

NAME

The Willoughbys Sunday Service for July 5th, 2020.mp3

DATE

July 8, 2020

DURATION

31m 56s

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

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation. Good morning, everybody.

[00:00:06]

So are you ready for our week count? I feel like that's somehow part of my job now. This is our 17th week. This is our 17th week online here at Wellspring's.

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It's July.

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I can hardly believe it. And as I have been thinking back over this time that we've been gathering like this from a distance, I've actually been appreciating something about the human mind that I knew, but that I'm having a real direct experience of right now, which is its elasticity, you know, its ability to adjust and turn something that is strange into something that we can do without having to think about it. I feel like that experiment has happened in real time for me over these past 17 weeks. This is now somewhat routine. I know how it works. Right. I remember early on in March and even in April for me and maybe you, due to feeling like almost everything I had to do required at least half of my brain. Right.

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Simple things. Decisions like what do I need from the grocery store? Should I go outside today? How if I'm trying to do this part of my job, how do I do it when I am in my house, when I cannot go to the office, when I cannot see that person? What happens if some kind of household appliance breaks? All right. Those kinds of things took up our whole attention in the beginning, and now they require less extra thought.

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It's been 17 weeks. That's one hundred and nineteen days. That's a third of a year.

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We've been living in the midst of a global pandemic under like under like unlike anything we've ever lived through before.

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For a third of a year, we have figured some things out.

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We have figured out ways to work with this reality. I'm proud of us, especially here. We figured out this. We figured out these online services. We've figured out other ways for Wellspring's to connect during the week. We have figured out how it works. At least I have one. The dishwasher repair guy has to come over during Covid. We figure it out.

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What networks of support we have to call on when we feel lonely.

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We figured out how to do many of our jobs in safer ways and make sure that our bills are still getting paid.

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And by the way, if you haven't figured some of those things out, please let me know. That offer doesn't expire. If our congregation can help. We will.

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But it's interesting, I think just in the past two weeks or so, I've also started to see more and more of us talking about a whole other kind of stress. A whole other kind of experience we're having right now. Some people are calling it decision fatigue. Decision fatigue happens when we have to make hard choice after hard choice, when we have lots of information to assimilate. And right now, we've been doing that for a long time. And with the change in Pennsylvania, with the change and different things that are closed, that are now open, we have this constant pull now of new choices are previously shut down. Public life is being kind of reopened.

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Right.

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It's sort of in fits and starts in little pieces and chunks. Sometimes it feels like it's like a one step forward, two step back reopening. There's new information. There's new risks and questions for us to weigh. For families with young kids, especially, I've heard for teachers also and school system employees, there's now like a deadline looming in the fall.

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There's this question of what we will do in a few months with schools and for some workers, stay at home. Flexibility from the beginning is ending or there are new pressures that are leading to new rounds of furloughs or layoffs. And meanwhile, the news about the outlook of all of this, it still seems like it's changing from week to week. It says uncertain in some ways as it's ever been.

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But just in new ways, and I know it makes me tired. I hear that makes a lot of you tired.

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One of the things that I feel with this tiredness, with this decision, fatigue, with this desire to just have somebody else tell me how it's going to go and what to do and how we're gonna fix it. I recognize that it's a longing for trust. Trustworthy leadership. I wish in this moment that we had that sense that I did really feel in March that we were all in this together, that we were all on the same page, that we were lost together, but that we were pulling in the same direction. And yet I see now all of the mask debates, I hear about resistance out there to continuing unemployment benefits, to keeping that going, to offering new rounds of support for small businesses. Honestly, I even watch the press conferences sometimes from the White House, where it seems like one public official gets up and says one thing and then the next person at the podium says another. That hope for us all to be on the same page.

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And pulling in the same direction and in this together, it feels farther and farther away. As we go.

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Our SpiritFlix movie today might seem on the surface to have nothing to do with this. It's part of this summer message series we do each year where we find the deeper meaning in movies or TV shows. The stories on our screens and the movie today is a family film. It's an animated feature. But if you watched it, you know that it's a dark one, which might be your first clue to why. I feel like it relates a little bit to these times and this feeling. I'm seeing the movie called The Willoughby's. It's a Netflix original. It's sort of in the tradition, if you know it, of Lemony Snicket's popular books, which are called a series of unfortunate events. It's that kind of a movie, a relatable frame also. Right. A series of unfortunate events could be the subtitle for the year 2020. In the movie, we meet this family. The Willoughby's a mother, a father and four children. And these four kids, they are in a tough spot.

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They are not growing up in good conditions. Their parents neglect them.

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These are parents who punish their children for having what they call childish needs, like food or sweaters and love. Even in the frame of a brightly colored animated feature that is at times funny and silly, we watched these four kids who are basically just trying to fight their way through a tough life, who are trying to find their way through without any caring support from the adults around them.

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Nobody to keep them together and pulling in the same direction.

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And because they're kids, you know, they have limited skills and knowledge available to them and they make some pretty dangerous choices as they go along. Each of the Willowby children adapt to their experience in different ways. But it's Jane who is kind of a bookworm of the bunch. She is the one who comes up with the plan for how they're going to get out of this. The survival strategy that most of the film focuses on. You see, Jane has read all of the fairy tales and from all of those fairy tales, she has taken the lesson that orphaned children are rescued. Right. It's all these orphan children who are the heroes of these fairy tales. They're saved by princes and very

godmothers and all other kinds of magic that conspires to turn things out OK for them. And so Jane decides that the Willoughby Children's only hope is to do that, to become orphans, to get rid of their parents. So that's what exactly. Well, she's not sure. But they'll be saved somehow, I guess. Right. By the sheer force of their hopes. And by the truth, of course, that they deserve to be saved. They deserve to be loved and well cared for. And they know that they have that seed inside of them. There's probably lots of things that you could take from this movie and maybe lots of ways that you could apply this story to our own longing for a trustworthy leadership in these fractured times that we're living in. But what I noticed was the way that the Willoughby's story serves as a reminder all throughout that hope is so vital to driving us to get through challenging times. But that hope is only half of the story.

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Jane and Tim and Barnaby A and Barnaby B the twins. They don't actually ever get their wish to become orphans, but they do hatch a plan. A plan that sends their parents on a trip all around the world and they get that very cathartic home alone type scene right where they jump on their parents bed and they slide down the banisters and they roll themselves up in carpets and they arrange things just the way they like them. And they have that giddiness of new found freedom where they think it's all going to be OK. But reality comes crashing in as soon as it's time for dinner and they realize they have no way to find food.

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Their hope that they will be saved by someone who truly cares from that for them, though, that does come true. And it unfolds slowly, not in one burst of a moment or an experience of newfound freedom, but through a series of choices that unfold over the rest of the film, beginning with the arrival of a nanny named Linda, a nanny who actually was hired by the neglectful Willoughby parents who at least knew that they had to provide the bare minimum of care when they left their children at home. But Linda, it turns out, has a much higher standard for what care really means.

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And it's that it's that human being holding in herself, that higher standard of care. That's what ends up saving the kids in this story.

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Yes. It's also the magical rainbow powered dirigible, and you know, the song Jane sings when you're stranded on the mountain at the end of the movie and all that kind of stuff. But those are just the kids movie plot devices that are moving us along at the end of the day in this story. What saves the kids is the fact that a woman named Linda comes into their life who has a higher standard in herself for what care really looks like it really means. One of the reviews online of this film. It comes from a woman named Vicky Peterson. She's a trauma recovery coach and herself a survivor of childhood abuse. She blogs for The Mighty, which is an excellent Web site. If you've never heard of it, it's an online community for people facing physical and mental health challenges and for their caregivers. The mighty.

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I recommend it.

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Vicky Peterson watched this movie through the lens of her own experiences and her training, and she points out that the movie make some mistakes. First of all, it certainly flattens a lot of important nuance for kids who might relate to the storyline. Perhaps most most dangerously, she says, even despite the real problems with the foster care system in America, it doesn't help real kids in difficult situations to portray orphan services as villains in the movie.

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And she says.

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As an adult survivor of childhood abuse and neglect. She says, My heart aches for the kids who are struggling in homes like this right now. There are plenty of reasons why quarantine is tough for so many. But she says for these children, it is especially hard. And more than ever, these kids need to know that they are seen and that they matter. And there are people who care. So in this sense, the release of the Willoughby's is timely.

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She says the kids who see themselves in these kids and these characters, they need encouragement right now.

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They need to hear more than ever that they're not alone.

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Not everyone has a nice nanny to step in and save the day.

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Most don't.

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But it points to the truth. She says that what they do need, it is a support system and they do need opportunities as they grow to find chosen family.

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Just as we all do to decide who will have the honor of loving and cherishing them for life. It is what we all deserve. We feel about now a support system, one that really helps when our own lives go sideways or when we are overwhelmed and that ability to choose who will love us and who we will love in return.

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In this moment, I believe that we can hold that same higher standard that Linda brings into these kids lives and ask ourselves what care is really supposed to mean. What does it mean to take care of each other? What does it mean to care about another person?

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We can ask those questions.

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We don't have to follow the lead of the unsatisfying words or inaction of the people we see around us or on our TV screens. In the context of this pandemic, that can mean talking about what it really means to support workers, the economy, businesses, what does it really mean to support people who've been laid off, people who are essential workers? What does care actually look like? What would it look like to hold our health care system to a higher and more inclusive and more universal standard of care? What might not just get him back to normal, but real care look like for families struggling with these impossible decisions about balancing work and school and safety in the months ahead?

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What does real care look like for all of us amidst these new questions on our minds? I hope about policing and race in this country.

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What does it look like to hold a higher standard of care for our neighbors who are black and brown? Higher maybe than the norm around us, higher maybe than what we inherited or. Than what the leaders who we see on TV seem to be saying. What could it do in this world for us to be more like Linda? Even if the kids, the Willowby children, the people around us don't expect it to hold a higher standard for what care really looks like. It might just help to save somebody who is in trouble.

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Who is casting out with hope on their end? Their half of the story?

[00:18:48]

What would it look like to meet that hope with real care? Came across another resource as I was preparing this message. Actually, Reverend can send it to me. That's how I came across it. It's from a therapist and an educator named Lindsay Brozman.

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Lindsay created this tool.

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It's a pretty solid tool, I think, that can help us figure out how to take care of the little ones that we might have in our life in this time. A Kovik kids activity book. It's designed for kids ages four through 10. But honestly, I'm halfway there to decide how to fill it out for myself. But it's certainly good for little ones. The exercises in the book are built around research that identified something called p, c e's.

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You might have heard of ACEs or Aces.

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Those are adverse childhood experiences. I know we've talked about them at Wellspring's before. They are a list of challenging experiences that kids sometimes go through and they are correlated in research now to challenging outcomes as adults, not just in mental health, but in physical health, in in things like financial status, in all kinds of measures of success. The things that happen to us in childhood have an impact if they are not addressed and healed. And so these protective childhood experiences, these pieces are also research identified for any kids who experience something that is challenging or traumatic in childhood. The seven P.S. E's are correlated with positive outcomes in adults. They serve as a protective factor. They buoy resilience and recovery and help kids cope and heal and thrive, even if they've been through something difficult.

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And right now we have all been through something difficult. Lindsay Broman describes why she created this workbook on her Web site. She says you might be asking why now? Right. Isn't quarantine over?

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Well, she says, you remember that feeling early in quarantine like time didn't exist. And like the days went by in a blur. I do. Right. We all saw that meme, right. That it was the the four hundred ninety fifteenth of March.

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That was how we felt. Right.

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Well, she says that's trauma. When something is too big, too much or too intense to be able to take in and digest, often there's difficulty recalling time before or anticipating time after.

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Yeah, that's trauma.

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Those are Lindsay's words, but they hit home with me. I know that this is why I find it comforting to track how many weeks it's been.

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It's a way of organizing things in my mind, remembering where we've been, where we are, and making sense of what's happened, because I, like all of us, have lived through a collective trauma. Lindsay goes on. She says, Whether or not quarantine is in the past for your family or for you, it may still be very much in the present, in our minds and in our bodies. So she says you can use this activity book with your kids.

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It's a tool. It's a frame maybe to write your family's story and then review that story, maybe even like a bedtime story on a regular basis, or come back to it and help kids organize all the messy chaos of the pandemic into a linear story of safety and resiliency.

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I did look at the book. It's a good resource. I recommend it.

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And wouldn't it be nice for all of us to have a caring person in our lives?

[00:23:25]

To have a Linda or Lindsay Brahmin or just a good, loving parent who could help us organize all the messy chaos of the pandemic into a linear story of safety and resiliency. I believe we deserve that. And I actually do believe we will one day. But I also know that hope is only half the story. We can hope for this pandemic to stop threatening all of our lives.

[00:24:07]

We can hope for it to end. We can hope for it to reorder our priorities and the process and help us build a more compassionate world where we're better able to care for each other in hard times. We can hope for all of those things.

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But I feel like I see clearly more than ever how hope is only half the story.

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Our faith has always asked us to be people who hold hope in one hand.

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And deeds and practices and action in the other.

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If we want this world to be made more whole, our lives to be made more whole, then some portion of us. Probably most of us. Right. Need to walk the talk. We need to walk the talk of this extravagant and abundant bloodedness that we proclaim is all of our birthright that belongs to all people. Some of us are gonna have to be, Linda.

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I'm sure all the people in Linda and our congregation are loving this message, by the way, but some of us are going to be that person.

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We're gonna have to be the person who doesn't just shake our heads and point a finger, who doesn't just get angry about it on Facebook, that we can do that, too. That's fine.

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But the person who steps in.

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The person who holds a higher standard of what care really looks like and who acts on it.

[00:26:00]

I know we're tired. I'm tired, too.

[00:26:06]

I've learned, though, as I've grown that when I feel tired or frustrated or fatigued, the tempting, easy thing is to keep following the track I'm on, to keep doing what I'm expected to do or what I'm used to do. And it gets me nowhere. It gets me more tired and more frustrated and more fatigued when I mindlessly just roll on a head. With care from other people who've supported me, I've learned over time that when I feel tired or frustrated or fatigued, that's usually my body's way of signaling that it is not time to mindlessly push ahead. It's time to stop.

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Paradoxically, the last thing I want to do to stop and ask a harder question, a deeper question, what am I really trying to accomplish? Instead of being frustrated, what is my real intention? What am I really hoping for?

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And can I open up the blinders to ask, is there a better answer that might get me there rather than what seemed like all of these traps of more spending, my wheels and more frustration that are laid out all around me?

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Sometimes just stopping and asking those questions makes you a saving grace to somebody else.

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By taking the pressure off of the people around you, the people in your house, the people who are looking to you for answers.

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Sometimes the people who ask those kinds of questions are good leaders.

[00:28:02]

Good caregivers, Lindas.

[00:28:07]

Willing to be kind and imperfect and vulnerable and lost together.

[00:28:15]

But to show up for each other. Anyway.

[00:28:21]

Simply because we trust that we are worthy and we are worthy of showing up for each other, of being seen and that we're all worthy of being cared for.

[00:28:37]

Hope is an important half of the story.

[00:28:43]

And when it is met, that halfway point by real care, as the narrator said in the movie, we may not get those moments exactly what we wish for, but we do get what we need.

[00:29:02]

Amen. And may you live in blessing.

[00:29:09]

I invite you all to take a moment on my refrigerator, turns on in the background, it's working. Take a moment to close your eyes. Now your head, maybe relax your shoulders and join me in the spirit of prayer.

[00:29:28]

God of our hearts.

[00:29:34]

Mystery beyond our understanding.

[00:29:40]

We are people who are tired. Some of us are anxious. Uncertain about what's coming. And we are people who hold some kernel of hope.

[00:29:57]

We know we have some kernel of hope within us.

[00:29:59]

If we woke up this morning and turned this turn this video on and are going about our day.

[00:30:10]

We have that light still inside of us. That spark. That spark of hope is not the same thing as optimism. It's not the same thing as knowing that something's going to be OK. That spark of hope is the thing with light within us that trust that something is good. No matter how it turns out, the spark of hope, trust that.

[00:30:39]

This life is worth tending. And nurturing and working on together.

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We remember that we are good and worthy of those things. And that so is every single person we encountered.

[00:31:02]

Now, we are all worthy of the care, all the care that we can give.

[00:31:08]

And receive and return.

[00:31:12]

And may we remember in these confusing times, no matter how more difficult or challenging or easier they get, may we always remember to act from that place?

[00:31:30]

For these prayers, I've spoken and for the prayers that all of the people with us this morning carry on their hearts. We say Amen.

[00:31:41]

If you enjoyed this message and would like to support the mission of Wellspring's, go to our Web site. Wellspring's you. You. Dot org. That's Wellspring's. The letters u. U dot. Oh, R.G..

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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