

NAME

The Big Picture Audio.mp3

DATE

May 2, 2021

DURATION

35m 44s

3 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

Speaker3

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Speaker1

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation.

[00:00:05] Speaker2

Good morning, Wellspring's. Well, it started as a joke way back in the stir, craziest days probably of our lockdown. Last April, a man named Josh Swaine searched Facebook for every other person named Josh Wayne that he could find. And he started a group chat and sent them this message. You're probably wondering why I've gathered you all here today and when one of the other Joshes guessed that it was because of their name, Josh Swain's said precisely. And at 12:00 p.m. on April 24th, 2021, one year from today, prepared to meet at these coordinates and fight whoever wins gets to keep the name. Everyone else has to change their name. You have a year to prepare. Good luck. It was a funny joke and with not much else to do last April. It went viral online at the time, which meant that a lot of people knew about this. And as winter this year turned to spring, Josh Swains started getting messages from people asking for details, asking for a specific location and rules. And he realized with sort of equal parts, amusement and horror, people were booking flights. The coordinates that he'd chosen at random that morning were, in fact, in a field just outside of Lincoln, Nebraska, the perfect site, it turns out, for a battle to the death between every Josh in America. I'm talking, of course, about Josh Fight, which if you have been on Twitter this week, probably then you know how it went down because that original Josh decided to commit.

[00:02:03] Speaker2

He went all in. He booked his flight to Lincoln, Nebraska. He contacted local police to inform them of the event and asked people online if they were coming to bring donations of canned foods and to give money so that the event could benefit local food banks and the nearby children's hospital. And then they set down their ground rules. Only one weapon was allowed at Josh by a single pool noodle per participant. Costumes were welcome signs and fans were welcome and the victor would be decided on the honor code. The last person remaining who had not been hit by a pool noodle would be the one true Josh and we'll get to keep their name for all time. So again, imagine the Internet's delight when April 24th, 2021 finally came this past week and we were not only treated to cell phone videos of the battle, but we were also treated to news of a final victor, four year old Josh Vinson Jr., who attended the event with his father, Josh Robinson, senior, and was the last warrior standing at the end of the great pool noodle battle. Here's how Josh received his victory.

[00:03:25]

Little Josh, Little Josh can you give us a few

[00:03:28] Speaker3

words on your thoughts on the big win.

[00:03:32]

I everyone coming out right now.

[00:03:37] Speaker3

He's five.

[00:03:38]

(cheering)

[00:03:45] Speaker3

You don't.

[00:03:51]

I love humans. Sometimes we are really great. I have watched these clips more than once in the past week, and apart from my appreciation for the purity of year long commitment to a joke, it's also because this story gives me that feeling of like this is how it should be, right. People just doing things for the joy of it and laughing together and having fun, especially when it's a whole bunch of adults creating something silly and magical and not even realizing who it was really for in the end, as much as it was for any of them. In the end, this was also about giving this littlest one that they found among them the best day of his young life. Now, maybe you'll think this is a stretch, but honestly, it called to mind for me the spirit of the Beatitudes in the New Testament scripture that often quoted a set of teachings from Jesus that the meek and the mourners and the merciful and the pure of heart, the little children, the least of these the last shall be first right, the slightest and smallest. The youngest Josh at Josh Fight should be and will be the winner in the end. This is how it's supposed to be. That is the feeling we know in our bones. I think every time we talk about wanting a better life for our kids or about wanting to leave the world as a whole better than we found it, it's like there's something in us that knows this is the truth underneath it all, even in the busy middle of our lives, as we get older, we start to realize more and more that we cannot take any of this with us.

[00:06:20] Speaker2

And we start then to see more of the big picture that what actually matters most is not what we have in this life, but what we give away and what we pass along. I read an article last month that went sort of mini viral, at least in the progressive and spirituality circles that I run in, a lot of people were reading it. It's by an entrepreneur and a nonprofit leader named Teju Revilla charm. And it has one of those excellently provocative click Baity titles. It's called Maslow Got It Wrong. Maslow, If You Don't Know, refers to Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist who created a well-known model to sort of describe the stages of human health and fulfillment called the Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. You might have heard of it. Now stay with me here, because this comes back to this idea about what we give away being what matters most is in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, supposes that there's a sort of priority order for our happiness that certain needs on the bottom of the pyramid, like food or sleep or safety, have to be met in order to allow for the higher needs to be met, things like love and self-esteem.

[00:07:54] Speaker2

And at the very tippy top of the pyramid, self actualization, a sense of internally generated worth and purpose and fulfillment. Now, lots of people take issue with this framework today, even though it's still very influential, it is ubiquitous to modern psychology. I learned it in Psych 101 in college, but Revolution's article isn't so much interested in debating Maslow's framework as it is in highlighting a missing piece in Maslow's model you see as revolution shares in the article. Abraham Maslow spent six weeks in the summer of 1938, just as he was formulating this theory living with the of Blackfoot Nation near Alberta, Canada, with the indigenous First Nations people of Canada. And he was influenced by what he learned there about the symbolism of the Blackfoot teepee You can see Maslow's model here on the left and the Blackfoot teepee on the right. And you can see the similarity in form, of course, where each level lays a foundation for the next level up, the next idea. But what fascinated me, though, about the Blackfoot model and symbol is the different frame it takes on the whole thing, on the whole scope of human thriving and what's necessary for it. Because you can see on the left Maslow's model just looking at it as a whole. Right. It's focused on the scope of an individual life, on personal needs and the growth of the self. But the Blackfoot model begins at the bottom with the self as already whole.

[00:09:53] Speaker2

And then the Blackfoot model builds upon the self by recognizing that the goal of self actualization is the creation of community, the connection and bonds between individuals that make life worth living. And finally, the highest point in that Blackfoot model reaching open at the top towards the sky is what's called cultural perpetuity here. It's the idea that the community sustains itself and continues to live on beyond any one person or group of people. It's a way of thinking about human flourishing that goes beyond the scope of a single lifetime or even a single person's own lineage to encompass the lineage of the entire gathered community, its whole community survival. It starts with what we have and what we gain in this life, but its highest goal is what we pass on. The idea of looking at things in the scope of one lifetime versus many lifetimes is not new to spirituality, right? It's not new to these big picture questions we ask ourselves about why we're here, what happens before and after we're here. It's always been the way that the concept in Christianity of eternal life has made the most sense to me, that eternal life is not about my private life continuing on so much as it is about capital life and how that never dies. The concept of eternal life, of course, it's in Christianity, it's in Islam, there are conversations in the Koran about what happens in the afterlife and in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and religious traditions that privilege cultural perpetuity, like native or indigenous religions like Judaism.

[00:12:11] Speaker2

Also, it's there this idea of a life that is bigger than our own private lives. And in traditions like Hinduism and certain schools of Buddhism, there are beliefs about reincarnation, about life before and life after this one. And even in nature and science, we have a way of seeing that life is eternal. When we talk about that capital. L big life, not our own individual lives. Right? We remember that every piece of matter in our universe has existed since the beginning, since the Big Bang, since the first spark. The periodic table tells its story of evolution, all just different atoms crashing into each other and forming different bonds, making up the same building blocks everything on earth. The same stuff, literally, that has always been here, just changing form over time. In this way, cultural perpetuity and eternal life, I can understand it as the truth, and that big picture idea comes back to an idea that is deeply Unitarian Universalist to the idea that all life is worthy because we are all connected and made up of each other. Literally, we constitute each other materially and also in our hearts. The needs of each individual always have to be in balance with compassion and care for the community as a whole, not only right now, but also when we think into the future.

[00:14:00] Speaker2

We are in relationship not only with the children we have already met on this earth, but with the children that they will birth. It's big picture stuff. But when we think about it, when we remember it just for a moment, I think it changes how we might see the ordinary moments of our lives. Because if this is how we think about the purpose of a life, about what foundation it lays for the ones who come after us, we begin to realize that so much of our work to create a world where everyone's dignity and worth is honored, so much of that has to do with looking outside of our own self development, even outside of our own families, our own lineage to that bigger human family. It means seeing other people's ancestors as sources of wisdom and richness to as sources of our heritage, no matter what we look like or where we're from. And it means seeing other people's children as our own in so many ways. Seeing what's at stake for the children of people from other countries, other cultures, people with different beliefs who do not look like us and taking their futures seriously just as we do the children we love and know and have born. Every Josh is part of the same Big Josh family and all of us can work together to create something for little Josh to take with him as an example of how to show up for others down the road.

[00:16:02] Speaker2

These are big picture thoughts, and here we are just a few weeks post universal vaccine availability when probably a lot of our minds are blown just by decisions about whether or not we're going to go to an indoor restaurant for the first time. Right. There's a lot going on. But even though it's a big picture idea, the good thing about this concept of thinking about the human family and thinking about our lives in the scope of all life is that it gives meaning and purpose to the small, daily, tiny ways to practice care for all people in the here and now. We're going to try that out in a specific way during this message series that I'm beginning today. We're calling it heirloom connections and we're doing something completely different. We're taking advantage again while we're still working on our own plans at Wellspring's to come back together and to offer Sunday services both in person and remotely in the future. For now, we're going to take this last opportunity to try something new that we could really only do in this sort of format online. We're going to give you all a peek this month into some video pen pal exchanges between 10 members of Wellspring's of all different ages and stages of life. Our youngest pen pal correspondent is five and our oldest is 82 years old. Now, all of these pen pals signed up to be part of this message series back in March.

[00:17:45] Speaker2

And they have each been sharing video messages back and forth with each other and with Wellspring's as their intermediary of sorts. I've been sending a lot of emails with you've got mail in the subject line wondering if Meg Ryan gets a residual every time I do in our preachers. This may be myself and Reverend Ken and Josie Waldman. And we're all taking inspiration from these conversations. Excuse me for our messages. With the participants permission, we'll be sharing some snippets of their video correspondence with all of you as well. Getting to know somebody outside of your own age group can be a little intimidating, but maybe part of the reason why is because it does tend to widen your perspective, widens our perspective on life and on the choices that we have made and are still to make within it. The opportunities, though, to actually get to know and even become friends with someone of a very different age are sort of rare in our world. Right. Think about the places that you spend most of your time. You have your own families. Many of us live, not me. I'm single, but many of us live with people of different generations. But those family relationships are not exactly simple, right? That can often be fraught with a lot more meaning than a simple friendship. Outside of those families, we spend time at school with mostly like age peers, or we spend time at work also with generally mostly like age peers.

[00:19:28] Speaker2

And some of those work relationships can also be a little fraught depending on our situation. We go to the gym or we're part of a social club maybe, or we hang out at a particular place in town and we're usually not in touch with people of very different generations from our own. Maybe if our neighborhood is the sort of neighborhood where people really get to know each other, we might get that chance. But even neighborhoods often kind of trend demographically towards one group or another. As the author Courtney Martin talks about in a piece for NPR's On Being blog, we're so often generationally segregated. She talks about leaving her family behind for college, which, of course, was an intense kind of communal living experience for her with other 18 to 22 year olds. And then she said, when I graduated, I thought I was moving out into the big world. But really, I kind of just picked up my college life and moved it into Brooklyn, she said with roommates in her 20s, friends in her 20s, going out to parties, out to restaurants, with other young single people. There was a lot of solidarity, she said, but not a lot of perspective. It was sort of like a never ending loop, according to Courtney, of exuberant partying. And how do I find my place in the world freakouts? She said, you know, a little baby energy or elder energy really would have done us good.

[00:20:58] Speaker2

And in Courtney's article, she talks about how religious communities are one of these few places where we can build a friendship with someone across generations. Spiritual communities are perhaps the only other community besides family. That promises to hold us from birth until death. Possibly the only community outside of our family that promises to hold us from birth until death. Getting to know people of these different ages and stages of life, it can be helpful for practical reasons. We can learn new words and skills sometimes from younger folks among us. We can hear stories about how to handle a problem or how to make a big choice from the folks who are older and have been there before. But it's also just a powerful thing to be part of a community that honors every single person matters, no matter where they are on this life path, no matter how many days or years of experience they bring to it. So I want to start us off this morning down this path that we're going to take together for the next few weeks by showing you a few snippets of the early conversations between two of our pen pals. We matched up Lily, who is seven with Susan, who is 77, just to start getting to know each other last month. I'll let them introduce themselves to all of you now to.

[00:22:56] Speaker1

Hi there, Lily, my name's Susan, nice to meet you.

[00:23:02] Speaker3

Say hi, Susan. Hi, Susan. Look at my phone. Thank you.

[00:23:07] Speaker1

I love spring. I love flowers. There's some of them near my yard. And I have a very favorite Bush called Forsythia, and it's down here by the end of the driveway. I love being out in the spring, my absolute favorite season. Here's my forsythia. Bush just love the yellow color and the daffodils. Do you have daffodils? We have some very, very pretty daffodils in front of our house. So aren't they beautiful? They don't last very long, but for the time they do. They're wonderful.

[00:24:07] Speaker3

I love this one. OK, so here's our backyard. We're not going to go down there, but here I'll just zero in. There is our daffodils. I can give you that. You got it. So right here, let's zoom out a little bit. OK, go ahead. And you can zoom in, zoom in this area. You can walk over there. Yes, I want to be here. There they are. OK, let's go back. Sorry. This video making you if this video was making you dizzy, OK. All right. So what's the next question? How do you see this video?

[00:25:07] Speaker2

All of our Penpals started corresponding last month and many are still exchanging video letters. So we gave them some questions to get started. And as you watch, I want to invite any of you also from home. Go ahead if you'd like, and join in the conversation, too. You can type your answers to the questions that Lili and Susan are asking each other into our chat.

[00:25:32] Speaker3

Do you have a favorite day? The week, which one and why? I know I didn't do this yet, but it's probably Wednesday. Wednesday is your favorite day. Yeah. Why has this happened last week? I don't know why, but it I don't know why I didn't come last week. But everyone, there's we have three things. We have three to say. I don't know why they are marvelous Monday. They do nothing for Friday either. But we have free Tuesday was good and we also got technology Thursday but one day wonderful Wednesday. And that when she puts a big thing on the board. Who is she? Miss Brown. A the first technology thursday lend me my first technology. Thursday is probably going to be someone milking cows. Oh, and for wednesday day he put a big miss brown, put the big word on the board and whoever can market and spell it correct and mark correctly. And boy,

[00:26:58] Speaker1

Do I have a favorite day of the week. Which one and why. Hmm. Well. Before the pandemic. I. Might have said it was Saturday because I saw more of my grandchildren on Saturday. But now. The days are pretty much the same, although I am starting to see my grandson who plays baseball, that will be starting up soon and two granddaughters to play soccer. I can see them a little bit more, but most days of the week I'm at home and or at our shop where we have two businesses. But I don't think I have a favorite day of the week anymore.

[00:27:58] Speaker3

If you could take lessons OK, who would you most like to trade places with for a day? What does that mean? So if there's one person that you would like to be, you would just live their life like a princess or the president of the United States or, you know, who would you trade places with? Lydia? Yeah, your sister. But oh you want to go to kindergarten again in your pictures.

[00:28:28] Speaker1

Oh, OK. Who would you most like to trade places with for a day? Hmmm, I guess it would have to be the president. That might be a very interesting day to have talking to a lot of the people that run the country.

[00:28:50] Speaker3

So this this video is five minutes, so maybe we should stop and save all of these other questions for another time. Yes, only because it's a five minute video and we can save it for your next message. Remember your pen pals, OK? And the next time you want to one more. What season do you like best? Oh, yeah. Because she talked about her favorite season. Do you remember her favorite? Her favorite was Spring. Is that yours, too? Yeah. Why wouldn't you. Why why spring? Can you turn to the camera. Why spring now is now and it rains you like all that stuff. Yes. All right. So let's save the rest of the questions for later, OK? Say by susan, can you look at the camera and say that again?

[00:29:33] Speaker1

We'll hear my videos almost five minutes. I'll see you next time. Bye.

[00:29:41] Speaker2

So in next week's message, we're going to hear a little bit about how people develop their understanding of faith at different stages of their lives from Reverend Ken, along with Evan, who is 14, and Micah, who was thirty six. But in the meantime, I'll close our message today with a gentle challenge, a gentle challenge to ask some big picture questions. To ask some questions, maybe of someone you know, from a different generation, we have a whole list of them available in the resource guide that our spiritual development ministry put together for this series. And actually, if any of you want to do literally what Lily and Susan are doing and you'd like a video pen pal from within the congregation, let me know in the chat or send me an email. I will be glad to match you up with somebody else who's interested and get you started. But maybe today you just want to sit with this morning's message. With the thoughts of little Josh and Mazzello and the Blackfoot TV and what it all means. And maybe this can be a time for you to reflect on what perspective you take most often in life. Is it the individual life perspective with self actualization at the top? Or is it the Blackfoot First Nations perspective with what happens after you are gone at the top? I think we need both at different times, in different stages in our lives, which image is more helpful to you right now? And which one might help when you are faced with big decisions and choices about how you want to move forward? Today, may we all find the spaces and the communities that hold us? And remind us that despite the isolation of the past year and the disconnection that we so deeply fear and all of us are part of a bigger picture both here and now and truly forever. Amen.

[00:32:18] Speaker2

And may live in blessing. The windy day and I invite you now to join me in the spirit of prayer. God, I love this life. At this moment. God and creator who breathe life into all of the lives before this moment and will continue to give that spark of life to so many beyond me, beyond us, beyond now. When this span of history feels too big, when it feels so far beyond our imagination. Help us come back to the truth. That history is only this. It is only a collection of people just like us living one day at a time.

[00:33:38] Speaker2

Living one morning at a time, one breath at a time. All of us have only a collection of moments in this life. And we pray, holy presence, that you will be with us to help us make those moments conscious ones. That each breath and step that we take. And each morning that we wake up. Might be suffused. And filmed and shot through with the recognition of how precious and magical it really is. We bring love into our lives for the people we don't know, the ones who are not here yet, and the children all across this world, not only our own, but all of the young ones among us and the ones who will one day be us. The children who will one day sit in our offices and live in our houses, run our institutions and serve in our government. May we all remember in our time that part of what we do with our lives is create a world worthy for them? For all of our sakes. May this be so? And for the prayers that I've spoken in, the prayers that everyone gathered this morning with us, this whole thing silently in their hearts,

[00:35:27]

We say amen.

[00:35:32] Speaker2

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END OF TRANSCRIPT



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