

NAME

Wizard of Oz Audio.mp3

DATE

August 3, 2021

DURATION

28m 4s

2 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Speaker1

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation. Good morning, everybody. I'm so glad to be joining you again on a Sunday morning. Hmm. Huh, and looks like there's something different about my video today, huh? I can't quite put my finger on it, though. Do you do you notice something different? Uh, well, I guess we'll figure it out later.

[00:00:34] Speaker2

Anyway, these last

[00:00:36] Speaker1

Few weeks here at Wellspring's, we have been preaching in our Summer Spirit Flick's message series, as we do each year, finding the deeper meaning in movies and in the stories on our screens. And I've noticed a bit of a trend these last few weeks. We've had our preachers revisiting some of their classic favorite stories on the screen. Last week, Rodney preached about the movie Grease. A few weeks back, Reverend Ken preached about die hard spoiler alert. He does argue that it is a Christmas movie. And so maybe it was me noticing that trend. But something about life these past few weeks got me thinking about the movie that inspired my message today, a movie that is nearly as old as movies themselves. It's almost 100 years since its release at this point, the 1939 classic film The Wizard of Oz. Now, if you grew up, at least in America, but probably almost anywhere in the world at this point, I don't think it's possible to not know this movie. It's a story like Humpty Dumpty and Old MacDonald had a farm like it's deep in there from childhood. I could not tell you the first time I saw this movie. It's a it's a memory before memories, I think, for me. But I know intimately all the characters, all the costumes, all the songs. And maybe you do, too. But I'll remind you of the basic sketch of the plot of The Wizard of Oz in the beginning of the film.

[00:02:16] Speaker1

Dorothy, a girl living in Kansas, gets swept away from her home by a tornado and she set down into the magical land of Oz. And so she wants to try to find her way back home in this new place and she sets off with three new friends that she makes the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion and the scarecrow. They set off down the yellow brick road to see the wizard who all of the residents of Oz promise can make. Whatever she and her friends are longing for real can make it come true. Oh, that's what it was. Yeah, I see now. So I always find it interesting to look back at classic childhood stories like this with adult eyes, because what really happens in this movie, right, is Dorothy experiences head trauma. She gets hit on the head in the tornado with like a flying piece of wood or something. She passes out and we all get to watch the massive hallucinations she has before she comes to the movie, points to it, right? The Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, the scarecrow. They are played by the same actors as three of the farmhands on her family's farm. We meet them early in the movie. And it's the same with The Wizard of Oz himself.

[00:03:51] Speaker1

He's a reconstruction in her subconscious of the little bit shifty but ultimately kind traveling fortune teller in her little Kansas town. Dorothy gets hurt at the beginning of this movie. She's injured in a natural disaster, something that's nobody's fault. She is just vulnerable and in the wrong place at the wrong time. And in that state of being scared and under threat, her mind tries to make sense of what's going on, tries to find a way to feel safe again. You know, it's a perfect plotline. Now, as an adult looking at this movie, it's perfect for a children's movie developmentally. Right, because so many children's stories are about this, something that is with us from birth, that feeling of being scared and just trying to feel safe again. When you are a little person and you don't know much, the world can be a really big and scary place and learning how to feel safe and to find safety. That is one of our biggest tasks of childhood learning how to assess risk, who to trust and how to keep ourselves. Well, it's not just relevant when we are little, though. I mean, what could be more relevant for us today, today, August 1st, 2021, more than a year into a life changing situation for so many of us. The reason I am still talking to you on a screen right now,

[00:05:39] Speaker2

All

[00:05:40] Speaker1

Of us wondering after a big natural disaster,

[00:05:45] Speaker2

What

[00:05:45] Speaker1

Is safe and what's not, who is safe and who's not. Our world has become even more confusing in just the last week or two, we're watching headlines about breakthrough infections and the new Delta variant of the coronavirus. I actually got a covid test for the very first time in the pandemic. Believe it or not. Earlier this week, it was negative,

[00:06:17] Speaker2

Fortunately, but

[00:06:20] Speaker1

I went and got tested because I felt sick. For the first time in a long time. I haven't been going places and meeting many germs and I hoped it was just a cold, but I had no idea. I wanted to know was that I didn't put anyone else, didn't put any of you at risk. What do we do when we're not sure anymore what's up and what's down and when it's all so confusing and the world may be flush with colour and excitement again, but now there's also witches and flying monkeys and we don't

[00:06:58] Speaker2

Know who we can trust in

[00:07:02] Speaker1

This new world. We found ourselves in

[00:07:05] Speaker2

More

[00:07:06] Speaker1

Than that. We don't know how or whether we can even get back to that place,

[00:07:11] Speaker2

That home

[00:07:12] Speaker1

That we used to know. I think many of us are struggling with these questions right now. I know that I am. For me, it's like a low grade hum in the back of my mind, this feeling like we've made it through the worst of this experience. But things are still not on solid ground. And my subconscious subconscious is humming. It feels like all the time still trying to find my footing. This is what collective trauma does to people, to us, it reverberates over time, we've talked about this at WellSpring's so many times, long before the pandemic trauma happens, whenever something overwhelms our ability to cope and make sense of what's going on, and it can be collective, it lives alongside us as we start trying to find our way out or around or moving forward alongside

[00:08:29] Speaker2

What's happened,

[00:08:31] Speaker1

Trying to formulate some new sense of the meaning of it

[00:08:35] Speaker2

All.

[00:08:38] Speaker1

And we're all somewhere on that road right now. Like most roads, it takes time to travel. Especially when the trauma seems to be ongoing or to revisit us in waves, but the good news, I think, is that really the only way we can screw up this journey is to pretend we're not on it at

[00:09:05] Speaker2

All, as

[00:09:07] Speaker1

Long as we are willing to pay attention

[00:09:12] Speaker2

To where our

[00:09:12] Speaker1

Feet are moving on this yellow brick road together,

[00:09:16] Speaker2

As long

[00:09:17] Speaker1

As we're willing to tell stories and process our memories and notice our thoughts and feelings and allow ourselves

[00:09:26] Speaker2

To

[00:09:27] Speaker1

Slowly find and make this meaning from these experiences,

[00:09:33] Speaker2

Then we will get there.

[00:09:36] Speaker1

Or actually maybe a better way to say it is we will find enough safety and meaning

[00:09:44] Speaker2

Here,

[00:09:45] Speaker1

Not there, but wherever we are on the path by being honest with ourselves and each other

[00:09:55] Speaker2

About how

[00:09:56] Speaker1

We're feeling. We've won more than half the battle, being honest, maybe half the battle. But the other half, of course, is found with each other. It's finding the soft places for those thoughts and those feelings as we make sense of this to land with someone else. And that's the part of this that we can do for each other as we travel. Not every person we meet and we know this is going to be caring or understanding or see things the way we do or even be open to the way we see things. And that makes the people and the places where we can really share it all so much more precious. I remember this week a story I read a little while back, another story actually about a tornado in Kansas. It's from the short story author Antonia Nelson, who wrote about something that happened to her back in 1966 when she was five years old. Antonia, as a little girl, her father, her mother, who was pregnant at the time, and her four older siblings, this big family, were all packed into their station wagon one day

[00:11:20] Speaker2

When the

[00:11:20] Speaker1

Sky began to get cloudy and angry, and suddenly things got a little too quiet in the

[00:11:28] Speaker2

Air.

[00:11:30] Speaker1

And Tony's father pulled into a shopping center parking lot because he saw the signs and he was hoping to get them all inside to take cover. But he was too late. A tornado was cruising fast along the flat Kansas prairie and heading straight towards them. And before they could run inside to safety, it roared right past the shopping center into the parking lot. And Antonia remembers it, picked up the family's station wagon

[00:12:01] Speaker2

And it turned it over upside down

[00:12:07] Speaker1

And then set it back down onto the pavement. And the tornado blew off down the road. The family's car, now upside down, had been set back down on the ground almost gently. Now, the whole family was shaken up like hell on the inside. Right. But miraculously, none of the children and adults, the seven people in that car were physically hurt. And Tony remembers going to the hospital afterwards. They all went to get checked out and the doctors examined each child one by one, no broken bones, nobody needed stitches, maybe a couple bruises. But, yeah, everybody was OK. Except there was one thing they didn't know, you see in the 1960s, the technology was not what it was today, and the family and Antonia's mother all went home wondering

[00:13:09] Speaker2

For months

[00:13:11] Speaker1

Whether anything had happened to that baby growing inside of

[00:13:15] Speaker2

Her womb with the baby. All right. Would it not for months.

[00:13:25] Speaker1

All they could do was wonder and hope.

[00:13:29] Speaker2

There was nothing to do

[00:13:30] Speaker1

But wait and see. You know, any time we try to move forward, move on from something scary that happens to us, there's always some of that same kind of weighting.

[00:13:46] Speaker2

Will it be all right? Will it not?

[00:13:51] Speaker1

How will this affect us? How will this change us? We can do the things we can do. We can go to the hospital and get the scans. But there's some piece of what is to unfold that simply has to unfold and come on its own time. And yet the time

[00:14:15] Speaker2

While

[00:14:16] Speaker1

We may have to wait through it, we don't have to be passive in the waiting. It can be a scary thing to go down the yellow brick

[00:14:27] Speaker2

Road, there

[00:14:30] Speaker1

Are flying monkeys and witches. There might be danger and there might be adventure ahead, but there can also be friends. Companions and connections who travel with

[00:14:44] Speaker2

Us,

[00:14:46] Speaker1

Sticking together, linking arms, skipping down that road,

[00:14:52] Speaker2

Singing and listening

[00:14:56] Speaker1

And supporting each

[00:14:57] Speaker2

Other, being

[00:14:59] Speaker1

For each other, those soft places to land that help to keep us safe as we travel along the way, Dorothy finds herself in this bright and vibrant and colorful place. She has survived what's happened to her, but also the places new and scary and unfamiliar. All she wants

[00:15:23] Speaker2

Is to be home again, and her

[00:15:26] Speaker1

Little misfit crew wants things to a heart and a brain and courage, things that they have lost one way or another and are longing to find again those things that they seek the way back

[00:15:40] Speaker2

Home.

[00:15:41] Speaker1

They all end up being things that they have to find along the journey. Things that they learn were always inside them. In Dorothy's case, magically the way home was literally on her

[00:15:55] Speaker2

Feet the whole time.

[00:16:00] Speaker1

But in traveling together, they are able to share what they are seeking and why they are seeking it, they are able to guard and protect and love one another. And eventually that wizard cannot snap his fingers and make things happen. But he can lovingly point out to them the gifts they've already been given and how maybe they can use them now in a new way to create a different kind of future.

[00:16:36] Speaker2

The poet Densha LYMERix

[00:16:40] Speaker1

Has a poem that everybody is sharing right now. I noticed online of small kindnesses, you may have heard of her. She grew up speaking Arabic for a time. There were a few years that her family lived in Beirut and Lebanon. And Anusha Llamas has written a number of poems about that experience and about the Arabic language itself, including one poem about a phrase you may have heard. If you know or are an Arabic speaker yourself, it's the phrase inshallah, inshallah. I remember first hearing it regularly from a friend of my old you church in D.C., a white woman I knew who became a U. U. Muslim dual affiliated when she married a Muslim man. And then again, I heard it years later from a classmate in divinity school, a black Muslim woman from Chicago. Both of them peppered their speech all the

[00:17:46] Speaker2

Time with

[00:17:48] Speaker1

This word. It seemed to come up in so many conversations. They might say, this winter I'll go back home to see my parents, inshallah, or, yeah, I really think this new project I'm working on is going to turn out well, inshallah.

[00:18:03] Speaker2

The phrase means if God wills it, if God wills, it is a

[00:18:10] Speaker1

Similar word for this in Spanish. You might know to ohala now to a Unitarian Universalist ear. Maybe you have a little bit of a head tilt reaction to that idea of constantly peppering your speech with this phrase. If God wills it after all you use, don't necessarily all believe in God, let alone some sense of God's will or plan. If there's any consensus among Unitarian Universalist, maybe it's that what is divine and what is human work together, God's will and our will sort of in a partnership on a seesaw of some kind. Right. But you can ask too many Unitarian Universalist and get 20 different answers for how they would balance that particular seesaw. Is what happens more up to us or to God something greater than us? I have my opinion, but of course, I don't know the answer. And I've always remembered how I felt hearing these two women I knew pepper this phrase into their speech, keeping it right on the tongue Inshala. I felt safer somehow,

[00:19:41] Speaker2

I felt

[00:19:42] Speaker1

More at ease. Like it was a little linguistic reminder, a small practice of devotion to keep on the tongue at all times, to ask and hope

[00:19:57] Speaker2

For

[00:19:57] Speaker1

Things with a constant kind of humility, a way of remembering that what I do and what I plan for is always at least a little bit out of my hands. That much is

[00:20:12] Speaker2

True for all of us right now.

[00:20:19] Speaker1

And while it can be scary,

[00:20:22] Speaker2

It's also good because

[00:20:25] Speaker1

I don't know about you, but I'm not qualified to be God. I don't want everything that happens to be in my hands. And because disasters strike often in this life, disasters of all kinds, losses and traumas and illness and grief, then I want gentle hands to strike sometimes also to set my car down softly on a parking lot. I want colorful dreams to show up and companions to join

[00:21:00] Speaker2

Me, people who

[00:21:03] Speaker1

Show me all my own magic when I

[00:21:05] Speaker2

Forget it.

[00:21:09] Speaker1

People who can be with us while we find our way back to safe places. Places that may

[00:21:19] Speaker2

Look the

[00:21:21] Speaker1

Same as they did when we started, but because of the journey,

[00:21:26] Speaker2

We will be different. We will have grown. Hmm. To me,

[00:21:36] Speaker1

That is perhaps the most loving image

[00:21:40] Speaker2

Of God or of the divine, not the

[00:21:44] Speaker1

One who you pray to in the right way to make things turn out the way you want them, but a God who will stay with us no matter what changes, a love that does not let go until we find our way back home. This is the new show, Mariss

[00:22:08] Speaker2

Poem about

[00:22:10] Speaker1

That beautiful Arabic

[00:22:11] Speaker2

Word,

[00:22:16] Speaker1

I don't know when it slipped into my speech, that soft word, meaning if God

[00:22:23] Speaker2

Wills it and

[00:22:25] Speaker1

Shall I will see you next summer,

[00:22:29] Speaker2

The baby

[00:22:30] Speaker1

Will come in spring,

[00:22:31] Speaker2

Inshallah,

[00:22:34] Speaker1

Inshallah. This year we will have enough rain. So many plans I have laid have unraveled easily as braids beneath my mother's quick fingers. Every language must have a word for

[00:22:49] Speaker2

This, a

[00:22:51] Speaker1

Word our grandmothers uttered under their breath as they penned the whites soaked in lemon and hung them to dry in the

[00:22:58] Speaker2

Sun or peeled potatoes,

[00:23:02] Speaker1

Dropping the discarded skins into

[00:23:04] Speaker2

A bowl.

[00:23:06] Speaker1

Our sons will return next month. Inshallah, inshallah. This war will end soon. Inshallah. The rights will be enough

[00:23:18] Speaker2

To last through winter. How lightly we learn to hold hope

[00:23:28] Speaker1

As if it were an animal that could turn around and bite your

[00:23:31] Speaker2

Hand,

[00:23:33] Speaker1

And still we carry

[00:23:34] Speaker2

It the way a mother would carefully

[00:23:40] Speaker1

From one day to the next. That last stanza, I'll read it again, how lightly we learn to

[00:23:54] Speaker2

Hold hope

[00:23:55] Speaker1

As if it were an animal that could turn around and bite your hand, and still we carry

[00:24:02] Speaker2

It the way a mother would carefully

[00:24:06] Speaker1

From one day to the next. May we carry it with love?

[00:24:16] Speaker2

May we carry it together into the next week, friends

[00:24:22] Speaker1

And all the way

[00:24:23] Speaker2

Down a long road ahead?

[00:24:28] Speaker1

Amen, and may you live in blessing. I invite you if you feel comfortable

[00:24:38] Speaker2

To close

[00:24:39] Speaker1

Your eyes, perhaps bow your head by your shoulders,

[00:24:43] Speaker2

Fall and

[00:24:45] Speaker1

Join me in the spirit of

[00:24:47] Speaker2

Prayer.

[00:24:54] Speaker1

God of our hearts own language,

[00:25:00] Speaker2

God who

[00:25:01] Speaker1

Knows and carries our hopes along with us.

[00:25:11] Speaker2

Holy Love force

[00:25:14] Speaker1

That holds us all in holding us, you know, how our communities and our families

[00:25:23] Speaker2

Are in

[00:25:24] Speaker1

Places of uncertainty

[00:25:27] Speaker2

And

[00:25:27] Speaker1

Doubt. How things seemed to shift and change for so many of us, how we live our lives always every day with these mixtures, turmoil sometimes of excitement and joy and worry and gratitude and

[00:25:46] Speaker2

Loss, how many things we

[00:25:52] Speaker1

Experience in times like these when we have been shaken up and set back down? May we remember that there is nothing we can feel that is not acceptable? There is nothing we can feel that we are not supposed to feel. And in fact, may we remember that honoring how we are is what helps us move

[00:26:26] Speaker2

Forward

[00:26:29] Speaker1

With the consciousness to turn what we feel into something good, to transform our emotions and thoughts and experiences into something that is in alignment with our hearts calling and our values and what you call us to. Which is love. Which is kindness and care towards each other. As we walk that path together, as we experience that alchemy of transforming what we experience into something that is good for the world, maybe we find comfort in our companions. And may we remember,

[00:27:20] Speaker2

Thanks to you, thanks to each other, that

[00:27:25] Speaker1

So far we have made it through and we can keep

[00:27:28] Speaker2

Moving

[00:27:30] Speaker1

With each step and breath

[00:27:33] Speaker2

One moment and one day at a time towards what we long for. For the

[00:27:42] Speaker1

Prayers that I have spoken this morning and for the prayers that everyone with us is carrying silently on their

[00:27:49] Speaker2

Hearts,

[00:27:50] Speaker1

We say Amen. If you enjoyed this message and would like to support the mission of Wellspring's, go to our Web site. WellspringUU.org. That's Wellspring's the letters UU dot ORG

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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