

FIX YOU (inspired by the Coldplay song)

Week #2 of the 5-Week Series, "The Songs of Life"

Oct. 18, 2020

Rev. Richard Maraj

Rev. Richard Maraj: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center's Sunday virtual worship celebration. I'm Rev. Richard Maraj; we're so glad that you have joined us today!

Some exciting news: we're adding more LIVE services! As of Nov. 1, we are going to have a 9 and an 11 a.m. outdoor service. So we hope that, if 11's better for you, that you'll be coming out for that experience, as well. So we're excited for that! We will still have videos of Sunday and Wednesday, and then two LIVE services beginning Nov. 1 at 9 and 11 outdoors.

This weekend we've got the kids' "Drive-Through Halloween Festival." And it'll be 100% safe. The kids will be able to pull up and get some candy, and you can check out the website for more details.

We have a menu of great classes going on. On Mondays Rev. Lori is teaching a Bible class: "Not Your Grandmother's Bible Study." And on Tuesdays I'm teaching a class called "How to Get Out of Your Own Way." There are other great classes; you can check those online, as well.

But now, before Rev. Lori leads us in a time of prayer and meditation, we will listen to our choir as they sing "Surely the Presence."

Unity Choir (singing remotely):

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;
I can feel God's mighty power and God's grace.
I can feel the brush of angel's wings;
I see glory on each face.
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

MEDITATION

Rev. Lori Fleming: I invite you to join me in a time of prayer and meditation. As we close our outer eyes, take in a deep, cleansing breath and release it slowly. Take in another mindful breath as we let it go: letting go of any busy-ness we've had so far today. Letting go of any negativity that no longer serves us. Letting go of anything that keeps us from being one with God.

As we move into this quiet place – this time of spiritual communion to the presence of the Living God. That Christ presence within. That living, loving presence that's implanted in our very souls from the beginning. As we begin this season of gratitude, we feel grateful for our own lives. For living in this beautiful time and this beautiful space. For knowing that each and every one of us is an unrepeatable expression of the Divine. And for that, we are grateful!

The activity of gratitude is a spiritual power that brings more goodness into our lives. And so we are grateful for it all. For the good; for everything else. Because gratitude brings more good to us now. And each thing that we're grateful for is sending a blessing forth into the spiritual realm that energizes that good. That attracts God's unlimited potential into our lives in deeper ways. Unlimited potential for more good. For deeper loving relationships. For better jobs and more prosperity. For everything good. Because when we're grateful, we're using the activity of Spirit to spiritualize everything. And so we're grateful for our health, knowing that each and every cell of our body is being brought to wholeness. We're grateful for our church home: for this amazing place where we come to worship you, God. To be with our friends. To know that you created us in love, and that we live in love each and every moment.

We're grateful every good thing: for our homes, for our friends, for all of it. For this truly is the season of gratitude.

And so each and every day, in each and every way, we use our power of gratitude to bring our good towards us. And so we take just a few moments to bask in the unlimited possibilities that is God the good. And we move into the silence knowing that we are truly grateful for everything.

SILENCE

And so, sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude as we bless every single thing in our lives, moving that spiritual realm into the unlimited possibilities of God for greater good in our lives and all those that we love. As we move into this season of Thanksgiving, we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

SONG

Todd Herzog: "Fix You" (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)

When you try your best, but you don't succeed
When you get what you want, but not what you need
When you feel so tired, but you can't sleep
Stuck in reverse

When the tears come streaming down your face
When you lose something you can't replace
When you love someone, but it goes to waste
Could it be worse?

Lights will guide you home
And ignite your bones
And I will try to fix you

And high above or down below
When you're too in love to let it go
If you never try then you'll never know
Just what you're worth

Lights will guide you home
And ignite your bones
And I will try to fix you

[Instrumental]

Tears stream down your face
When you lose something you cannot replace
Tears stream down your face and I
Tears stream down your face
I promise you that I will learn from my mistakes
Tears stream down your face and I

Lights will guide you home
And ignite your bones
And I will try to fix you

[Light applause]

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Maraj [clapping]: Thanks, Todd! Thanks, Craig; that was absolutely fabulous! Really, really good! Great song!

*“When you try your best, but don't succeed
When you get what you want, but not what you need
When you feel so tired, but you can't sleep
Stuck in reverse*

*When you feel the tears streaming down your face
And you lose something that you can't replace
When you love someone, and it goes to waste
What could be worse?”*

The first time I heard the song, “Fix You,” by Coldplay, I was really amazed at how it hooked me so quickly, and stirred up a lot of emotions deep inside. And I was amazed at how quickly it did it, but I realized it's because I can relate – and most of us can relate – to many of those painful emotional experiences.

How many people would agree that being human includes experiencing hurts, losses and sadness? And how many people would agree that no one likes or wants to feel the pain of hurts, losses and sadness?

You know, one of the things I love about this song is that it hits you with a barrage of different difficult emotional experiences that really triggers those in ourselves, and also triggers some empathy for people going through some of those same painful experiences. And I like it because most of us don't like to feel it. And we have a variety of ways of avoiding feeling painful feelings. You know, sometimes we busy ourselves. We can pretend, deny, ignore. We can stuff those emotions and feelings. Sometimes we use food and alcohol. Sometimes we just laugh and kind of gloss over it. Or sometimes just say, “*Oh, I'm hurt; no, it's all good. I'm good.*”

One of the greatest things I think about songs that they do for us is: Songs often help us feel feelings that we don't allow ourselves or want to feel. That songs help us feel emotions that we'd rather avoid. I think there's something great about music that does that to us; it opens us up and takes us to a place deep that lets us know that it's okay to feel and go through these emotions. In fact, it's not only okay; it's good and it's important. And it's a beautiful thing to feel all of our experiences.

Do you have a song or two that you hear sometimes and it kind of makes you sad, and takes you kind of deep. And yet, you feel kind of good. One of those for me is Joni Mitchell's “Both Sides Now.” I feel kind of sad, you know, and I feel kind of down ... yet, it opens my heart to feel more deeply, which I think is always a good thing.

So today we are in Week #2 of our five-week series, “The Songs of Life.” And this series we use songs – and the wonderful messages and the feeling – to help teach us how to live more fully, more joyously and more lovingly. Last week the song, “Viva La Vida” by Coldplay, and this week's song, “Fix You” by Coldplay, I think really explore the realness and rawness of life and the human experience. And how we can use it in a more positive way, and even get a spiritual benefit to help us.

The only thing that I don't like about the song, “Fix You,” is the title, and I'll elaborate on that a bit later. But I think it really has hopeful, touching, uplifting message for all of us to live our lives better.

You know, life is a great and amazing thing. And it presents us with a variety of amazing, wonderful and challenging and difficult experiences. And it's all a part of the tapestry of this amazing gift and journey of life. And one of the hardest emotions, by far, for all of us to move through is the pain of loss. Every one of us – every human being – experiences loss. And whether it's loss of a loved one, or the loss of a job,

or the end of a relationship, or the end of a certain way of life, every one of us experiences the pain of loss. And it's hard for us, because we don't like endings. And the fact things end in life.

And it's understandable that we want to avoid some of that pain, but the truth is: if we try to avoid some of that pain, it actually creates more pain, and robs us of some of the goodness and the beauty of life that we're meant to experience. We've all heard that expression that, *"We think that we're human beings having a spiritual experience, but we're actually spiritual beings having a human experience."* And the reality is, once in a while, I think we're having spiritual beings trying to avoid a human experience! Because we often want to avoid all the negative stuff, all the unpleasant stuff, all the uncomfortable stuff. But when we avoid that, we also avoid some really important aspects and parts of life.

So what we want to do this morning is look at: How do we handle the losses, the sadness, the pain of our lives in a more positive way and a more enriching way?

The first thing we need to do is to FEEL AND WALK THROUGH IT. In the 23rd Psalm it says, *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."* What this means is that life is something to be experienced. We have to experience all of life. And that means we have to walk through the valley of all the experiences that are unpleasant ... not just walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Walk through the valley of the shadow of grief. The valley of the shadow of sadness. The valley of the shadow of failure. Of broken-heartedness. Of divorce or a health challenge.

Now, rejoicing and celebrating is good, too! We have to walk through all of it! And particularly the ones that we want to sometimes avoid. If we want to experience the fullness and the richness of the life that we came here to live, and the person we came to be, we need to feel all of it. Not just try to get to the other side! But to realize that even the experience through the valley is something that's important and enriching for us.

Jesus walked through all the valleys of experience that he had. Walked through the valley of the experience of being betrayed, of being hated. Walked through the valley of injustice. You know, he walked through Jerusalem with his head held high, even though he knew what was coming. And Jesus also felt all of his emotions through all these experiences. You know, it says, *"Jesus wept."* Jesus experienced frustration with his disciples, who couldn't stay awake in the Garden of Gethsemane. He experienced some anger in flipping over tables in the temple. He cursed the fig tree. If I was there, I would have thought, *"Oh, Jesus; you're a little cranky. Maybe you should have a Snickers bar!"* But that's just my opinion! But I think what Jesus was trying to show there was: If we want a full and rich and complete life, we have to feel and walk through all of the experiences that life has to offer.

I ask you: what unpleasant emotions and experiences have you been avoiding and are currently avoiding? And don't want to feel or walk through? And what feeling of loss haven't you dealt with that you've stuffed instead of moving through it to process it in a healthy way?

For me, an example – the idea – of walking through something is captured in that expression that you hear people say: *"Just breathe through it."* You hear that line in yoga class: in an uncomfortable position. *"Breathe through it."* When I get a needle, I don't like it. I tense up and they always say, *"Breathe through it."* Or I get a massage and they hit a difficult, tight spot. They'll say, *"Breathe through it."* Women having babies: they'll say, *"Push and just breathe through it."* And the fact is: Breathing through it doesn't stop the pain, but it helps move through it in a healthy way, rather than holding on to it and have it be stuck and create a block. Holding on to resentment or bitterness or anger. Those things are unhealthy. But when we feel through it, and breathe through it, we process it in the best way possible, and the healthiest way possible.

You know, one of the things that stops us from feeling and walking through all of our feelings is that we often judge ourselves. We judge those feelings as bad, wrong, terrible. And then we judge ourselves for actually feeling them. I know people who judge themselves. They say, like, *"I'm a spiritual person; I*

shouldn't feel sad! I'm a spiritual person! I shouldn't feel angry or upset!" There's so much judgement that goes on that prevents us from actually allowing ourselves to feel certain emotions.

I have a little shtick about showing an example of it. Of saying that, you know, when we're sad, sometimes then we just get mad. We feel bad that we were sad. And then we get mad that we felt bad that we were sad. And then we regret that we got mad about feeling bad about feeling sad. And then we feel guilty about regretting that we got mad, feeling bad, feeling sad. Then we felt ashamed. And it goes on and on! We could have just felt sad and gotten over with it! But, instead, we kind of do a number on ourselves that really causes us more hurt and more pain.

So I ask you: What judgements do you hold about certain emotions and feelings? And allowing yourself to actually feel those and process them? It's important that we feel our feelings without judgement of our feelings. And when we walk through the valley of those feelings, we actually process them in a healthy way. And, in the long run, they will actually bless and enrich our lives if we're willing to feel and walk through them.

Now, some of the techniques I think help – that help us walk through – are: The first one is crying. It's good to cry! Sometimes we teach boys, *"Big boys don't cry!"* We feel bad about crying. Crying's a good, healthy way to cleanse and let the emotions move through us. Another thing I find that's helpful is journaling. When we journal, and get it out – and allow ourselves to feel and process – it's good. Another one is talking to people. I think that's really, really important.

You know, this stuff isn't easy. Processing painful emotions. And it takes work. It takes emotional work and spiritual work. And it's not an easy thing! That's why the word "work" is in there! It takes some work for us to cleanse and be healthy. Just like it takes exercise – and that physical work – to feel healthier and stronger, it takes emotional work and spiritual work to cleanse the inner being to feel healthier and be a more open channel.

The second thing is that it's important for us LET GOD HEAL AND RENEW US. I love that line in the chorus that says:

"Lights will guide you home"

And God is the light! God is the light that shines in us that no darkness can ever overcome. God is that light that leads our path and brings us home.

When you think about home, it is the place where we feel safe, where we feel comforted and nurtured, where we feel loved. Where we feel safe and supported. The whole idea of coming home: really coming home to God, coming home to our true nature, coming home to our awareness that we are connected and one with God.

I love that next line in the 23rd Psalm that says, *"For thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."* And the first line: *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."* That, when we really connect with God, we feel comforted. We feel a sense of peace. We feel like we are home and safe.

And then the other line says:

"And ignite your bones"

God will ... I mean, lights will guide you home and ignite your bones. That's kind of a weird, really cool expression: to ignite your bones! And what it really means is that, sometimes when we go through grief or sadness, we can feel despondent and lethargic, and feel that we're not motivated. But to ignite our bones brings us alive again ... gives us a sense of hope. It re-energizes us. And, you know, it's almost like a rebirth after we've gone through that dark experience; is that we light up and we feel more alive.

Again, in the 23rd Psalm, it says, *“He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restoreth my soul.”* The whole idea is that God will not only heal us, but God will restore and actually renew us.

Have you ever had a time where you were broken-hearted, and you thought, *“Oh, I’ll never love again; my heart is so broken it will never mend?”* And then it mends! Over time, it mends! We don’t know how, but it does! That our hearts are healed. I’ll be we’ve all had times where we felt like failures; we felt we’d never succeed or bounce back. And what happens over time? We bounce back! That’s the amazing thing! With God, we don’t need to know how; but we just have to open ourselves and allow God to heal us, to renew us, and to restore us.

When we turn to God, and know that, when we turn, in God’s presence we shall not want, and that God will heal and renew us. Amazing things can happen through that process that will bring more good into our lives.

Earlier this year I watched an episode of *The Magic of Tidying Up*, with Marie Kondo. They actually, on Netflix, had some episodes. And I think I’ve mentioned this once before. There was this episode about this woman, and she had lost her husband. So she had lost her husband; she has this house that has all this stuff. She’s filled with grief. And Marie makes her go through all of the stuff: all of the clothes, all of the furniture. And she’s crying and reflecting, and crying and reflecting. And then there are decisions that need to be made, and she’s, *“Oh, I never made those decisions before; my husband made all those decisions!”* And she’d cry a little about that. And then she realized, *“Wow; this room that was his office is now empty, and now I need to figure out what I’m going to do with it.”* And over the months of watching her – you see her walk through the valley of experiences. She feels all her feelings. But there’s a point at which she is almost reborn! She rediscovers new decisions and new identity and new goals and opportunities for herself. And the person – from the beginning of the loss and the grief to the end – was transformed into a new life. Still missed her husband – always will! And loved her life. But there was a new life because she was able to feel the pain of loss, and grieve and learn from it.

Sometimes when we walk through that valley and allow God to heal us, we become more resilient. We become more confident. We become more appreciative. We get a new perspective. And it’s almost a rebirth from allowing ourselves to walk through the experience, allowing God to heal us.

I ask you: What are you grieving about? What loss are you experiencing in your life now? And are you willing to walk through it, give it to God, and allow God to lift you and to create something new and better for you?

The next thing we’ll talk about is that last line in the chorus:

“And I will try to fix you.”

Now, this song was written by Chris Martin. And he wrote it about his then-wife, Gwyneth Paltrow, who had lost her dad. And he wrote it to help her process it, because she was absolutely devastated. And so, it was a way he was trying to “fix her,” or help her feel more whole, you know, or the sadness. And that part I don’t agree with, because I don’t think we’re here to fix people. I don’t think we can fix people. But I 100% believe that we are here for people and each other, and we can make a huge difference in each other’s lives.

So I take the idea of the song, “Fix You,” to mean to help you. To be there for you. To encourage you. To support you. To believe in the truth of who you really are as you’re walking through this experience.

There’s a line by Martin Rutte and it says, *“You have to do it for yourself, and you can’t do it alone.”* And, to me, that’s such a powerful thing. No one can do it for us, but having people there to encourage us absolutely makes a huge difference.

The one thing that I realize more and more every day is that, **not only are we here for each other, we need each other!** If we just tried to do life ourselves, and everything about me, and get all our money, and get all the things we wanted, we would live a very lonely, empty life. Because the truth is that we are here – as Scripture says – to love one another. To encourage one another. To support one another. To believe in one another. And we are here to express that for our family, for our friends, for strangers ... for anyone in our lives.

Sometimes we need to ask ourselves: So who in my life needs my help to heal? Who in my life could use some cheering up? Or who in my life could/needs to remember their smile? Or who in my life needs some encouragement and to believe in themselves? Or needs to be reminded that they're loved and they're not alone?

Rev. Rogers gave a fabulous talk last Wednesday, and one of the questions he had was, *"What is the way that Spirit is calling you to minister to others?"* And I'd say: What is the way that Spirit is calling you to help others? What are the gifts that God has given you to uplift and encourage and support other people? Maybe it's your warm personality and your positive energy. Maybe it's you're a handy person, and you want to fix things. Maybe you're good with "techy" stuff. Maybe you're good with children. Maybe you have the gift of hospitality or the gift of music or creativity. Maybe you're a "people person." If you're a volunteer, maybe you've got connections that can help someone. Mentor them to get a new job. Maybe you're funny, and you make people laugh. Maybe you're really talented at telling really good "bad" jokes.

Which reminds me! Where did Napoleon keep his armies? In his sleeves! *[Chuckles]* Why can't you trust softball pitchers? Because they're underhanded! And what do you call a naked cow? A strip steak. *[Simulates "rim shot" drum roll]*

So one of the things that I absolutely 100% believe is that, when you are going through a difficult time, and someone is there for you, it makes that difficult time much, much easier. I have found that the happiest people in the world are people who reach out to connect and to help and to support others, and realizes it – from family to friends to strangers – that, *"I am here to help others and make a difference in other people's lives."*

The idea of "Fix You," to me, is the desire to help someone. To make a positive difference in their life.

And so, what way are being called to help beyond what you're doing right now to make someone's life better and different? In a more positive way? We're not here to "fix" each other, but we are here to help each other and to make a difference.

And so the final verse I want to address is when it says:

*"And high up above or down below
When you are too in love to let it show
But if you never try you'll never know
Just what you're worth."*

That was a little clunky reading of it, but what it's saying – and reminds us – is that love is the thing that we seek more than anything else. But, unfortunately, sometimes we hold back from showing our love to the people in our lives. Sometimes we push love away because we're afraid we're going to get hurt. Sometimes we close off our heart. Sometimes we're scared to say to the people we love that we actually love them! And, unless we try, we'll never know what we're worth. Unless we try, we'll never express the fullness – and feel the fullness – of love.

And so the question is: In what way – or in what area – are you holding back love, and not sharing your love fully with the people in your life? And in what area are you wishing you'd experience more love?

That you would like to feel more love? And, finally, what risk is love calling you to take? What risk is love calling you to open your heart and love in a greater way than you have ever loved before?

Maybe it's as simple as trying to reach out and make a new friend. Maybe it's asking someone out on a date. Maybe it's visiting a neighbor and making a connection there. Maybe it's reaching out to an estranged family member and saying, *"I'm sorry,"* and trying to heal that. Maybe it's telling someone you love that you love them. Maybe it's getting closer with your siblings or your kids or your mom and your dad. Or telling someone you just miss them!

So I had a friend that, he and I, communicate a lot. And it's been, like, nine or 10 months since we have. And so I reached out to him several times saying, *"Hey, I really miss you! I'm really thinking about you."* It took several times before we actually clicked, but we ended up having a two-hour catch-up phone call, and it was so good! Now we're sending each other texts at least a couple of times a week, and it feels great. And if I didn't reach out, that thing could have gone dormant.

And so what in your life are you wanting to reignite and expand the level of love that you feel and that you experience and want to experience?

So today, tell someone you love them! Risk and reach out! Because the bottom line is: Not only do you want it, you're worth it! You're absolutely worth it!

Leo Buscaglio had a line that I absolutely love. He said, *"If you miss love, you miss life. So don't miss it!"* And encouraging us to love, and love the people around us. And love ourselves. To express and feel love in the greatest ways possible.

You know, emotions are a powerful thing. We are blessed to experience some wonderful emotions, and we're also blessed to experience some painful emotions. Because sometimes we try our best, and we don't succeed. Sometimes we lose something we love that we can't replace. Sometimes we love someone and it goes to waste. But the truth is that we need to experience and handle all these things in the richest and fullest way if we want to have a rich and full life.

So what we need to do is feel and walk through. We need to let God heal and renew. We need to help love one another. And we need to take a chance on love, because we are worth it. And that is the lesson that we get from the second song of our series, called "Fix You."

God bless you all!

OFFERING

Rev. Lori Fleming: It's that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. We know that, when we tithe, it's a spiritual principle that brings more good into our lives.

And so we hold our offering in our hands, and we say: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* And so we say thank you, God, for these gifts, these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love; they are received in love; and that they move through this ministry with the energy of divine love out into the world as good. And that each giver is blessed: heaped up, pressed down and overflowing, for that is the Law. And so it is. Thank you, God! Amen.

CLOSING

Rev. Lori Fleming: We're so grateful you could be with us here online. We've missed you so much! We're so glad you could join us! We hope that you've been uplifted in some wonderful, amazing way.

And now will you listen me in enjoying our choir singing the Peace Song?

Unity Choir (singing remotely):

Let there be peace on Earth;

And let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on Earth;

The peace that was meant to be.

With God as Creator,

Fam'ly all are we.

Let us walk with each other

In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me,

Let this be the moment now.

With ev'ry step I take,

Let this be my joyous vow:

To take each moment

And live each moment

In peace eternally.

Let there be peace on Earth;

And let it begin with me!

Rev. Lori Fleming: And will you affirm the Prayer for Protection with me?

The light of God surrounds us;

The love of God enfolds us;

The power of God protects us;

And the presence of God watches over us.

Wherever we are, God is. And all is well!

Have a fabulous week!

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