

NAME

Economy of Joy Audio.mp3

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DURATION

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2 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Speaker1

The following is a message from Wellsprings Congregation.

[00:00:15] Speaker2

The heart is bloom. It shoots up through the stony ground, but there's no room or space to rent in this town, you're out of luck. And the reason that you had to care. Traffic is stuck and you're not moving anywhere. You thought you found a friend to take you out of this place. Someone you could lend a hand in exchange for grace. It's a beautiful day. Don't let it slip away. The sky falls and you feel like it's a beautiful day. These are the lyrics from the song Beautiful Day, written by Bono and sung by and performed by U2. The song was written after O and I wore these in it because at the time Bono wore his sunglasses, I'm going to take them off its prescription glasses. Yeah. So the song was inspired or is about a man who loses everything but still found joy in what he had left. Bono was inspired to write the song because he was involved in the Coalition Jubilee movement, which was in 2000, which was set up to wiping out billions of dollars of debt owed by the poorest countries. And I think this is song. This song is a great example of the expression of joy, the way the lyrics and the music work together. It it's it's so powerful because I think the joy is encompasses more than just happiness. Joy is, is is deep. It's so deep because I think it encompasses so many emotions at the same time.

[00:02:18] Speaker2

There's all there's wonder. And yes, there's sadness and pain all there at the same time. I know for myself, when I'm experiencing joy, I'm laughing and crying at the same time. It sometimes makes no sense to me how this happens, but this is a song I think that goes deep into that feeling of joy. I mean, when you think about the opening line, it's like the heart is a bloom and it pushes up through the stony ground. And he's making a metaphor that the heart is like this little flower that all it wants to do is push through the harshness of life reaching for the Sun just to celebrate being alive. To oh, it's going to do when it gets up there is going to open up and just face the sun, and that is what I think Bono is talking about is what we have to do in order to experience joy. Our heart has to break through the harsh. Stony world. Ultimately, to find Grace. In relationship to ourselves. In relationship to the other. And relationship to the world, and that opens the door of. For the possibility of experiencing and being with and having joy. The name of this message that I'm preaching today is the economy of joy, and that title came from Lee. You know what, as a lay preacher, one of the things we do as we're working on our message if we talk to one of the preachers and I was explaining to Lee what I was thinking.

[00:04:17] Speaker2

And she said, Oh, that's like the economy of joy. And what that means is, I think that there are three. There may be more and I'd be curious to hear what people think, but I think there are three aspects to joy. There's creating the space where joy can flourish, where it happens. And I'll talk more about that and a little bit. There's experiencing joy, which is when you're just so you're in it and you feel it in your body, I mean, for me, nothing makes me experience joy more than music. Ever since I was a little kid, I can't help it if I hear music I like, like I'm doing right now, see my hands. They're moving. I think about it. You can't see. There's a massive grin on my face when I think about music, even if it's music I don't like, I'm like, Whoa. So does this experiencing joy? And then there's expressing joy. And I think that it's really easy to conflate, confuse mixed them all up together because I think they are really different and I want to spend some time sort of pulling them apart and looking at each one. So. But before I go to there, I also want to talk about and this is a little little return or left turn, depending on where you how you think about it, the politics of joy.

[00:05:55] Speaker2

There's a way in our culture that we have this idea of what joy looks like and that we're supposed to be the only way to be joyful is to be almost like this whirling dervish running down the street. Yeah. I'm so happy dancing in the streets. You know, ah, like I imagined, like some of the scenes in West Side Story where people are dancing in the streets or in the heights. And that's this idealistic idea of what joy is. And also, one of the things in Western culture is this idea that those who have less are able to teach us who have more about joy. And this is evident in the concept called the Magic Negro, which is a character that exists in film and stories. And you've all seen movies like The Green Mile or the Help or Bagger Vance, where there's a person of color who has nothing but somehow teaches the person who has everything the real meaning of joy. And there is something that is just sort of politically gross about that whole idea. So I want to keep that in mind because language is a difficult thing to deal with when you're trying to express something so complex as joy. And some of the examples I'm going to use to talk about joy, I want you to keep in mind that there is this also this underlying way in which we think about what joy is.

[00:07:30] Speaker2

For example, I when I was thinking about this, I thought, OK, what's one of the most joyous moments or what filled me with joy? And for me, I think of the first time I saw the Grand Canyon. And the point at which I saw the Grand Canyon, just looking at it and looking down and seeing rainbows and looking down in the canyon and seeing clouds, I again, I'm a weepy guy. I cry. I can cry very easily. I was like, weeping. Oh, that is the most beautiful thing ever. And even when I tell the story, I communicate this joy of seeing this. This this awesomeness. This I mean, truly using the word awesome in the way it's meant to be used this awesomeness of the Grand Canyon. But in talking to someone, as I often do when I'm working out these messages, they reminded me that it could also be someone having clean drinking water for the first time. That is could be immensely joyful for someone or someone just having an act of kindness bestowed upon them. Someone paying for someone's coffee in a line at a coffee shop. All of these are a way of opening the door and allowing someone to experience. Feel. And express. Joy? So one of the things I want to look at.

[00:09:06] Speaker2

Is that? The difference between happiness and joy. They're related. And I think sometimes when you look up the definition of joy, you see that it says happiness. And I'm like, That's confusing. How can that be? Oh, there was a point I wanted to make. I want to jump back to the politics of joy. One of the things I did look up and I was very curious about this in the Constitution. Why did, as you say, the pursuit of happiness and not the pursuit of joy? It's really curious about that. So of course. My friend and little nemesis, Mr Thomas Jefferson. He's the one who changed the line. Originally, it's at life, liberty, and it was something to do with the pursuit of things, property, things we could own, and he changed it to the pursuit of happiness. Now there's a theory that he got it from the philosopher John Locke and John Locke wrote about this philosophy sort of in the same way. Now there's some historians who say there's no way he could have got from Locke was Locke was a supporter of the Crown, and they would have been at odds with each other. But the interesting thing I saw in what John Locke wrote in the way he was using happiness, and I think it speaks to that the time and how they were understanding it. He was trying to say, and I'm going to paraphrase.

[00:10:32] Speaker2

He was saying that the pursuit of happiness, having this goal of this meta happiness, this overarching happiness will keep you from making decisions that are about immediate pleasure and gratification. That and that, to me, actually sounds like the pursuit of joy. Not happy because happiness is so immediate. It's so fleeting. It's so like, Oh my god, I'm so happy. Ok, it's over. You know, I think at the times when I'm really happy and some of them are hard to even remember, like they don't stick with you. But the times I feel and celebrate and enjoy, they stick with you for a lifetime then, and they don't go away because I think they're always there. They're always present. And again, so, joy, is this it's there, it's gone. I think I mean, sorry, I got that backwards happiness is there, it's gone. Joy is something that you have to open yourself up for. It takes. It's a practice, it takes work. It takes a discipline to get yourself into that space where you can be open to and feel and express joy. So I give you an example of that in my life. So my dad. Who probably some of you are tired of hearing me talk about because they talk about them all the time. And I actually made a whole show that that I did right before COVID, one man show where I was like a little love letter to my dad, but I never thought of my dad as being a joyous person.

[00:12:17] Speaker2

In fact, I think it's taken me almost to the point where I'm almost 60 years old to recognize how wrong I was. When I would always see my dad thinking my dad is being grumpy and kind of miserable and like, Wow, now he was always telling jokes they were inappropriate jokes, but he was always going around telling jokes. He was always laughing and making fun of things and poking things. And he loved movies, comedy, music, all this stuff. But in general, he always seemed to be like, So I have a vivid memory of one day coming, you know, sitting at the dinner table and I go, Look, I got an A in school look, I got an A and he goes, Yeah, what do you want? Let me write a letter when to parade? What do you want to call the president? I go to work. I make money. You go to school. You get A's. Ok, fine. And as a little kid, I don't even know what he was trying to teach me at that moment. I don't even think he knew, but it felt like I wasn't seeing that he was miserable. And I said, I'm not going to be like you. But here's the thing that same guy. When I was in fifth sixth grade, I can't remember exactly when when he found out that at Sears, they were doing a correspondence course in basic electricity and that he could get them and give them to me because he saw how much I love tinkering with things.

[00:13:46] Speaker2

He came home one day from work and he handed me a stack of books. He goes, It's a course in basic electricity. It's for you. Whatever you want to do, you can do it or not do it. It's up to you. My eyes lit up. I'm like, what? Of course, in basic electricity. Woo-hoo. That summer, I have to say it was one of those. I have the most joyous memory of reading those books trying to figure out what things meant. I mean, one of my favorite jokes is I'm looking in the book and I'm going a Kappa Sider. What's a Kappa Sider? And I go to the library and I'm like, Librarian, what's a cat beside her? She goes, What a capacity. I don't know what you're talking about. See, right here. She goes, That's capacitor. Go to the physics section. Ok, so such joy and I finish the books. I took the test. I got an A. When the certificate came back, my dad sat there, typed out his name, my name in front of his name because my middle name is his name, Luther. And he gave it to me, put it in a little plaque, and he handed it to me, and here's the thing my dad may not have been able to express joy, but he certainly made the space for it to happen, both for me and my sisters.

[00:15:01] Speaker2

I mean, my sisters and I have spent our lives pursuing what we love, what makes us happy? My one sister is a writer. My other is a doctor and surgeon, and I'm a musician and filmmaker, and I don't think we would have been able to even begin that journey of taking on something that most people would think, Oh, you can't do that. That's impossible. If it wasn't for my dad setting these conditions for us to. Feel and sense, the joy is even possible. And I think about when I'm working in the studio every day, I have a condition called dish where my tendons fuse and I'm in pain a lot, and yet I wake up every morning and I am so happy to get out of bed because I know I'm going to go down in the studio and work on something or someone's coming over. And it will be as tedious and as annoying, and it's difficult and it's mind numbingly crazy and anxiety producing as it can be. There's joy. There is a sense of joy in creating and making something. So that is creating the conditions for joy. I'm going to move on now to feeling joy. In the early 90s, I was a reporter for Radio for Peace and Radio for Peace was a shortwave radio station that was located in Costa Rica, and I was lucky enough to get to go down there for a month and spend a month working at the station and learning stuff about shortwave radio and about the politics.

[00:16:46] Speaker2

It was on the grounds of the University for Peace, which was created by Robert Mueller, who was one of the founders of the U.N.. I also got to spend a day with him, which was pretty amazing. Spend the day with one of the founders of the U.N.. How often does that happen? That's insane. But some interesting things about that trip. I landed on the Friday before Easter in Costa Rica, and Costa Rica is a Catholic country, so everything is shut down. And when I say everything, I mean, you can't get a cab. Everything shut down. And then the town I was staying in was a little teeny town. I don't even know if you could call it a town, one paved road. Is that a town? And probably about 200 people lived in this town, and nobody very few people spoke English, and my Spanish is OK. It was better by the time I left. But while I was there, it was. It was sketchy. And there's funny stories I have, but I'm not going to go into this right now anyway. Good Friday, I decided that I was going to walk through the rainforest to the station, which was walking up the side of a mountain and going over a string bridge and all that sort of stuff.

[00:18:04] Speaker2

And it's something I wanted to do. So I asked, how do I get to the station? They just follow that path. Ok, so I go. And it was this amazing experience chased by monkeys that were. And I say Chase. I mean, I'm walking, and all of a sudden I can hear them following me and I look up and I'm like, Those are monkeys up there and they're following me. I saw a bug. I swear the wingspan was this big. I was sitting down for a second. It came and flew and just kind of looked at me like this and said, Oh, OK, you're OK. And then it flew away. So I get up to the radio station and there's nobody there. I'm like, Where is everybody? This is really weird. Where did everybody go? I don't know. So for about 45 minutes goes by. And here comes this caravan of cars and I go, What happened? Where? What happened? They go, Oh, a boa was crossing the road and we had to wait for it to cross. I'm like a what? They said a boa was crossing the road. You know, big snake and you let me walk through the wood, the rain forest with a there's boas out there.

[00:19:07] Speaker2

They're like, Yeah, I'm like, I'm not going anywhere without being in a car anymore while I'm here. But it still was this amazing experience and kind of opened me up that night. Uh, since, as I said, Costa Rica is a very Catholic country. All 200 people in the town made the procession around the town to the church. And they all sang in unison as they were doing it, and now they were singing Latin or Spanish. I'm not sure I didn't know what they were singing, but I'm standing there in front of the church. And as the procession got closer, this wave of feeling of emotion of joy came over me that I have never felt before up. You know, I felt that sense, but not up until this point in my life. And I could not stop weeping, could not stop crying. In fact, I didn't want to. And it was this crying again filled with laughter. And I don't know why. I mean, it was a group of people singing marching to the street. They were carrying Jesus on the cross and they had Mary. And but it was this feeling I was feeling this immense joy that was coming from all these people. And it was so, so powerful. And I think part of it was, for me was having that experience in nature earlier that kind of opened me up to be able to receive and be present to.

[00:20:48]

Joy? So that's feeling joy.

[00:20:55] Speaker2

So now we move on to expressing joy. Now I said, there's nothing that moves me more than music. So in the chat, you'll see that there is a companion podcast to my message where there is a series of songs that are played that are what I think of as expressions, musical expressions of joy. I called up a couple of friends. I asked them, What song makes you actually email them to be specific? What song makes you think of how you feel, joy, how you express joy and what makes you joyful? And I got a lot of different responses. Some of them completely surprised me, and I also included some of my own. And so as you listen to the podcast, you're going to hear me talk a little bit and set them up, but I want to go through them right now as expressions of joy. So the first song, as soon as I thought about this and it's going to drive some of you crazy, I know because it's going to be a song that some people go, Why would you pick that song? It's awful. It's terrible. It's walking on sunshine by Katrina and the waves. Every time I hear that song, it just makes me smile. But it doesn't just make me happy. It is that frenetic child in me that just wants to run free when he hears music and just can't stop moving and just start bouncing up and down and wants to dance around.

[00:22:26] Speaker2

And I think of that song as representing sort of adolescent joy or teen teen joy. It's so youthful, it's so full of energy. And the song I put right next to it is Sir Duke. Someone friend of mine sent me that, and I think that it's an example of someone's deep, deep love for music, which is Stevie Wonder. And that is one way to joy is to love something deeply love. Someone deeply love deeply can open your heart up to joy. Yeah, it opens you up to sadness and pain and all those other things. But again, that's the point I'm making. I think all of it is included in joy. So there's Sir Duke and you know, as soon as you hear those horns come in da da da da da da da da da da da da da da. How can you not have a grin on your face? It just makes you know that you're alive. The next song is, of course, what I started the message with beautiful day that song. But you to again, I can't say enough about it because it is. It encompasses the light and the dark reading. If you get a chance, look on Wikipedia. It's a really cool article about how the song musically came together. That opening was developed by Brian Eno and Daniel Anwar.

[00:23:52] Speaker2

They almost trashed the song because the band didn't like it. It started off as another song, and they kept playing with it and tweaking it. Obviously, they thought the chorus was cheesy. It's a beautiful day, really. That's what you got by now. Come on, can you give us more than that? But something happened when Eno and Lenoir, the producers of the song, added This little keyboard part at the beginning and this little drumbeat, and it changed the tone, and it also inspired the edge to come up with some. The think of the song a little bit differently, and what I love about it is in the music. There is this darkness that's there, and yet there's a celebration of life when you get to the chorus. Every time I hear that chorus, it feels like the sun's coming up, you know? And so and I love the end of the song where he goes the line. He sings, what you don't have. You don't need it. Now what you don't have, you can feel. Somehow, Bono is definitely a poet. The next song I put I played is a Wellspring staple when joy comes back, but I found the Ruthie Foster version, and it just makes me weep every time I hear it. It's so it's so moving. So check that out. It's got this bluesy thing going on, and if you have any doubt that joy does not encompass all the different emotions.

[00:25:20] Speaker2

Listen to the Blues because it's all there. It is still, to this day, a thing that blows my mind and how you can. This music can be so sad and tell such a deep, sad story, and yet it is so joyful. It is so full of life and a celebration of life, and it gets in your body and you get to move. And so joy comes back. A nurse, patapaa from Miriam Makeba and Patapaa Amin's touch was a dance that was really popular in South Africa, and I mentioned in the podcast, so I got to work with her a little bit a couple of years ago, which was again another joyful moment in my life. My friend Gary sent me Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da, I felt obligated to put it in since there's so much Beatles hysteria. The song is this. I'm torn about this song just because it is a celebration of life. It's about, Hey, life goes on. But it's the simple things in life that make us joyful and that connect us. But look on Wikipedia, there's some sadness of the story, the guy that came up with the line felt he got ripped off. There's a whole thing that goes on with this. The next piece I play is a piece by Igor Stravinsky called I can never say this correctly because it's in Russian o'clock and it means pastoral, and it is one of my favorite contemporary classical pieces of music.

[00:27:01] Speaker2

And I just think it is so joyful. But at the same time, it's it's solemn. There's joy to the world, which a friend of mine sent me. I. You're going to hear the Pentatonix version. Rise up, rise up. This song has been one of my favorite songs forever. Probably not. A lot of you know it. It was a big 80s dance song, and it became a theme song for many movements the gay rights movement, civil rights movement. It was part of the Democratic Party at one point, but it is such a celebration. It was first played in Pride Fest in Toronto in 83. It's been. The singer is always invited to all these political rallies to sing the song. It's such a fun song to dance to, but it also can. It lifts the spirit. Of course, I had to put one of my own songs in there. Someone thinks you're wonderful from the We Stood Up CD sung by the wonderful and late Sarah Dash, who was in LaBelle and also performed with the expensive Winehouse. And that song really is just about trying to instill in someone who doesn't believe in themselves that there is hope, possibility and joy. And lastly, if you can stick through the whole podcast Beethoven's Ode to Joy, so that is. The expression.

[00:28:29]

Of Joy. So.

[00:28:37] Speaker2

How can we make sure that we have joy in our life? And I don't want to be prescriptive, but these are some things that I found gratitude. If you are actively grateful for the things you have, as opposed to worried about the things you don't. It makes it easy to open yourself up for joy. Self-care is so critical. The gifts we give ourselves. We give ourselves so many gifts, and we probably don't even think about the way we give ourselves gifts. A couple of weeks ago, driving home from here, I got a flat tire. I ran into like one of those little gullies in the road and destroyed my rim. And when I went to the car dealership to get a new tire, they said, Oh, it's going to be a thousand bucks. But I had bought the insurance when I bought the car and I recognize I give him myself a gift. Even though I didn't think, you know, you might not think of it that way, but I was like, so thankful to Rodney for thank you for taking care of me. Self care. Add happiness to your life, just like we look for the problems, we can also look for the joy. Love more. Love something actively. Again, I can't stress enough for me, I love making music and playing music, and I have to say that it's not always fun.

[00:30:06] Speaker2

It's not always happy, but it does feel my heart and fill me with joy. Appreciate the small things. Laugh more. I love to laugh. And be present again. These are not prescriptive. These are just suggestions. Try them mix and match, play with them. Play another way to have joyous Ken talked about last week. So in closing, I like to say so may all of you find a way to create. Experience and express joy in a way that is specific to you and may God or higher power that you believe in. Give you the strength to be the light. The beacon in your world and to spread the joy. B the joy. And live the joy. Amen. Will you pray with me? God. Gaia Spirit. Thank you for all of the joy. That is present in our lives, that it's present with us here today and present with all of us who are at home watching. And may this instill us with the feeling? Of experiencing joy and allow us. To have it and then express it and share it with the world. And as Technician says, sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.

[00:32:10] Speaker1

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