

**NAME**

WS Message 5-10-2020.mp3

**DATE**

May 12, 2020

**DURATION**

25m 5s

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

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation.

**[00:00:05]**

Hi, everybody.

**[00:00:07]**

So in the 1990s, when I was a teenager, I confess embarrassingly, I used to read a lot of People magazine and US Weekly. Some of you might still read it. No judgment. But I remember that one of my favorite things in reading those, you know, celebrity magazines basically was always that that section of the magazine that said stars, they're just like us. Right. So you'd have you'd have Jay Z eating an apple like a person or Kate Hudson in a ponytail. The scandal. Right. So it was, I think, especially good for me as a teenager. And I think this might be what's behind the appeal of things like that in general, that these people who felt on a pedestal somehow far away, they were doing everyday things. They shared some of the same experiences as I had at the time, an awkward teenager trying to figure out what was going on in this new adult world that I was slowly stepping my way into.

**[00:01:17]**

I felt a little bit of that same feeling when I saw this the other day. This is an ad. It was in the local Courier Citizen newspaper in Lowell, Massachusetts. Over a hundred years ago, in October of 1918, the ad was placed, as you can see, by the Grace Universalist Church of Lowell, Massachusetts. And it says, with the desire to do everything possible to eradicate this epidemic from the city, Grace Universalist Church will remain closed another Sunday. Grace Universalist Church was a young congregation at the time, just over 20 years that they'd been gathered together.

**[00:02:04]**

I saw this ad and I read a little bit of the story behind it, shared from a colleague of mine online. And I thought, Grace Universalist Church, they're just like us. I wonder if all of this felt as impossible to them.

**[00:02:26]**

As it does, I think, for me and for many of us now.

**[00:02:31]**

I sit around sometimes in my house these days and I think about how impossible it feels to make a simple decision about whether or not to go outside. How impossible it feels some days to get work done. I'm sure for some of you how impossible it feels some days to think about another day of home schooling or another Zoom call.

**[00:02:52]**

How impossible it feels to think bigger, how impossible the election feels. Or just the thought of how are we going to find our way out of all this? It's comforting to me to know that people in the past and also people who gathered in communities like ours have found their way through impossible times. And it makes me want to know how. Right. We can't do that. Exactly. What we are going through now is different in so many ways than what we have gone through before. And we are different.

**[00:03:42]**

Our message series for May is called Love the Hell Out of This World. And it is designed to be a series where we dig a little deeper actually into where we came from. The spiritual tradition that Wellspring's is a part of Unitarian Universalism came from the merger of these two distinct religious traditions in America.

**[00:04:01]**

The Unitarians and the Universalists Grace Universalist Church obviously was one of these historic universalist churches in the United States. And looking back on who they were, it doesn't necessarily tell us who to be or what

to do. But it does give us some clues for how people have survived and how these traditions have carried on to the place where we are able to be here today. Universalists were once Christians. Who came to some conclusions about what their faith taught them, that made things very challenging for them. They were Christians who heard the gospels and dug into their faith.

**[00:04:58]**

And the more they read about this God who loved the world so much. The less they were able to work with this doctrine of their church that said some people are saved and some people are damned. Some people go to an eternal place for winners and some people are eternally in the losing position.

**[00:05:20]**

Facing awful torture and torment in this place called hell.

**[00:05:28]**

The early Universalists read that part of the Bible that said, God is love. And they said God is love, this capital I kind of love. That's what makes God so powerful. That's what makes that love divine and holy.

**[00:05:49]**

Its ability to hold every single person to make room for all people when we cannot.

**[00:06:01]**

When human beings do not have hearts big enough to do that. For each of us, that feels completely impossible. But maybe there's hope that there is some higher, greater power in this universe.

**[00:06:19]**

That can hold space and redeem me and you and everybody else, no matter who we are and no matter what we may have done. That is a saving belief for me.

**[00:06:35]**

And it is essentially a faith in something that feels impossible. Today, when we think about universalism and when we talk about it in Unitarian Universalist congregations, we don't usually place as much emphasis on what happens after this life, on whether there is a literal hell or not. We talk a lot more about how hell is already here.

**[00:07:03]**

People make hell for themselves and for each other all the time. We have enough to worry about without thinking about what happens after we die.

**[00:07:17]**

And if we believe that everyone deserves to be saved by love. Then we have to at least act in ways that make room.

**[00:07:30]**

Make room for people to find that love in their own lives.

**[00:07:37]**

Maybe we can't have that heart big enough for every person. But maybe by each one of us stretching and growing our hearts where we can.

**[00:07:48]**

The sum of our parts. Is actually what creates that heart big enough for all people.

**[00:07:59]**

I saw an example of this kind of universalist belief in action in a pretty hellish environment.

**[00:08:11]**

Last month, there was an article in The New York Times written by Nick Kristof. It took us into two of the worst hit hospitals in the Bronx, hospitals that had been converted to take care only of Covid-19 patients.

**[00:08:29]**

It was a very hard thing to read. Not nearly in any way as hard as it was, I'm sure. And still is for the people who are actually living it.

**[00:08:42]**

But the stories of. Isolation of mobility, of the inability to breathe or speak or connect. Of unending death upon.

**[00:09:01]**

They rival any Dante's Inferno I've ever read any description of what hell might be like.

**[00:09:12]**

And in that impossible, awful, horrific situation. There were stories all throughout of health care workers, doctors, nurses, people in that hospital who found ways to honor the beloved ness of the people around them.

**[00:09:37]**

Who found small ways? To act in that same kind of faith. That we all deserve. That we all deserve to be seen. An honored.

**[00:09:54]**

There was an email that was reprinted in the article. It was from an attending doctor, one of the supervising doctors in the hospital written to his young residents in training.

**[00:10:06]**

And it asks them to go out of their way in a way that normally health care workers would not do to give special comfort to patients who would not be getting it from their loved ones or from chaplains or religious leaders or clergy. He asked his doctors to take a few moments, if you can, to talk with the patient about their families, to talk with them about their lives and their dreams. Ask them if there is a loved one, you can call for them. And lastly, he said two very difficult things. Hold your patient's hand for a minute as they near death or pass.

**[00:11:00]**

And ask your entire team to stop. For five or 10 seconds. Bow your heads.

**[00:11:10]**

State the patient's name. And ask for silence.

**[00:11:19]**

He said this helps us retain our humanity. In times of such crisis. And he said it gives our patients families some solace.

**[00:11:34]**

That they, too, were treated with dignity.

**[00:11:44]**

There's a an author named John Pablo, that's who wrote an article where he talked about this distinction between fighting what we hate. And saving what we love.

**[00:12:00]**

Those doctors, those nurses, those health care workers are fighting such a intense battle these days against something that we don't know how to destroy. And saving what we love. And those moments might feel so small in the face of that disappointment. Right. Taking five or 10 seconds to have a makeshift bedside religious service. I'm sure that it is heartbreaking for those people who have just fought and lost the battle with that virus in that person's body.

**[00:12:40]**

It feels so small.

**[00:12:43]**

But as that doctor says, it matters so much. It matters so much to our common humanity, to recognizing our preciousness.

**[00:12:58]**

Pavlovitz is quoting in his article, Some of you might have already picked up on this of your Star Wars fans. He's telling the story of one of the recent Star Wars movies, The Last Jedi. He talks about how there is a turning point in that film. There are these resistance fighters who are struggling against this giant scary force out there that is totally overwhelming them. And they've just lost a huge battle and nearly died themselves in the process. And that line comes as one of the characters fan is pulling. His comrade Rose out of the wreckage of her crashed and burned ship.

**[00:13:41]**

And that's when she has that moment of realization. She says we are going to win this war not by fighting what we hate, but saving what we love. We're gonna win this war not by fighting what we hate. But saving what we love.

**[00:14:06]**

There is hell on this earth. It shows up in millions of ways that we abuse and hurt each other in black men who are killed while jogging in Georgia for no reason. And children who are hurt and abused through no fault, possibly ever could be, no fault of their own. It shows up in the big systems that leave some people to be more at risk due to this virus than others.

**[00:14:43]**

And it shows up in ways that we can't point any finger at anyone right in the natural disasters and the mutations of

tiny little viruses.

**[00:14:57]**

It can feel overwhelming. And impossible.

**[00:15:02]**

To know how to fight those things sometimes. And when we are motivated by trying to fight what we hate, trying to destroy and destroy and destroy.

**[00:15:15]**

It's understandable, it's human. I'm not going to say it's right or wrong. But I know that the end result of that is destruction upon destruction. And there is power. Real power in saving what we love.

**[00:15:38]**

And remembering how much is beloved and how worthy of saving it is in those health care workers, remembering in those moments how precious and human that life was and not just turning it into a virus vector to be stopped. But remembering that that person was beloved to someone.

**[00:16:04]**

Universalism tells us that all of us are beloved to someone. When we act in our faith. We will find that we can feed that fire to save what we love forever.

**[00:16:25]**

Because even in defeat.

**[00:16:29]**

Even when one person or patient or election or battle of any kind is lost. We will always look around and find more to save.

**[00:16:43]**

We will always see more worthy of saving.

**[00:16:49]**

And that's not a destructive force. That is a regenerative force.

**[00:16:55]**

It grows the more we feed it. Even with the smallest of things in an impossible and big situation.

**[00:17:10]**

The Grace Universalist Church, way back in 1918, they had another article actually written about them in the paper. That same month. It describes an emergency food kitchen that they set up. It says the women of the church were working with other local congregations. They were making stew, beef and vegetables and lamb and potatoes, and they were distributing it to families that were unable to do their own cooking because of the influenza.

**[00:17:50]**

A small thing. But not that small.

**[00:17:57]**

An act of faith. Much like the one that we are doing this weekend. That we are partnering at the same time right now, right with our other local spiritual communities, with our interfaith council here in Chester County, not cooking stew in kitchens. This time. But holding a virtual food drive, doing the things we do now to care for each other, right. Paypal-ing 20 dollars for a box of food or some cans of peaches? Boxes of milk. That will be distributed by the Chester County Food Bank this week. In our name and so many others. In honor of Mother's Day. Our local interfaith council worked with members of our own HeratWorks Team to make a beautiful video about each of our local religions and spiritual communities teachings on hunger. It's in the description below. You can watch it after our service today. In times like these ones, just like we did in 1918.

**[00:19:10]**

We Universalists, we live our faith.

**[00:19:16]**

We save what we love. Nothing we love is too small for saving or too insignificant.

**[00:19:26]**

When we save what we love, we mean that we will be saving all of our neighbors. All that there is around us that is beloved.

**[00:19:38]**

As best we can. In any given moment.

**[00:19:45]**

I know that for me, one of the pieces of grace in these last few weeks has been how small my focus has gotten, right.

**[00:19:58]**

There's just less in front of me literally every day. And so I am noticing a lot more things that I love.

**[00:20:07]**

I'm noticing how tender my my sense of appreciation is for the music that I can just put on and let fill my apartment every single day. I'm noticing the way that this time of year cardinals land on the rooftops and sing. And I am finally learning how their song is different from the other bird song because I'm actually paying attention to it.

**[00:20:32]**

I'm noticing how impossibly bright red cardinals are. I can't believe that color exists in nature. I'm noticing my love for the wind that is blowing through the trees, the comfort that I get from that rustling sound.

**[00:20:53]**

I'm noticing the love I feel when I get a note from a friend. Or hear just the sound of their voice on a phone call.

**[00:21:05]**

There is so much worthy of saving. Maybe some of you have noticed this, too. Maybe you are finding things that you love in fresh new ways these days. You can type them in the chat if you want. You can share them with us. You can speak them out loud. As you're watching with us, if you're watching on Sunday morning, what are the things you love these days?

**[00:21:39]**

The things that you love most in this time. And in this moment.

**[00:21:50]**

I don't believe that our attention to these things is a way of being Pollyannas. Or of shutting out, ignoring the hurt and the hell that is here in this world.

**[00:22:03]**

Our attention to these things that we love. It's a way of feeding ourselves. Of sustaining that small spark. That small spark of the capital I love of the divine that lives inside each of us. And when we feed those small things that we love. We are energizing and feeding ourselves for whatever fight might still be out of us. And we are reminding ourselves always of all of the things out there that we still have the power to save.

**[00:22:51]**

I mean, may you live and blessing?

**[00:22:58]**

I invite you to take a moment to close your eyes if you're comfortable. Relax your shoulders, your jaw, maybe bow your head and join me in the spirit of prayer.

**[00:23:14]**

God of our hearts.

**[00:23:18]**

Who speaks to each of us in our own hearts language? Who shows us the beauty of this earth in the way that only we can recognize it?

**[00:23:31]**

May we look around and feel less alone today? Not just here and now in this moment, but less alone. Remembering all who've come before us.

**[00:23:48]**

Remembering the ones who raised us. The mothers, the fathers, the parents and step parents. Grandparents. The ancestors whose names we don't even know. But all of the ones who showed us in some way what it meant to love and feed and care for someone beyond ourselves.

**[00:24:19]**

May we find ways today and in the days to come? As things feel challenging, an impossible.

**[00:24:26]**

To act in ways that honor the love they showed to us. To remember that they wanted us here. And they wanted us to pass that love on. For these prayers I've spoken. And for the prayers that each of the people watching this morning carries on their hearts. We, Salman.

**[00:24:53]**

If you enjoy 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 you you dot o r g.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**



Automated transcription by Sonix  
[www.sonix.ai](http://www.sonix.ai)