

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE RAIN?

Inspired by the Credence Clearwater Revival Song

Week #6 of an 8-week "Songs of Life" Series

July 11, 2021

Rev. Richard Maraj

SOLO

Guest artist Kirsten Plambeck sings the message title song, "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?"

Someone told me long ago
There's a calm before the storm
I know, it's been comin' for some time

When it's over, so they say
It'll rain a sunny day
I know, shinin' down like water

I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
Comin' down on a sunny day

Yesterday, and days before
Sun is cold and rain is hard
I know, been that way for all my time
'Til forever, on it goes
Through the circle, fast and slow
I know, it can't stop, I wonder

I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
Comin' down on a sunny day
Yeah! Yeah!

[Instrumental]

I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
Comin' down on a sunny day

Yeah, now!
I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
I want to know, have you ever seen the rain?
Comin' down on a sunny day

[Congregation whoops and applauds]

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Maraj: Whooo! *[Congregation applauds]* Kirsten Plambeck! Whooo!

So how many people love the rain? Love to look at it, listen to it, walk in the rain? How many rain lovers are there out there? How many people ever had a bad rain experience? Like it literally rained on your parade, or rained on your picnic, rained on your baseball game or rained on your wedding? Or, even worse, rained on when you had a really good hair day? Anybody ever ... *[Congregation laughs]*

You know, when I used to live in Kansas City, it used to rain a lot: a lot of thunderstorms. And I always felt like rain ... like there was this calming, cozy effect of rain. I used to love being under my down-filled

comforter sleeping to the sound of the rain beating against the house. There was something so cozy about it! Since coming to Phoenix, I love the rain ... but that's because we hardly ever get any!

[Congregation laughs] Or not enough! We get so excited about rain here in Phoenix, we take a picture of it and post it on Facebook! We get that excited about rain! *[Congregation and Rev. Maraj laugh]*

You know, rain – when you think about it – is this universal provider and giver and supporter of life. When it rains, it gives us water for drinking, and for hydrating our bodies. Replenishing our lakes and water reserves. You know, it quenches our thirst; it nourishes the land so there can be growth. I mean, it really feeds and is vitally important to our well-being and to life, itself. In the Bible, in the Book of Isaiah, it says, *“God waters the earth, making it bring forth and sprout: giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater.”*

So water is a vital and crucial part of our lives. And one thing I find amazing are the various interpretations and symbolism of rain in different cultures and across the world. Rain symbolizes fertility, rebirth, renewal. Abundance, blessings. Cleansing, refreshing and renewing. And it also, strangely, represents some unhappy things like unhappiness, rain, sadness, melancholy, foreboding ... even depression.

Ever seen movies when it rains? And in literature, they use rain to kind of express sadness and melancholy. And when there's rain and darkness, it's usually something scary might happen. When it's rain, darkness and thunder, you know, some Jason or Mike Meyer stuff is going down! *[Congregation laughs]* Some bad stuff! *[Rev. Maraj laughs]*

And so rain has a lot of symbols – a lot of meanings – for people. So what does rain symbolize for you? What is the meaning of rain for you? What are the thoughts and feelings and emotions and images that get triggered when you think about rain, or see rain?

Today is Week #6 in our eight-week “Songs of Life” series, where we use songs that touch us, uplift us, that we just love so much to see what message or lesson they might have in it for us in how to live more fully, how to live more consciously, and how to live more spiritually.

Today we're going to use a song that uses the symbol of rain: the 1971 hit by Credence Clearwater Revival, “Have You Ever Seen the Rain?” Written by John Fogerty. Now, that band was actually begun by Tom Fogerty, John's brother. And they were kind of a cover band in high school, and then they developed into CCR. And they had some hits like “Bad Moon Rising” and “Looking Out My Back Door” and “Fortunate Son.”

And, at the time of this song – what was the inspiration of writing this song – they were at the top of their game. They had exceeded all their wildest dreams of fame and success. They were one of the top bands! I mean, it was a tremendous time. When I listen to this song, I find it so uplifting and energetic and joyful! Do you find that same? It's a pretty positive, uplifting song? Would everyone agree with that mostly?

Well, interestingly enough, it was written from a place of pain and a place of sadness and loss. Because, while they were on the top of their game on the outside, inside the band was unhappy. There was a lot of stress and tension and conflict ... and particularly with the two brothers. And it led to Tom leaving the band, and breaking up the band for good.

And so, it's like: when their careers were on the up and the high, their relationship was on the low and down. And so the symbolism of rain on a sunny day represents all their success and all the good feelings and happiness, and the rain represents their sadness and pain. So they were experiencing pain and happiness at the same time. So, *“Have you ever seen the rain coming down on a sunny day?”* meant that it was raining on their happy and most successful time of their lives.

And so what message is there in this song for us to teach us how to live more intentionally? Live more joyously? Let's look at the first verse. It says:

*Someone told me long ago
There's a calm before the storm
I know, it's been coming for some time*

And I love that old saying, “*The calm before the storm.*” And what it kind of represented for them is: the band members were frustrated. They were irritated. They were upset. There was a lot of tension. But nobody was saying anything! The band just kept everything bottled up, acting like everything was all good. Everything was okay. And it was just a pressure. And it was looking calm on the outside, but it gives rise to a storm. It gave rise to them exploding and blowing up and deciding to break up as a band.

How many people ever stuffed your feelings and not shared what really was going on with you with someone? [*Congregation murmurs*] How many people have ever disliked and avoided any conflict? How many people don't like to have difficult or awkward conversations? Nobody likes that! Nobody likes those difficult conversations! Nobody likes stuffing their feelings!

But what's even worse about it is not being honest. Not telling our truth. Withholding what's really going on in us, because it damages relationships. It creates walls, and it creates distance and disconnect. Not being honest – not sharing what's really going on with us – literally hurts teams, it hurts partnerships, it hurts companies – you know, it hurts communities – by just bottling stuff up. It erodes trust and intimacy and closeness and connection.

You know, Greg Baer. Everybody know Greg Baer? *Real Love*? One of the things he said is that most of us don't go for “real love,” because it means being honest. And we would rather go for imitation love by saying what people want to hear. Saying things that'll make people like us and not reject us. We'd rather settle for an imitation love. But, at some point, not being authentic and honest will never get us to the experience of genuine, authentic love. They'll always be loving the things we think they are, and think they're saying, and not really the truth of who we are.

And the truth is: even if you eventually break up, being honest is always the best deal, because we know where we stand. We know we can make healthy decisions of moving on or staying. And it gives a real foundation for actual, authentic love.

So I ask you: Who in your life are you not being as honest to? What family member or friend? What co-worker or partner or child? And in what way are you not being honest to yourself? That honesty and authenticity is such an important thing ... this is kind of a warning in the song that you just can't do that! You can't keep stuffing it!

Several years ago I had a friend. And I don't know what the “official” title of his was, but I always called him a “corporate fixer.” He was the kind of guy that went into a corporation when it was really not doing good: laying people off, selling parts of the business to try to save the company. And I would ask him ... like, I'd say, “*Man, how did that happen? Was it one big blunder? One big goofy mistake that really cost the company? Or was it some big project they went all in, and it just failed?*” And he said, “*Nope!*” He said, “*Almost every time, it is not doing the little things that needed to be done. The little things that needed to be addressed. It was all those things that weren't talked about. All those things that weren't discussed. All those little things that got swept under the rug over time, to the point that the corporation became very unhealthy and dysfunctional. And that's why I had to go in.*”

And so what it's saying is that, when we don't communicate – when we don't share, when we don't have those difficult conversations, and aren't authentic – it damages organizations. It damages all of us. And the pain of trying to correct it is really hard and difficult.

And so a question we need to ask is: What is that thing in our lives that we can't sweep under the rug anymore? What is one thing in your life that you know that it's important for you to share with a loved one? And what is one thing in your life that it's time for you to be honest with yourself?

The second thing we learn from this song is about the importance of igniting your hope. And here's what it says:

*"Yesterday, and days before
Sun is cold and rain is hard
I know, been that way for all my life

'Til forever on it goes
Through the circle, fast and slow
I know, it can't stop, I wonder"*

And the whole idea of *"Sun is cold and rain is hard"* is the opposite of how we think it should be, and want it to be. And so it's like: when life isn't going the way we want, you know, then he's asking a question ... It's really about the idea of things going from bad to worse. Going from bad to worse so much that we wonder if it will ever get better. That are things always going to be this difficult? Is this relationship always not going to work? Is my life always going to feel frustrated?

And there's so much that he's wondering: you know, will this be this way forever? And, really, what he's doing is: he's seeking hope! He's wanting some hope in a situation that seems absolutely hopeless. You know, hope is an important and powerful thing. Without hope, we wouldn't believe that we could get through tough times. Without hope, we wouldn't dream. Without hope, we wouldn't think that our lives could get better. Hope is a powerful and important thing.

In Corinthians it says, *"And these three remain: faith, hope and love."* And I always think to myself, *"How did hope get invited into the 'big three'?"* [Congregation laughs] I always think it would be faith, forgiveness and love. Or faith, gratitude and love. How did hope sneak in? Faith, hope and love? And why?

And here's Martin Luther King's words. He said, *"If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps us going. You lose the courage to be. You lose the quality that helps us go on in spite of it all."*

So my question is: Where in your life do you need some more hope? Is it a family situation? Is it with a friend? Is it in your career or in your health? Where is it that you're seeking more hope?

You know, there's a light that shines in us, and it is the light of hope. Paul called it our *"hope of glory"*: that Spirit and Christ presence in each of us. And it is that light that reminds us that we can make it through the tough times. It is that light that reminds us that, even if I can't see the answer, there is an answer. Life can get better. That life will get better.

Dale Archer, a doctor, said this. He said, *"If I could find a way to package and dispense hope, I would have a pill more powerful than an anti-depressant on the market. Because sometimes hope is the only thing between man and the abyss."*

Hope is the thing that helps us go on. Hope is the thing that helps us hang on, and helps us keep on. So where in your life do you need to infuse and re-engage a sense of hope? And are you willing to allow yourself to feel that sense of hope? It doesn't mean that everything will go exactly the way you want, but it will lift you up in that journey to move forward.

Robert Louis Stevenson said, *"It is better to travel hopefully than it is to arrive."* Because hope makes the journey better. Hope makes the journey brighter. Hope makes the journey more positive and more optimistic.

And so, this week in your life, what is something you want to have a more hopeful thought about? Are you willing to infuse a level of hope, knowing that that situation and your life will get better? That there is a solution and answer, even if you can't see it right now?

Hey, what's the thing when there's rain and sun? What's that thing that it forms at the end? Anybody? [Congregation shouts out answers] A rainbow! A rainbow! That, at the end, there's ... what they call a

good fortune or a good luck or a pot of gold at the end. But it's really hope! That what comes forth from the rain and the sunshine. There is hope! And there always is.

And the last thing that it teaches I think is to remember that life is a miracle, and it's always a miracle.

You know the line, *"I want to know: have you ever seen the rain coming down on a sunny day?"* I remember the first time I ever saw rain while the sun was still out. I was a little kid, and I thought it was a miracle; I didn't think that was possible! How could rain and sun be coming down at the same time? I thought it was the coolest thing in the world! I thought it was amazing and miraculous!

And, to me, life is a miracle when it's raining, and life is also a miracle when the sun is shining. And life is a miracle when it's raining and the sun is shining at the same time. Because I think it teaches us and shows us the various aspects that are all a part of the tapestry and the miracle of life.

See, life is a miracle when you're curled up in a ball under your bed, never wanting to come out. And it's also a miracle when you're standing on that mountain top with your arms raised over your head! Life is a miracle when we fail, and life is a miracle when we succeed. That life is a miracle when a baby is born, and life is a miracle when someone dies. You know, life is a miracle when things begin, and life is a miracle when things end.

See, the tensions in that band ended that band, and made a split and harmed the relationship of two brothers. A great band that was at the height of its success ended. The brothers didn't reconcile. And yet that song was the most successful song from CCR! And still, 50 years later, it's inspiring and bringing joy and smiles to everyone. John Fogerty said it was sad when he wrote the song, but he doesn't think that song is sad. He doesn't look at it as sad any more. See, a part of that transformation requires that we accept the fact that there is rain and sun in life. That there are times that are bittersweet. And even when life is bittersweet, life is still a miracle.

I saw a news story of a young boy. His name is Ethan Hayes. His dad died when he was four. And his mom died when he was six. And months after – he might be seven; I don't know if he's seven yet. His aunt, who became his guardian, and was taking of him ... He said to her, *"You know, everybody's always sad. Nobody's smiling, and I'd like to do something about it."* And he asked her to buy a bunch of little figurine toys of rubber duckies and dinosaurs and other little figurines. And it's in Savannah, Georgia. They went downtown, and he would hand people a little toy and say, *"I got this for you to make you smile."* They were not only smiling and be touched, they would often ask him for a hug.

And he was being interviewed, and he was sharing some of this stuff. And the interviewer said, *"So does this make you happy?"* He said, *"Yeah, it brings me a lot of joy."* He said, *"Do you know that you've given out 500 of these little figurines?"* He said, *"What's your goal?"* He said, *"My goal is 33,000."* [Congregation laughs] He said, *"That must make you happy!"* He said, *"It does make me happy. It does bring me joy. But I still miss my mom."*

And the thing about that: it's like, as I listened to this story, my heart was touched with so much joy and, yet, it was touched with some pain and sadness. See, there are moments like this that are bittersweet in life, and in our lives. But even in those moments, life is still a miracle.

I'm sure everybody remembers Gilda Radner, one of the original seven from *Saturday Night Live*. She died at 42 of ovarian cancer. And this is a quote she said: *"I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned the hard way that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next."*

And life is bittersweet. There are beautiful things that are like shiny, sunny days, and there are things that are like rain. And we need to accept them. Because the truth is: life is always a miracle.

Albert Einstein said, *"There are two ways to live life: one is though nothing is a miracle, and one is though everything is a miracle."* Whatever's not going well in your life, remember life is a miracle.

Whatever is going well in your life, remember life is a miracle. And also remember that you are a miracle.

Rain is an amazing gift. It is a gift from God. It replenishes, it renews, it blesses in so many wonderful ways. And it's a gift that can remind us about how to live life in a greater way. The number one thing is to be honest and share the truth of yourself. Don't let a wall build up. Share what's going on in you, so we can experience real, authentic, genuine love. Second, let your hope be re-ignited. Re-ignite your hope in whatever you think is hopeless. Open your heart to know, even if you can't see it, there's an answer. There's a solution. And things will get better. And, finally, remember that life is a miracle. And it's mixed with things, and it is bittersweet, but it is always a miracle. And so are you.

And these are the lessons that teach us how to live a better life, from the song "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?"

God bless you all!

[Congregation applauds]

MEDITATION

Rev. Lori Fleming: I invite you to close your outer eyes. To take in a deep, cleansing breath and release it slowly. Make yourself comfortable in your chair, gently letting go of any busy-ness we've had so far this morning. And taking in another mindful breath as we move our awareness within: into our heart space. As we feel the presence of the Living God in us, as us, and through us.

In this space of spiritual communion, we are whole. In this space of spiritual communion, we are one. In this space of spiritual communion, we are powerful and strong, knowing that – as we open our hearts and open our minds – God is guiding us into lives of grace. That the Spirit of God is guiding us to our unlimited prosperity. That, in this abundant universe, there's more than enough to share and to spare.

In this quiet, still place, we recognize that we've come here for a very important purpose. That each of us can do easily, for God provides everything we need to live a lavish life – a life filled with joy, with loving relationships – because we are God's beloved. And God is well pleased with us.

And in this high and holy and exalted frame of mind, we take just a few moments to move more deeply into the silence as we fill our hearts with God's love.

SILENCE

Sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude that you have created us. We are grateful that you sustain us; that you keep us healthy and whole. And we say thank you for all of our abundant blessings. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.