

**NAME**

Blinded By the Light - Sunday Service for August 2nd, 2020.mp3

**DATE**

August 4, 2020

**DURATION**

23m 17s

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

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation.

**[00:00:04]**

Hi, everybody. It's good to be with you again today, and I hope that this message, the service this morning finds you're doing well, like I think actually millions, maybe tens of millions of people.

**[00:00:17]**

Early on in the month of July, I ordered for the first time Disney plus. And I did it for one specific reason, and that was to see the filmed version of the stage play Hamilton. Now, as it turns out, I came for Hamilton and stayed for Pixar, but that's a separate conversation for another time. I haven't seen Hamilton live and seen on Broadway or touring. And my wife and I a couple of years ago, we decided, you know, did something we do on a regular basis. Once a year, we go up to New York City, stay overnight, see friends, get some food. New York is where I'm from. It's always nice to get back there. And we decided that we also we feel ready to spend a ludicrous amount of money on a Broadway play. And there were two choices. One was Hamilton and the other was excuse me, Springsteen on Broadway. And our reasoning went like this. Hamilton will probably be here for a very long time. There will be a touring version. It can be played by all kinds of actors and actresses, whereas Springsteen on Broadway is just Springsteen. On Broadway, there is no replacement. There is no other person to play Bruce Springsteen. And so we went to see Springsteen on Broadway and we never looked back with any regrets whatsoever.

**[00:01:31]**

It was entirely worth the money and the investment. It was one of my most favorite place I've ever seen and I have seen a lot of plays in my life. Some of you know that Springsteen on Broadway is Bruce kind of telling his life story in words and even more because he's Bruce Springsteen in music. And one of the things he does is he will play some of his songs and he'll intersperse stories throughout. And so he opens Springsteen on Broadway with one of his first songs that kind of started to make him famous. It's called Growing Up. It's from his first major studio album, recording Greetings from Asbury Park. And he does about the first couple verses and chorus. And then he goes into more of a spoken word piece. And I'm going to read that to you right now. Except the thing is this Springsteen on Broadway, he actually curses a lot more in that in that show that he does on a lot of his records. And and if you've been around Wellspring's for a while, you know, I don't you know, I'm not averse at all to a good curse word.

**[00:02:33]**

However, something feels a little bit different now that I'm kind of coming into your homes. I recognize I have dialed way, way back on the cursing and some of you might miss it. And some of you are grateful for that. So, you know, that's your experience, not mine. You do what you want with it. So I'm going to read this to you. And throughout this message, there are a few things where there are some curse words and I'll just kind of bleep those out or pick a different word. So Bruce starts to say, now, everybody, everybody has a love hate relationship with their hometown. It's just built into the equation of growing up. If you take me, I'm Mr. Born to Run. I'm Mr. Thunder F-in' Road. I was born to run, not to stay in my home. New Jersey. It's a death trap. It's a suicide rap. I had to get out. I got to hit the highway. I'm a road runner, man. I got the white line fever in my brain. I'm going to bring my girl and I've had enough of the stuff this place dishes out. I'm going to run, run, run. And, well, I'm never coming back.

**[00:03:36]**

And Bruce pauses, I currently live 10 minutes from my hometown and then he concludes, but born to come back, who would have bought that stuff?

**[00:03:54]**

It's a great way that he begins the story of Springsteen on Broadway, because it's about this tension all throughout

his life. He's in his 70s now and he's doing a lot of reflecting on who he's been and who he was and the stories that he's told and who he wants to be in the later stages of his life, kind of gathering up the pieces of himself and that tension between going out and coming back.

**[00:04:20]**

What it is to leave home and what it is to return home changed with maybe a different deeper appreciation and different eyes for seeing home.

**[00:04:35]**

Today's Spiritflix message, the series we do in the summer about the stories that we watch on our screens and the wisdom within those stories. It is a Bruce Springsteen story. It's named for one of those songs, Blinded by the Light on that first album of his, except it's set far away from Asbury Park, New Jersey, or even from the United States. It's based on a true story. It's based on a memoir by a writer named Sarfraz Manzoor. Now, he grew up in a small town, depressed town, a struggling working class town as a first generation son of immigrants from Pakistan. Now, this is a story that's been changed, even his name was changed, the main character in Blinded by the Light is a young man named Javaeed. Javaeed is 17 years old. And like a lot of 17 year olds, he has no idea where he belongs in the world. He's an aspiring writer, but his parents were economically terribly struggling. His father has just lost a job in his factory, the job that barely kept them in kind of the middle class. He's lost his job and his mom has to take on extra, extra, extra work, sewing and repairing garments. And they're barely holding on. And David has this vision of himself as a writer, as an artist.

**[00:05:58]**

And he is also.

**[00:06:01]**

An immigrant to a country that lets him know in many ways he is not welcome there. This is set in 1987, this story, and this is when some of, you know, authoritarian movements, the big one, what we would call maybe they're alt, right. The you know, the you will not replace us. Jews will not replace us crudely ugliness we've seen, especially in the last few years, in a heightened way in this country. Well, that was called the National Front in 1987. And it was viciously racist and anti-immigrant. And to be Pakistani in this time, especially in a place an hour from London, was to be a vulnerable person. And so Javaeed really feels this tension between the family that he feels he's pulling away from and the wider world that because of who he is, because of his identity, because of his race, his nationality, his ethnicity and his religion as a Muslim.

**[00:06:56]**

Whether he belongs in that wider English society as well.

**[00:07:02]**

Now, one of his fellow South Asian students who is not even that close with when the movie begins, he kind of runs into him in the hall and they bump into each other and out of this guy's Walkman. Remember, it's nineteen eighty seven out of this guy's Walkman pops a Bruce Springsteen cassette. And eventually Javaeed starts to ask, who's the guy? And his friend says, Bruce is the direct mind to all that is true in this blanking world. And David, here's Bruce Springsteen, and he feels that for the first time, someone has understood his story, the economic struggles and the struggles to fit in, even with their very different identities and nationalities. In the midst of this life in which he has all these tensions and pressures and the threat of violence and the threat of harassment because of the racism that surrounds him and the tension with his family who want him to be one thing, something respectable, like a doctor or lawyer, to go to university to become that.

**[00:08:07]**

But no, he really wants to be a writer.

**[00:08:12]**

This is a coming of age story, it's a totally unobvious movement, essentially unobvious movie as one of the reasons I love it. I mean, Bruce has some subtle songs, but as someone who has seen him in concert, I don't know, 15, 16, 17, 18 times, I lost count. By now, Bruce is not beloved for his subtlety. He's beloved how big an open and inclusive his heart is and how even in the in a stadium of 70000 people, he can make it feel intimate.

**[00:08:45]**

Bruce, I think, understands and he tells the stories that struggle of what it is to fit in. To know who he is and where he belongs in this life and how does he make room for the parts of himself that he feels maybe are not worthy? Bruce has been very open about his struggle with his own years growing up in his fraught, difficult, at times abusive relationship with his father, who he wasn't quite sure really loved him and his father's undiagnosed mental health disorder. And the fact that Bruce Bruce has had to wrestle with his own mental health, his own depression, as he has aged into himself over the years.

**[00:09:23]**

So between Javaeed and Bruce, David, a much younger person, 17 years old. Wanting to know who am I? Whose am I? Where do I fit in? And if I don't fit into the categories that already exist, how might I create or be a part of

creating a new world in which I and others can belong?

**[00:09:55]**

Like I said, this isn't a terribly subtle movie, they will show on a screen covid when he takes a trip to Asbury Park, New Jersey, which is kind of the apex of this movie. And he's had a falling out with his father. And they will play on a screen Independence Day, which is a beautiful, very sad song about Bruce separating from his own father. And they'll play that and you'll know it kind of mirrors of David's feeling. Like I said, it's not subtle, but it's big hearted.

**[00:10:20]**

And I think that big heartedness in the life of this country right now is so important. One of the things this movie made me think of was President Obama's eulogy for John Lewis just a few days ago, just this past week, in which he said that what John Lewis did, what he called us to was a vision of a big hearted, tolerant, vibrant America of perpetual self creation.

**[00:10:49]**

A vibrant, big hearted. America tolerant. Of perpetual self creation. This is what blinded by the light is all about. Even if it's not set in America.

**[00:11:09]**

I think back to my first semester in the grad program that I completed last May of twenty nineteen in a very different world, I think one of the first classes I took and it was all about some of the kind of core ethical commitments of what it is to be a social worker or what it is to have a social degree, whether we're working on the macro level on policy or whether, you know, we're working kind of more intimately with people on the micro level. And the professor I remember he said, you know, we have this commitment to cultural competence and that's bigger than just social work. But he said, you know, cultural competence is important.

**[00:11:49]**

But I want to say something else is even more important, cultural humility.

**[00:11:55]**

Such a profoundly important spiritual commitment, you know, becoming an I don't know at all the kind of person who is really open to the world around them and because of who they are and how we connect in our core values, that we're open to continuous change and growth, he said. It's not just about cultural competence, which is knowing knowledge about other people who might be different from yourself, he says. It's about culture, humility, he said, because that keeps you connected with other people in an interested way, an empathetic way, a compassionate way.

**[00:12:31]**

And that can't help but change us in some very profound ways.

**[00:12:36]**

All the things I love about this professor, he's one of my my most favorites that I had during this entire three year degree that I did.

**[00:12:44]**

He started to tell his story.

**[00:12:46]**

A story of many different parts, a young man who who grew up in Latin America, in South America, and a young man who knew that he was gay, and a young man whose family was not from long time in South America, but actually was of Middle Eastern descent, a man who would come to America and marry a white Anglo man and a man who, as he shared with us, the professor did, was very, very close to his grandmother growing up.

**[00:13:21]**

And where he's from.

**[00:13:24]**

And he said one day she kind of revealed to him that for many, many decades, she in this Catholic country that they were from, she had always been kind of a secret Buddhist.

**[00:13:37]**

I love the way he wove all the parts of himself together and model that for us, this invitation to know ourselves fully and embrace the parts of ourselves, that's what blinded by the light is all about, because if we can do that and be at home in ourselves, then we can be more at home in the world and the complexity of the world and the way in which the world asks us to grow. With a profound sense of psychological, interpersonal, relational integration.

**[00:14:13]**

Not integration is just some legal concept, some kind of static thing, but integration, welcoming all the parts of who we are individually and of other people as well, to into a kind of dynamic creativity, a trusting of emergence in

which we are being what we have not yet been and which we will never stop becoming.

**[00:14:38]**

This comes back to the end of *Blinded by the Light*, it is a very touching movie. I found it to be a movie that brought tears to my eyes a more than one occasion.

**[00:14:50]**

And it's after it has kind of separated from his father. They've had a real falling out and they're not talking. And David has been kind of moved out of the house and he's won an award, the award that's going to allow him to go to Asbury Park, New Jersey. It's based on something that he wrote.

**[00:15:11]**

It's going to allow him to go to the place where the boss is from and Javeed gives this speech just has just as he's about to in high school and go to university and his parents because it is a big hearted cinematic movie. There is that moment where they show up and he didn't expect them to show up. And he offers these words quoting Bruce. He says no one wins unless everybody wins. You can see that David is starting to understand that if he is to cut off part of who he is, to become another part of who he is, the price will be too much. And his parents show up and his father for the first time really gets to see who his son is.

**[00:16:02]**

And tears are in his eyes, and afterward he says to his son, kind of like with a blessing, son, write your stories, son. Write your stories. But don't forget ours.

**[00:16:20]**

Don't forget ours.

**[00:16:24]**

Beautiful message, I think, universalist message universalism that says there is a love so special we don't need to be special to be loved.

**[00:16:34]**

And if we don't go around having to compare and contrast ourselves to other people all the time, but can integrate the different parts of who we are, we naturally create space and permission for other people to do that for themselves. And in that we give voice to that love that holds us all that old universalist and still as fresh as this morning's news truth.

**[00:16:57]**

Son, write, your stories, yes, but don't forget ours.

**[00:17:02]**

Invite the whole of who you are home.

**[00:17:08]**

This is such a profoundly important message of this movie for this time, I think particularly of being an American, but just being someone who was alive at this time. If we want to be truly big hearted. If we want to be ongoing and self creating, but not stuck in a back then or again, but a now and in an emergence that trust that we can grow into a way of being that we have not yet been and make space for that look, that is more wide. One of the most powerful things that I read in the wake of this summer's uprising. The reaction to the death of Brianna Taylor and Floyd. And, of course, more.

**[00:18:02]**

Was written by Michael W. Twitty, who is a chef I'm a foodie, is one of my favorite chefs, but he's even more he's a culinary historian and he says that what he does is he collects and cooks the histories of his people in the diaspora.

**[00:18:22]**

You see, Michael W. Twitty is black and gay and queer and Jewish. And he apologizes for no part of who he is and he welcomes it all, and he models that for us as well to the different parts of who we are.

**[00:18:39]**

And he wrote a beautiful, searing, angry, profoundly loving, calling to account, calling into new ways of being blog post called a scolding in seven pieces. And I want to read to you from it. Michael Twitty says, I understand that I will always be queer by color and sexuality and faith and philosophy in your eyes, and I celebrate that because I am every color in the rainbow. Otherwise I really have zero FS to give whether or not you love me back. I have my work to do grace, compassion, peace, love and all that other good old time religion stuff. And I don't have time to waste. This place, he says, meaning America, this place is not a thing to be squandered. You say we should unify around the symbols of obfuscation born in slavery and native removal and manifest destiny. And I say no, we can choose new ways to be one, understanding how much our blood has crossed.

**[00:19:43]**

We are deliciously impure.

**[00:19:48]**

If you are not multicultural and kissed by otherness and soaked in the world of your neighbor, you have wasted your opportunity to be an American, to be part of an accidental planned experiment. The glory here is not in melting, but melting by learning from each other and having no boundaries on opportunities. And to have those opportunities, black people cannot be the canaries in the American coal mine any longer.

**[00:20:20]**

Black lives matter, and if they do not, there is no reason to dream in American.

**[00:20:29]**

Oh, I love that phrase.

**[00:20:32]**

The capacity to dream in American not as a cheap grace thing, but as a deep, enriching, profound thing. And kind of reality that even a movie not even set in America testifies to.

**[00:20:49]**

The kind of truth that blinded by the light speaks to.

**[00:20:54]**

It is the call over and over again.

**[00:20:59]**

To have our lives transformed. By the ongoing power and energy of love. That energy and that power truly divine. An ending unfinished and inviting us. To take our place in its way, we are seeing now what the opposite of that way of living does and the pain and the trauma and all the suffering that comes from it. So may we keep changing in the name of these deepest aspirations of our hearts? May we take the shape of love in our lives?

**[00:21:45]**

Amen, and may you live in blessed.

**[00:21:51]**

I would ask you if you would unite your heart with mine in prayer.

**[00:22:03]**

Divine Force and Flo. Spirit of this breath right here, right now, filling us up and asking us to empty ourselves right in the next moment. Our bodies can teach us what it is to make space for the different parts of who we are. That are great, glory is not sameness. Our great, glorious connection. Between ourselves, within ourselves, may we be a space making people. I mean, we allow ourselves to grow wide, to grow very, very wide with love. And take on the shape of the world that we hope to exist.

**[00:23:04]**

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**END OF TRANSCRIPT**



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