

NAME

Ordinary Praise Podcast.mp3

DATE

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DURATION

35m 46s

3 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

Speaker3

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Speaker1

The following is a message from WellSprings congregation.

[00:00:09] Speaker2

Melissa. Don't go too far. Need you to leave the piano and piano mike on. This is not a half assed attempt at a pocket square. This is just for ease of access. So for the second and most likely final time. Stray sock.

[00:00:41] Speaker3

Just stress. I tried to. Make it really cool. Straight talk. Who are you looking for? Stray sock. Are they inside the drawer? Stray sock. You know that I care. A stray sock. Help you make. Pair. You touch the earth. You're on the run. It gets sweaty. Where you stand. So far from the sun. Get clean with a wash. Get dry with a tumble. But when you come out, you're no longer a couple. Straight out to. Who are you looking for? Stray sock. Are they inside the draw? A stray sock. You know that I care a stray sock. I'll help you make a pair. So this is where you all come in. Ready? Stray sock. Who are you looking for? Stray sock of inside the drawer. Stray sock? You know that I care a stray sock. I'll help you make. Thanks so much.

[00:02:37] Speaker2

So that was a song that I wrote the lyrics for and Theresa, my wife, wrote the music for. And I mean, you just did name me Minister Emeritus. And so you are going to hear some greatest hits today, right? Because the worst thing that could ever happen. You know, I'm going to set the scene for you. Your favorite band has just been. Elected into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. And they get up there and they see these words. We're going to play some new stuff for you today. No one wants to hear that. So yeah, you're going to hear some greatest hits. There's some different spin. So thank you for the indulgence, because today is not just about nostalgia. Some of you might remember, if you've been around a little while here, that that song that I kind of wrote on a goof was actually for a serious purpose. It was pointing to the message I was given that morning about how everything in our lives, if we're really paying attention. Has a story. Everything can convey some meaning, some sense of aliveness and vital ness. If we're awake to it. This is the title that's related to that for the message today. Hashtag ordinary praise. Which some of you know and quite a number of you have kind of participated in in social media, kind of introduce the term eight ish years ago. It was connected with a message here, as we were doing on the time at the time about Brené Brown's daring greatly.

[00:04:37] Speaker2

And I can't remember if it was actually in her book. Or. I just read it around the same time and it connected. It's this quote. William Martin, the parents daodejing. Do not ask your children to strive for extraordinary lives. Such striving may seem admirable, but it is the way of foolishness. Help them instead to find the wonder and the marvel of an ordinary life. Show them the joy of tasting tomatoes, apples and pears. Show them how to cry when pets and people die. Show them the infinite pleasure and the touch of a hand. And make the ordinary come alive for them. The extraordinary will take care of itself. I'm not a parent. Although you could say I was involved in the birthing of this congregation. Yeah. I love that energy and I love that teaching. I love, especially the examples of the ordinariness, the tactile, the real, and the close to hand and heart. But I also love. The counterpoint. The other way is foolishness. And I think we all know why. We miss our lives. If we believe they only happen in the spectacular. They only happen in moments like this. And before the service I. Had a final opportunity. To pray with the band and all the participants in today's service and the tech team. And I never know what I am going to say before I pray. Truth is, most of my spiritual practice is entirely quiet. I trust that the words will come. I think I said something like this.

[00:06:53] Speaker2

There are moments you want to capture and keep. This is one of those moments for me, but we don't get to capture and keep anything in this life. Well, we can recognize. Is that what makes a moment like this possible? And this is what the truth that I want to be alive to and connected with today. There is a moment like this because of all the other moments that contributed to it. And we can't capture or keep that. But we can choose to live in alignment with it every day of our lives. Now, those of you who have been around for a while. You know that I am not. I'm not I'm not above cursing. And it's actually not my intention today. Although you always want to leave room for the Holy Spirit, right? So we'll see what happens. The truth is, I think in that quote, the reason he says not just raising our kids, because we're raising ourselves at the same time, too, to focus on just the extraordinary, just the big just the winning moments. Why that is foolishness is because of a couple of curse words. Reform. Some crazy four letter words coming your way here. Right. Best and more. They're not bad words, right? They're fine words in certain contexts. But I think as a culture, they've become our signature words. Best and more and hyperinflation of adjectives and adverbs. Because there can't be a best and a more. Without a less than.

[00:08:54] Speaker2

And without not best or more, this focus on best and more and always better than. It's stressing us. God knows I felt that stress so many times in my life. It's distressing us. And the truth is, yes, it's actually killing some of us. But just in the daily going about our lives. It's doing something even worse, actually. It's just enchanting us. That's what I love about hashtag ordinary praise. It's a gateway to re enchanting our lives. The basic stuff always here, not comparative. It's just here, if we notice. Best and more. These are the enemy of enough. And if. This place has taught me one thing which sometimes I have not learned as I should have. But if it's taught me one thing over and over and over again. That finally has written itself in my heart. Is that the practice of spiritual community is this. That you are enough. And I am enough. And we are enough. This is the antidote to the tyranny of best and more. See, because when we treasure our toughness, our ordinariness, our common fearlessness. And our lives can become enchanted again. And in the midst of a wave, my hands across the horizon here. All this right now. All of this the last couple of years and all of this predates just the last couple of years. The Gateway Back to healing will come by enchantment. That's what I am thinking of so much this morning. Endings bring up beginnings, right? And I'm thinking about half my life ago before I was even Reverend Ken Beldon, when I was just scared as, all right, I'm going to curse.

[00:11:35] Speaker2

Excuse me. Scared as shit. Reverend Ken Beldon. And why you? Medical Center. Second week on the job that summer. And how. My patients were the ones who were really teaching me. I remember in that second week wanting to find my sea legs. And believing they weren't quite there. And I had. Been regularly assigned to one of the major medical units and had spent a little time in that first week and a half with a man who was in his, say, fifties, and he was fighting off a really, really aggressive cancer. And while he was doing everything he could. To get himself healthy. Things were not looking good. And this story does end with me showing up at his room one day and hearing that he had gone to hospice for the end of his life. But in this particular visit and this particular day, I have no idea what I said in the prayer with him, although I prayed with him. I have no idea what we talked about, although we had a long conversation. What I remember is this. This pudding is delicious. He couldn't keep a lot of food down or in. Things didn't taste good to him anymore because of the number of medications that he was on. But he loved pudding. And as I walked in, he was literally licking the spoon. And he had like, you know, because they were trying to keep the weight on with him.

[00:13:16] Speaker2

It was like he had like a whole case of pudding there for him that he could have any time that he wanted. And he offered me some pudding. And I'm like my second week doing this. I don't want the nurses to come in and says Chaplin was seen stealing the pudding of a cancer. So at first, I demurred. I don't know. But he insisted. And so I sat down next to him. And I peeled off the lid of the pudding. And pretty soon I was licking the spoon to. I didn't know what hashtag ordinary praise was back then. But that's what it was. He was one of my first teachers. Pay attention to this life because it is so brief. Pay attention to this life because we never know when it's going to end. It is going to end. His was a lot closer than mine. And if we listen to the teachers from those places, they will tell us what you're searching for is here. Right under our noses. Right in our hearts. And the taste of a plastic spoon when all the chocolate pudding has been licked off of it. This is ordinary praise. He taught me. Like I said. Sometimes I. Have not kept as true to that teaching as I would have liked. But what I remember is sitting there right with him. We were from totally different spiritual traditions, by the way.

[00:15:12] Speaker2

It was a kind of communion. It reminds me some of, you know, this quote, it's one of my favorites and I've shared it a bunch of times. Like I said, it's greatest hits today. What Warren Zevon said towards the end of his life. So, you know, this quote, I think he was being interviewed on Letterman and Letterman kind of asked him, well, what are you learning as this kind of starts to come to an end? And Warren Zevon and perfect Warren Zevon fashion said, enjoy every sandwich. Enjoy every sandwich, enjoy every chocolate pudding. Because these things make up our lives. And missing them means that we miss it all. The holy hidden in the heart of right here and right now. Because yes, I do believe in a truly kind of radical, magical way. The world is always speaking to us. It's we who choose to perceive or not. That's the spiritual practice. Are we a tuning? And that's what you all leave me with. That's the gift you give me. After 17 years of doing this at the end when I'm thinking of the beginnings and all the days in between. Yes. Well, spring started as this kind of audacious experiment. Yes, it was hired by the denomination it to grow and it worked and it eventually comparable to a whole bunch of other denominational growth efforts. We had a kind of singular thing here. I want to focus on that today. That's not what this is about for me.

[00:17:01] Speaker2

You know, if you've heard any of my messages earlier on in the sequence, since I let you know my ministry was coming to an end here. There's things I wish I would have done differently. But today. Today. I want to focus on that ordinary stuff. Because that's the gift that we are to each other. And that's the gift that stays. One of the things that I did in preparation for this message today is I just did a search in my Facebook feed. Hashtag ordinary praise. And I saw going back eight years. Of little stories of justice and decency and kindness and generosity and natural beauty. Thank you for that gift. Thank you for that gift. I just want to stay up here and preach for 3 hours today. So settle in for. I cannot capture and keep this no matter how much I want to. Because it's like, just let me look at you again. From this vantage point. I mean, we do this week after week after week, even if I've been doing less of it in the last few years. Week after week after week after week, the most ordinary stuff. Coming up, what did Kris call them? I've heard those stairs called intimidating and cantilevered, even at the end. Just a learning new things. I've heard that word before, but it's one of those words. I have no clue what it means until I have to go look it up every single time. Showing up. Joy is showing up.

[00:19:12] Speaker2

Hurt. Showing up. Exhausted. Showing up. Energized. Showing up. Ordinarily. Well, my buddies is in town for us here for me today. And I was kind of describing what had changed over here. I remember the first day. Larry Jeffers, some of you remember that name in the summer of 2006. Some of you remember his memorial service here. And there were buildings that literally were not here at that time, almost 18 excuse me. Would have been 16 years ago. I remember those steps were the first time. In the beginning, the middle and the end. I want to treasure it all. Because I treasure you and I treasure our time together. And so I'd like to bookend. Today by going back to a story I told. In my very first message when WellSprings launched. I've told it a couple other times over the years, and it is one of my favorite stories about the power of ministry. I've treasured it for well over two decades now. It's the Fred Craddock story. Some of you might even know Fred Craddock was he's one of this country's most famous and well known. He was when he was alive and still actually through his books. Most famous and well-known teacher of preachers taught for decades. And he tells the story about his wife. And he's taking a trip through rural Tennessee. Decades and decades ago, he and Julie, his spouse, and they were at a little out of the way place. One evening. At the end of a long day of driving.

[00:21:19] Speaker2

They just wanted a quiet dinner. And as Fred and Julie sat there, they saw a man with kind of a beautiful silver shock of hair, kind of a gray fox who would call him going from table to table to table, glad handing people, greeting everyone, talking to everyone, engaging them in conversation. And Fred and Julie inwardly said, not us. We just want to have a quiet dinner. He came over. Any engagement conversation they tried to give without being rude as close to kind of monosyllabic answers as they could get to see if this guy would just move on. They could return to their quiet dinner. And at one point, this fellow asked Fred and Julie what they did. And when Fred gave his answer, he said, You know what, I'm going to kind of blow them out of the water here with something like 50 cent words. So maybe he'll just get the hint and move on. He said, I am a professor of Hamlet. And the guy shot back, Oh, you teach preachers how to preach, do you? And let me tell you, I've got a story for preachers to give to you. And he pulled up a chair without asking. And he said. I was born on the other side of these mountains. In a very small town. The kind of small town where everyone knows your business. And that was not easy for me, the old man said, because I was marked by one thing.

[00:23:10] Speaker2

I was the boy who did not know his father. I was the bastard. We lived a little outside of the town. And I mean, this is like pre automobile days. I would take, like, the horse in the buggy into like. Get the week shopping from the local market. And I could feel everyone's eyes on me. Asking that question. Whose father is he? There goes the bastard again. There goes the bastard. There was no place that felt safe for me. No place that I felt I belonged. But there was a church in the town. At one point that church got a new minister and there was something about that new minister. He was much taller than me that made me feel like I could go to church. Okay. And I wouldn't have all these eyes on me judging me now. Still, I want to tell you, the old man said. I went in late and I got out early so no one would ask the question, Is there a bastard in the church? One day, the sermon from the minister really moved me and really mattered to me. And I kind of lost my wits in that moment. And I didn't get out late and I noticed the crowd started to exit. I didn't want to be caught in them. I didn't want to be seen by other people. And so I saw a side door exit. And I took it and I was almost all the way there when I felt a hand clamped down on my shoulder from behind.

[00:25:11] Speaker2

And a wheeled around. And I looked up. And there was the minister. Not smiling, not stern, but just looking at me. And he asks the question I dreaded. Whose boy are you? He took his hand off my shoulder as I died inside. Whose boy are you? Another place. I wouldn't be safe. Another place where I would be the bastard. And then the minister looked at me again. Looked at me close. Looked at me real. And smiled. I see it. I see it. I see the family resemblance. At this point, he was beaming. I see the family resemblance. You are a child of God. Now go and claim your inheritance. And the old man back at the table. Grew quiet. And Fred and Julie were stunned and feeling just a little bit shamefaced that they didn't want to talk to this guy at first. The old man said. Those are the most important words that anyone has ever spoken to me. Thank you for listening to me. And he got up from the table and left. Fred asked stunned. Sir, can I ask your name? And said, My name is Ben Hooper. And Fred turned to Julie and said, I remember a story that my dad told me about the people of Tennessee electing as their governor twice. A man who did not know his father growing up. Named Ben Hooper. Now. That is a true story. Whether it actually happened. Is up for some debate, but it is the truest story I know.

[00:27:42] Speaker2

I've been telling it for 20 years. More so. My theological understanding of it has totally changed during that time, and it's still my favorite preaching story. It reaches into the hearts. Of ordinary praise. That's simply because we are alive. We matter. And we inherit all of it. Same as everyone else. Speaks to what my understanding of universalism is, which is that there is a love so special. We don't have to be special to be loved. And of course, so many of us. Live with the opposite belief, right? And unless we are special, unless we are achieving. Unless we are winners. Our lives don't matter. But Universalism tells us there is a love so special. We don't need to be special to be loved. So yeah, I know this is a special day for me and for us. And I would be lying if I said there's not a part of me that I've come to know, especially this past week as I'm I'm calling it right now, the simple minds part. Don't you forget about me. I've got that part. I've been listening to it. But it's not the part of me that matters the most today. Not by a long shot. Even more. It is ordinary praise that matters to me. It is the people who when I scrolled through. And saw that they had posted something. Hashtag ordinary praise had no reference to me whatsoever. I have no inheritance to give you today.

[00:29:53] Speaker2

Because it's not mine to give. What I can say is thank you. For letting me share it with you over the last 17 years. In so many ways. It's not mine to give because I didn't originate any of this wonderful stuff. I formed it and shaped it for a time. And how I hand it off. But the truth is, it doesn't go away. Because I didn't invent any of it. It's here. It's yours. It's you. It is WellSprings. All I would ask of this today, I've asked so much of you over the years, many things your money, your indulgence, your attention, your time. But all I asked today. His. Just stay awake to the glory of the ordinariness of what we've all created together. The commonness. That although there is change. Never ends. One of the best gifts I got was a note in a card from someone who wasn't able to be here today and actually relatively recent, like just the last few years, member of this community. And it was the best gift I've gotten so far. Not if the rest of you give me gifts you see best. I'll look at that four letter word. But let me tell you why it is the best gift to me. So insidious. Don't. I'm going with those. The best gift. Because they wrote in this card, thank you for your gifts to our community. Our community. There was a time when this was Reverend Kagan's gig. Some of you remember that.

[00:31:54] Speaker2

It's part of being the founder. But thank you for your gifts to our community. This will outlive me. Paola freakin Lula. Thank you for these last 17 years. Thank you for everything you have given me. Thank you for your love and your accountability and your challenge and your joy. And you're incredible, folks. You're incredible ordinariness. Because that's the best thing about all of us. Life is not found on the mountaintop. It's found down in the valley below. Because that's where we live. And that's where all the good stuff is. Wellsprings is not up at the mountain top. It's down in the valley. Thank you for letting me be your minister. I love the applause. And it's not about the applause. Right. Yeah. Amen. I love you. And may you live in blessing. Would you pray with me? Tears are prayers to. Maybe the best. Thank you, God, that we don't get to keep any of this. Because we're being taught over and over again. How to love what we cannot keep. That opens the heart day after day after day after day after day. And to live open hearted. In a world that wants us to close our hearts over and over again, in a world that breaks our hearts over and over again. To live open hearted. This is the greatest blessing that we can offer to ourselves. And to this hurting world. So that we may be a part of the tikkun olam. The healing of this earth. Of this world. And of ourselves. Amen.

[00:35:34] Speaker1

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END OF TRANSCRIPT



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