some of the rioting that goes on. Oh, they're destroying things. They're rioting. But seeing how the FBI actually. Helped them break into this into the post office. It made the people in the general public think there's something not right here and maybe they're there on the something. There's something not right with this war.

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The power of love, that John Lewis and Jesus talk about. Is the power to be a mirror, to reflect back, to show injustice, inequality,

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And.

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To have that strength, to sit in that love. Well, that's divine.

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So.

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I have a desire to be safe and to feel safe. And I wish for all of you. To feel safe and be safe, but even more, I hope we can find the courage and the strength to stand in that love that is so powerful. And that can defeat an army.

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And I feel like I was at a party a few weeks ago and someone said to me, this is this line, and I said, and I'm going to say it now, I feel like I'm remembering this from the future.

[00:27:40]

Love already won. Would you pray with me? God, spirit. Gaia, Mother Earth. Give us. The strength, the courage, the fortitude to live. In that light. That love. That you send your angels and saints to teach us, to show us. And that we may find a way to hold it, live it, share it and be it.

[00:28:38]

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END OF TRANSCRIPT



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