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## START OF TRANSCRIPT

**[00:00:00] Speaker1**

Pro tip, you might have thought I would learn by now. Don't put the papers of your message next to an open vent. If you want to see him do that. Good morning, everybody. Good to see you. Good to be with you here. And at home. So about two or three months ago, Facebook friend of mine set out a little fun challenge. He listed his top 25 Beatles songs. In alphabetical order, not representing every single letter of the alphabet, but just alphabetically so. I'm not going to forgo a challenge like that. So that's the beginning of mine. It's a little story and your bird can sing, it's my favorite rock song with rhythm guitar. Every little thing, beautiful little John Lyric from an early album, I think, from Meet the Beatles, that actually my friend Pete, whose wedding I did in 2008. He integrated words from that song into his vows to his wife. I could go on and on. They're my favorite. Don't expect his to be yours. And, you know, picking your favorite Beatle songs. It's like picking your favorite 72 degree day. With Sun. And no humidity. We're all going to have a different perspective on it, but. Does it really make sense to make it into a debate? No, and I am a recovering rockiest, which means that in my past, I will take up any opportunity to debate music with someone else and sometimes fairly fearlessly and stupidly. And that's the interesting thing that happened once people started to offer their top twenty five Beatles songs is there were some of us who said, Wow, you know, like that just missed the list for me.

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That was almost on mine. And then were some folks who started to debate. Well, how could you choose this song from Revolver and leave off this song from Revolver? Why is there no Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, which by the recovering rock-ist in me wants to say that's actually the worst Beatles album? Oh all right. You talk to me after if you want to point of all this point of all, this is to say it's one of the reasons. As much as I love movies and great television shows, I actually don't love award shows because I think they kind of stir up in me and culturally as well to this desire to not just have favorites which are all going to have. But to rank things. Better to worse. And I think that misses the point of creativity. The point of creativity is to be creative. And to explore this life in a generous way. To not make even excellence a competition. This is kind of what I want to talk about today as I begin this new message series The Great Integration. Great integration, the title we came up with kind of points to a phrase that many of us have heard recently the great resignation. The changes people are making in mass. Work, family, home, life relocations, geographies. This is a time of tremendous transition, right? Now, let's just step back for a second.

**[00:04:18] Speaker1**

There is no time of ever being alive, that isn't a time of transition. It's just that right now there's a lot of it going on. Seeds planted well before the pandemic. Are kind of now being harvested by the pandemic. This is a time of tremendous disruption in that transition. And let me say this. I have no idea what's going to happen. That's always true. I never have an idea what's going to happen. I've guesses. But I have no clue what the end result or end results will be. Of this time of massive transition in our lives. I can look at hopeful things. It feels like in the last couple of years of our lives, like there is a move away from some of the excessive individualism that's part of the American tradition towards more of an emphasis upon collective action. And then because like the great Tevye from Fiddler on the Roof, I like to say and on the other hand, isn't the move towards authoritarianism in our world also a form of collective action? Oh. There is no solving this. There's only signs of some hope. Some promising things that are part of our world right now. The title, The Great Integration, we want to be clear what we mean by integration, you will not hear in this message series integration as a kind of integration towards sameness. Right. The kind of integration we seek. Those of us preaching in this message series.

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It will be an integration based on differentiation. And within that and among that differentiation. Seeking for a larger wholeness. It is not the integration of stuckness. Of being so solid, we do not move, change and grow in this life. It is the integration of dance partners. Of yoga flow. Of movement and growth and dynamic balance. This is one of our core beliefs here at WellSprings, and it's the title for today's my message. We talk about original blessing. I want to read that to you and share it with you. Original blessing we are each born into original blessing, inherently whole because we are part of a source that is whole. Although our life experiences and our choices may fragment us, there is always the potential for integration within each of us. That is not a static stuck integration. It is dynamic and growing. And I feel it in my own life. Many of us are searching for this illusory right work life balance thing, whatever that means and can be so challenging, I know it has been for most of my working life, a challenge for me to find. And as I shared with you all, my letter that came out at the beginning of January about some of the reasons that I am ending my ministry here at the conclusion of June, at the end of our congregational year that there is nothing wrong. It's just in this 17th year. It is time. And the truth is, I want to work less.

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I already have one full time job right now. Is the Seder, says Dainu, that's enough. That is enough for me. And it's calling forth a different season in time for change. What I am trying to answer. By narrowing the focus of my professional life is not to seek so much of my identity, which I have done for so much of my life through my professional life. It is trying to answer the call of original blessing. Now, if you know anything about that phrase, original blessing, it's associated with a theologian named Matthew Fox, who at one point was a Catholic theologian and acting in the name of what he thought was a tradition within his Catholic tradition. He found himself booted from his Catholic tradition because he said there is this part of the tradition that he says Catholicism does not lift up and celebrate as much, and it's there. It's scriptural, it's biblical. It's right there for those of you. You know, if you know the story of Genesis, there are two creation stories, right? The one most of us think of is the Adam and Eve one. That's the so-called and I use that intentionally so-called fall. That's where we get the words original sin from, although if you read the text, original sin isn't in there. That comes later with Augustine thousands of years later. Point is. Is that story has a certain kind of cultural cachet, even for people don't believe it.

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This idea that life is about exile, that there was something great that we have lost and we were pushed out of the nest, and it's because there's something inherently bad or wrong about us. And that's the nature of life. But here's the thing. That's just one of the two creation stories. You know, the other one, too. It's the seven day one you got to create this and God created that. And by the way, it's a story of differentiation, not sameness. The light from the darkness, the water from the land. Different kinds of animals and the cattle. That's one of my favorite phrases the cattle and the creeping things. It's also a great song by the Hold Steady if you're interested, but, you know, leave that to the side. But in each of those steps, in that first creation story, it's the first one Genesis Chapter one. It is not a story of exile. Or a fall, supposedly. The divine word at the end of each of those days. And it was good. And that is a little qualifier. For us, humans. We were pronounced. Very good. And here's the thing. Right there in those two stories, you see two attitudes. Towards work. We call it a work creation balance if you want. On the one hand. Because of the original Sin, Adam and even the snake and all that and defined by the rigid gender binary of most of the biblical worldview. Giving birth labor is associated with pain and working the land.

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Different kind of labor is associated with pain and punishment. And through the second creation story ends up. You know, we're the first creation story ends up. Sabbath. Rest. Do a good job work as hard as you can. And let's remember to rest. One ends in exile. One ends in Sabbath. The stories that we hold in our hearts make a real difference about how we live this life. A number of years ago, I saw a really kind of simple and yet so on point expression of some of these different ways of living. Many years ago, it was a home from college, and I was doing what I often did when I was home from college, which was enjoying myself far too much and being a very little use to myself or anyone else, and my mom said, You have to be of use to yourself and anyone else, so you're going to go volunteer at a local daycare center. It was not one to argue with my mom, so that's what I did. And I remember there was this day, and by the way, the game I want to talk about in a second can be really fun. I'm not like saying competition is never fun. As someone who spends a lot of his time watching sports, I'd love competition, but it's just a part of life, not a model for life. That's the challenge we have in this country. Sports and competition has become a model for how we live.

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But there's so many other ways. So I was there at this daycare center and they were doing this. Put up that next slide. Musical chairs. Which can be a lot of fun for kids and adults. However. Depending on how fierce you get. Or how fierce your children are or the other children around them, you know? That musical chairs can be a knockdown drag out battle. And it's interesting as they were doing it and gradually reducing again, it's an exile game, you lose, you go out. There was one kid in the various iterations as they were playing this game over and again, this kid. They had no interest in the game whatsoever. Yeah. The other kid came in, tried to hip check him out of the way. Take my seat. And eventually, this kid, they just stopped playing. But there wasn't any forlorn ness and there wasn't any sense of defeatism. This kid, they went over to the side and it was, I can't remember. It was a Lincoln Logs or Tinker Toys or Legos or something. And just started constructing and creating. And what was cool that I observed is that eventually. In this exiling game. All the other kids who weren't winners went over and just sat down and started creating right alongside the kid. Who is sitting down with their Lincoln logs or tinker toys or Legos, whatever it was. And I can't remember what it was built, but in my mind it was some kind of elaborate city structure.

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That all of them got to join in. I think if we want an image of what original blessing is like. This child from long ago kind of pointed. At what I mean. Truth is, so many of our systems are based upon scarcity. And so many of our systems in so many ways. Reward us through fear and anger. Of not being those who don't have access to resources. I mean, in something that chills my Jewish born blood. I mean, remember the chant in Charlottesville in 2017? You shall not replace us, Jews will not replace us. This is an exile theology at work. There is only room for some of us. Either or. Just even saying those words and envisioning that world view, I can feel my own body get tighter. It is a theology of constriction. And scarcity. And it wounds our world over and over and over again through various harms and cruelties. Original blessing. Opens up space. Saying that opens up my body. Might open up yours as well to. And what I want to say as well, original blessing is not to borrow from The Lego Movie and everything is awesome theology right in the name of rejecting original sin. Don't want to say everything is awesome because we know it's not right. We really know this right now. We see invading powers and intentional cruelty. Everything is not awesome. Many things are broken and in pain. I do like to think of the fact and this story gets told and retold, I don't even exactly know what is true at this point, but there's a kernel of truth in it.

**[00:18:05] Speaker1**

It's Dr. King MLK Jr. He got his doctorate at Boston University. In theology, and he became familiar with a lot of Unitarians back then. Actually, it's before the merger, so, you know, Unitarians and Universalists, but he became familiar with our tradition, and it is said that the reason he didn't become a Unitarian was not that we didn't focus on Jesus so much. That wasn't the reason. I don't think he would have become a Unitarian anyway. He actually said, and this is a pointed critique. I think we got to take the heart. He said we did not wrestle enough with the reality of structural evil. In this world. In the name of not saying we are depraved or saying we are not depraved, we miss the cruelty in this life that for so many people is a fact of life. There is constriction and there is scarcity, and holding out a vision of original blessing doesn't mean that we go to the other extreme and just say, Oh, this is the best of all possible worlds right now. And we miss the suffering of others because of their position or power. Are struggling and are made to struggle. Because of the constricted and non space making world views. Of those with power. So about a year ago. I had my 51st birthday checkup. Because I didn't have my 50th birthday medical checkup because my 50th birthday happened about two weeks after the pandemic started and I wasn't going anywhere.

**[00:20:00] Speaker1**

So I saved all that up until just after my 51st birthday. After I got vaccinated, I went to the doctor's office, got a whole bunch of tests. And this is one of the things that they found. See, I'm just looking through the crowd here. Yeah. Ok. If I was preaching to a very younger crowd, I'd have to maybe explain this too much. But no, I have both or I found out back then pretty elevated LDL and actually pretty elevated HDL as well to the good and the bad cholesterol. And to borrow the words of Joe Girardi, the manager of the Phillies, who I became familiar with as manager of the Yankees, I kind of miss him as manager of the Yankees, to be honest. Again, if you want to debate me on that, let's talk afterward. But Joe Girardi was fond of saying when things did not go well. This is kind of how I phrased it with my doctor, my numbers, as Joe Girardi would say, it's not what you want. And so I started to have to make some changes. I did. It turns out, actually, I went for a. If any of you have done that calcium score calcium test. It's the one test that you want to get zero on. And I did because it means that the LDL. Has not hardened or calcified as best they can tell within my coronary arteries into plaques.

**[00:21:34] Speaker1**

Where construction really starts to happen and become dangerous. Essay I wrote years ago at a Christian seminary at Yale Divinity School, I was. You wanted to make sense of this word sin. And of course, I know all the definitions of setting that don't work for me and one I could come up with was actually this. Sin is constriction that impedes the life force and the flow. I'm not talking literally as if my cholesterol is sin, but as a metaphor. That which impedes the flow of life and love and belonging. That makes sense to me. Not original sin. But this kind of. Harmfulness, that is a part of our lives. Original blessing is not everything is awesome. Because things aren't right now. I mean, just take something so many of us are paying attention to what's happening in Ukraine. I mean, the sanctions that I think are the the best, worst choice that this country can take right now. They are intended to constrict and tighten. An increased pain. There's no getting around that right. It's just from my perspective, it's better than doing nothing to try to oppose the harm that Russia is doing in Putin, particularly. So also, I think better at this point than starting a collective world war. But sometimes we just have to hold. In painful balance, these challenges of our lives. And through a lens of original blessings, say it doesn't have to be this way.

**[00:23:36] Speaker1**

And there's a different vision. One of wholeness. One that says. The nature of our lives is not suffering. I think it comes down to essentially whatever our spiritual practices are, the heart of any spiritual practice that really makes a difference. Whether it's breath and body, whether it's service to ourselves or others. This is the acid test. To our spiritual practices, help us make space. Allow us to hold the tensions of our lives creatively and compassionately. A wholeness that is not based on sameness. But difference. A wholeness that says reality is relationship. And through the vision of original blessing, we might remember. Not the assurance that everything is fine. But that creation is at its heart, unbroken. And whole. And so are we. So you. So my high cholesterol notwithstanding. At our hearts, we are good. I mean, we live into that vision today. All of us. Amen. And may you live in blessing. You pray with me just briefly. Spirit this life teaches us even before words. How to hold and dance into. Creative balance. How to hold and dance into the taking of the breath and receiving what we need for a time not constricting or closing down. Opening up. And letting go. And then again. Opening up and taking in. And releasing and letting go. There is this divine pattern right there at the heart of this first thing that we do in this life. They remember that there is enough for us. There is enough for all of us. As we are enough. Amen.



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