

## **THE HAPPENING**

**Week #2 of a 6-Week "Songs of Life" Series**

**Rev. Richard Maraj**

**Sunday, Oct. 20, 2024**

### **SONG LYRICS TO 'THE HAPPENING'**

Hey, life, look at me  
I can see the reality  
'Cause when you shook me, took me out of my world  
I woke up  
Suddenly I just woke up to the happening  
  
When you find that you left the future behind  
'Cause when you got a tender love  
You don't take care of  
Then you better beware of the happening  
One day you're up, then you turn around  
You find your world is tumbling down  
It happened to me, and it can happen to you  
  
I was sure, I felt secure  
Until love took a detour  
Yeah, riding high on top of the world  
It happened, suddenly it just happened  
I saw my dreams fall apart  
When love walked away from my heart  
And when you lose that precious love you need  
To guide you  
Something happens inside you, the happening  
  
Now I see life for what it is  
It's not all dreams, ooh, it's not all bliss  
It happened to me and it can happen to you  
  
Once  
Ooh, and then it happened  
Ooh, and then it happened  
Ooh, and then it happened  
Ooh, and then it happened  
  
Is it real, is it fake  
Is this game of life a mistake?  
'Cause when I lost the love I thought was mine  
For certain, suddenly I started hurting  
I saw the light too late  
When that fickle finger of fate  
Yeah, came and broke my pretty balloon  
I woke up  
Suddenly I just woke up to the happening  
  
So sure, I felt secure  
Until love took a detour

'Cause when you got a tender love you don't  
Take care of, then you better beware of  
The happening

### **WORSHIP MESSAGE:**

*So this guy goes to the doctor and finds out he's only got one year to live. And he was so devastated, he went to see his pastor. And so they talked through it and then they prayed together. And the man said to the pastor, "Besides prayer, is there anything I could do you think that could help?"*

*The pastor thinks for a second and he says, "Well, I think there's something that could help, and that would be that you should get married to a woman with five children and you should move into an old trailer house. And then you should start your own business; buy a late 1970s Dodge pickup; and then have your mother-in-law come live with you."*

*And the man is kind of puzzled, but he's desperate. And he says, "So do you think, Pastor, that'll help me live longer?"*

*The pastor says, "No; but I guarantee it'll make the time you have left seem like forever." [Congregants laugh] Okay ...*

So how many people have ever had something that happened in your life that shocked you that you didn't see coming? Anybody? And how many people ever had an issue you knew you should deal with, but you chose to ignore it? And then how many people have ever had a pattern in your life keep repeating itself? And you said to yourself, "*Why is this happening to me again?*" Anybody?

So, this morning we're going to look at how we deal with the wake-up calls of life: the things we think we weren't expecting that just showed up and just shocked us.

So, we are in Week #2 of our six week series on "The Songs of Life," where I take famous songs -- songs we love -- and extract a spiritual message and some powerful life lessons for us to live more fully, to live more consciously, to live more joyfully, and to live more lovingly.

Last week, we began with KD Lang's song, "Hallelujah," written by Leonard Cohen. And it was a sacred, yet solemn song. And the three points we got -- and the message out of it -- was to honor our human suffering; to find spiritual balance; and then the third is to seek redemption.

And this week, we're going to look at the 1967 hit by Diana Ross and the Supremes called, "The Happening." It was written by Dozier and Holland and De Vol. And it was actually a theme song from a movie of the same name. The movie flopped, but the song actually went to number one on the Billboard charts!

This song: you could just look at it and think, "*Well, it's a love lost song.*" But it really is a cautionary tale ... but probably the most uplifting, and the best beat and rhythm to a cautionary tale that you could possibly imagine! And so, what it is about is a woman who takes her relationship for granted; who doesn't take time to nurture it. And then suddenly it ends. Suddenly, there's a breakup and she's devastated. And then she realizes it happened because she wasn't nurturing the relationship; she wasn't taking care of it. And then she warns, "*This happened to me; this can happen to you."*

So, even though she is sad because her heart gets broken, she receives the gift of the awareness that she's the one that had the power to have kept it going, and she's the one who has the power now to make new decisions and create a better situation.

"The Happening" represents the results or the outcomes or the wake up calls we get in life that relate to our actions -- or the lack of actions -- we take. You know, they're the results that come from really not

taking care of business in certain areas of our lives. That we can have a relationship happening; we can have a health happening; we can have a financial happening; we can have a spiritual happening. You know, the song really shows us that we play a role and have a responsibility in how we shape the circumstances and experiences of our lives. That we have the ability to positively and powerfully handle situations, including ones that don't go the way we would like.

So, we're going to look at three points and three messages for us about how to handle wake-up calls in lessons from "The Happening."

The first one is to **PAY ATTENTION**. How many people have ever -- sometimes in some area of your life -- not paid as much attention as you probably should have? Anybody have that? We human beings, sometimes we don't pay attention to things that are going around in our lives. Sometimes we live lives with our blinders on. Sometimes we ignore things; sometimes we neglect certain aspects of our lives. Sometimes, even in our own relationship in our own house, we aren't always in tune and paying attention to what's going on.

With ourselves, we sometimes don't pay attention to what we're feeling or what we're needing or how we might be hurting. Or even what we might want or seek. Whether it's in our family dynamics, or in our career, there are times that we are tuned out and really not paying attention.

And so, she shares in the song the consequences that happen when you don't pay attention. And the second verse says:

***I saw my dreams fall apart  
When love walked away from my heart.  
When you lose the precious love you need  
To guide you  
Something happens inside you, the happening.***

And the chorus says:

***One day you're up, then you turn around  
You find your world is tumbling down  
It happened to me, and it can happen to you***

So, this is the warning! And saying that there are consequences when we don't pay attention in our lives. Things will happen, you know; that we will miss out; that we will get hurt; that we will block and deprive ourselves of the level of happiness that we are seeking.

The Bible has multiple examples that say how important it is for us to pay attention. Proverbs 4, Verse 20-23 says:

*"My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear towards my words. Do not let them out of your sight. Keep them within your heart, for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*

Proverbs 22:17 says:

*"Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise. Apply it to your heart what I teach you."*

And then, finally, from Hebrews; it says:

*"Therefore, we must pay attention to what we have heard lest we drift away."*

I'm not sure what they're trying to say, but I'm thinking it's: "Pay attention!" [Congregants laugh] And to pay attention really means to listen! To be attentive; to tune in. To be aware of what we're doing; to be

aware of what we're feeling. To be aware of how we're living, and how we are showing up in life. It is to be willing to be understanding and to acknowledge what's really going on in us and in our lives.

And, to me, paying attention is a sign of a willingness to learn! A willingness to change; a willingness to improve. You know, a willingness to be guided and to transform into something greater. To me “happenings” and wake-up calls are life's way of telling us and guiding us to say there's a better way than this. You know, there's greater peace; there's greater happiness beyond the way that you're currently showing up in life.

To me, the “happenings” show us areas of our lives that need some attention; areas of our night lives that might need some clarity and guidance. It's about bringing them into the light to gain the best from them. And, to me, paying attention is about being aware without judgment and without shame.

And so, there was this woman in our congregation many years ago. She traveled a lot. Really successful; always on the go. And she loved that successful life; it was pretty prestigious. And, one day, she fell in a hotel lobby and broke her leg severely. Needed surgery and was laid up in bed for six weeks.

At first, it was so challenging and so difficult for her: from her busy, active, successful life to be grounded and laying in bed. Over time, she realized that that was her wake-up call to have a look at how she'd been living. She was trying to fill her cup from outside success; outside status; and wealth, and she was feeling empty inside. And she realized that she needed to begin to find her own inner joy; to feel a connection to God. And she began feeling that sense of fulfillment and joy and realized that finding it through that outer way was not a healthy thing for her.

And, ultimately, she found out what she was really seeking the most was her own self-love and her own self-acceptance. And she began to have a greater sense of peace because of that, and a greater sense of joy from within. And she slowed her life down. She was still successful, but she slowed it down and was really able to enjoy it.

And she said to me, *"I would have never changed my life if it wasn't for that wake-up call; if it wasn't for that fall that made me stop and have a look at myself and a look at my life."*

Paying attention is an important thing. So I ask you: In your life, what is calling you to pay more attention? What area within yourself – what area within your life – is saying, *"Pay more attention"*?

You know, somebody once said, *"When my life was shaking at its very foundations, I went to God, only to find out that God was doing the shaking!"* That sometimes things happen in a life to shake us up, to wake us up. You know, really, it's our soul wanting to express and experience more of the fullness of who we are.

You know, I truly believe that, when we don't pay attention, it's based on fear. Because we just don't want to know. We don't want to feel. We don't want to face it. We don't want to do the hard work that might be necessary to transform that area of life.

And, to me, when we pay attention, it's a sign of trust. It's a willingness to face and experience life, trusting that life and God will show and unfold something great if you are willing to be aware.

And one of the important things about paying attention is our willingness to ask ourselves a question: *"So, what is going on inside of me? What in me needs to be healed? What in me needs some care? What is it that I need to let go of? Or who is it that I need to forgive? Or where in my life do I need to slow down?"*

You know, one of the things I think is important for us to be aware of is that life will sometimes nudge us. And if we don't pay attention, it'll push us. And if we don't pay attention when it pushes us, it'll hit us

with a spiritual two by four! [Congregation laughs] It will get our attention! We don't need a happening and we don't need a wake-up call, but the question is: Are we willing to pay attention. It sounds simple, but it's powerful and it's important.

The second thing that I think is important from this song is teaching us to **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY**. The first verse says this:

***Hey, life, look at me  
I can see the reality  
'Cause when you shook me, took me out of my world  
I woke up  
Suddenly I just woke up to the happening***

And, to me, that whole idea about waking up is: waking up to the realization -- she realized -- that she played a part in what happened to her in her life. That there was a responsibility that she has, you know, for where she is in her experience.

You know, when we say things like, "You're responsible for your life," we always think, "Oh, that sounds so heavy. It sounds like such a burden. It sounds so negative and so onerous." But, the truth is, when you say, "I am responsible for my life," it means, "I am powerful. I have the power over my life. I have the power to choose. I have the power to change. I have the power to transform. I am a creator." When I say, "I am responsible," it means, "I am a creator. I am powerful. I am the one who makes the difference in my life."

Alan Cohen, the great spiritual writer, says this. He said, "One of the greatest tragedies of our culture is that we give our power away daily. We believe that there are forces in the outer world that control our fate. While the abiding truth of life is that we create our own destiny, we choose other people as objects of romance and we credit them with making us happy. And then, when they leave us, we blame them for our unhappiness. A check comes in the mail and we feel abundant; the next day an unexpected bill comes and we feel upset. The sun shines and we feel elated; the rain comes and we feel depressed. We act as if our happiness and our misfortune is dealt to us by any hand except our own."

To not accept responsibility is to give our power for our happiness and our peace to someone else or some outside condition. To accept responsibility is to say, "I have the power over my life. I am the one who chooses. I am the one who creates. I am the one who attracts greater things."

What I like about the song is that, when she gets the wake-up call, she doesn't blame. She just accepts responsibility: "Yep, I was a part of this. Yes, it was my actions that did this, and now I can choose some different actions." And so she accepts that level of responsibility.

And the question for all of us is: Are we willing to accept responsibility for our lives and accept that power? Claim the power, and use that power to make the adjustments that we need to make in our lives? Because the truth is: you write your own story. I write my own story. Whatever happens to us, we are the ones who write what those things mean and how those things turn out.

And so, the question for us is: Are we willing to accept our power by accepting responsibility?

You know, one of the things ... I heard a story years ago about this father who tells his son: "Here's a big rock, son. I want you to use all your resources to move that rock."

And the kid's pushing and leaning on it trying to pry it; doing all the things that the kid can. And then he says, "Dad, I can't; I give up. I can't."

He said, "Have you used all your resources, son?"

*"Yes, dad, I've used them all." And the kid keeps saying, "I've used them all."*

And then the father says, *"No, you haven't used one. You didn't ask for my help."*

One of the things, when we think about being responsible for our lives ... we think we have to do it alone. And we don't! A part of being responsible is being responsible to seek help; seek some support; seek some encouragement and what it is that we need. Seek some guidance. And it is good and important and it's responsible to ask for help; to ask for God's guidance. No one is supposed to do it alone! And a part of our responsibility in life is -- I believe -- is to ask for help; to ask for support and engage others in us fulfilling the work that we are here to do.

So, the second point is to be responsible. Because to be responsible means to accept your power; that you are powerful.

And the last one is to **MAKE A CHANGE**. You know, this song is really encouraging the person to make a change and evolve. You don't have to settle for this, because you can make some changes and actually improve and change and transform what's going on in your life. And it is inviting us all to look at how we're currently living -- how we're currently showing up and interacting with others and with life -- AND then say, *"What do I need to change? What do I need to let go? And what do I need to do to help align myself with my higher self? And to align myself with my higher purpose?"*

You know, the first thing we need to do, I believe, is to shift our mindset. Because sometimes I think we're in a mindset that isn't healthy and doesn't always attract the best situations.

My brother told me a story that our grandfather shared with him when he was a kid. And it's about this generous man who offers this builder a lot of money to build a really great house. So they come up on a price; the man gives the (builder) all the money and then (the builder) starts building the house. But he starts cutting corners and he starts using cheaper materials. And he starts just doing it fast and a sloppy job, because he's already got the money ... thinks he will get more money.

And so, when it's over, the builder says, *"Your house is complete."*

And the generous man says, *"No, no; this is my gift to you. It's your house."* [Congregation murmurs]

And you know, the mindset we put out into the universe is the things that we attract. We need to look: *"What is the mindset of the toughest situation in my life that I'm holding right now? Is it as positive as it can be? Is it as God-centered as could be? Is it as abundant as it could be?"* Because our mindset makes a difference.

And so, it behooves us all to think: *"What is my mindset in my life right now, particularly facing a wake-up call? And what is a better mindset I could be holding?"*

Wayne Dyer wrote a book called *There is a Spiritual Solution to Every Problem*, and it's to have that mindset. No matter how tired or negative or what area of our lives is to know that the answer is spiritual. To turn to a Higher Power; to turn to prayer; to turn to meditation.

So, the first thing to make a change is to shift our mindset: look at our consciousness and see what needs to be changed.

The second one is to express the highest spiritual qualities. You know, recently Phoenix lost a legend in Al McCoy. And, you know, he was a Hall of Fame announcer -- voice of the Phoenix Suns for 51 years! Famous for his tag lines of, *"Zing go the strings!"* or *"Wham bam slam!"* And his most popular one, of course: *"Shazam!"*

And he was popular for all this. But I'll tell you: for people who know Al, they would describe him as a person of incredible kindness and caring. He was friendly; he took time; and he was very approachable. And he was just a warm human being that cared about others.

The first time we had lunch was 18 years ago at P.F. Chang's. And we were sitting there and some young kid was our waiter. And we were just chatting, and it came time to order, and I ordered. And then Al ordered, and the kid's eyes just lit up, and he says, "You're Al McCoy!" He said, "I'd know your voice anywhere. My family, we've been listening to you for years! Even when there's a game on TV, we turn it down and listen to you."

And Al was just so gracious. And he turned his attention on the kid and was so interested in the kid. That kid was on cloud nine! I'm sure it made his day; it made his week; and I'm sure it made his family's evening when he got home from work. And to behold how gracious a human being he was. And I saw many more times, and many more examples was just touching.

You know, he was known for his voice, but it was really his kind heart and his generous spirit that really makes him the legend that he is. You know, they say, in life, people will forget what you do, but they'll never forget how you made them feel. And That's one thing that Al McCoy did exceptionally well. He made everyone feel important. He made everyone feel valued and valuable.

And so, think of one quality that you could embody the way Al embodied kindness. And think what a difference it would make in your life. Could you imagine expressing more kindness in your relationship? In your work? Or all the errors of your life? Or could you imagine embodying and expressing more friendliness? Or more care? Or more positive energy? Or more gratitude?

I mean, what's one quality that -- if you expressed it to people -- would be known for that. People say, "Boy, that person is so caring," or "That person is so compassionate," or "That person is so joyful, or "That person is so grateful and appreciative." That literally one quality expressed and embodied can absolutely make a difference.

And then the last one is to develop good habits. I've done several series on the importance of habits. They say that that what causes success is people who have good and consistent habits. There's something about having good habits that makes a difference. You know the number one good habit that makes a difference in our lives? I think I've told you before ... Making up your bed every morning. It's a good habit. You know, you create order in your life. Your mind starts thinking; you think, "It looks clean." You feel a sense of accomplishment. You don't even realize these things, but that good habit, one little good habit, makes a huge difference.

I mean, the habit of even just going for a walk every morning or evening, or the habit of doing yoga every morning. Or the habit of just smiling more consistently and greeting people. Or the habit of calling your family out of state at least once a week, the habit of daily meditation. And the habit of volunteering somewhere. Any of these good habits absolutely have a positive difference in our lives.

You know Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act; it's a habit." So, what is a good habit that you could start or restart and do more consistently and more daily? Because it will make a difference!

You know, when we want our lives to get better, we always want to change people; change situations; change jobs; change, thinking. Change all that stuff and it's going to make life better! The truth is: if we want to change our lives, we've got to change ourselves. We've got to change our own, our mindset. Change the qualities that we express. And change into some bad habits into some good habits.

As Gandhi put it, *"Be the change you want to see in the world."* We want our lives to get better, we need to get better. We want our lives to change, we need to change.

I truly believe that life is always pointing us in the right direction. But the question is: Are we resisting it? Are we ignoring it? Are we avoiding it? For everyone, those nudges are always there. The question is: Are we ready to wake up to them? Are we willing to lift ourselves up -- rise up and reach up -- to a higher level of living than where we currently are?

And the way to do it is to pay attention; it is to be responsible; it is to make a change. You know, there are and will be more wake-up calls in our lives. And we should get excited about it, because it's life trying to point us in a new direction. And we should realize that we can handle them positively and powerfully to take us to a higher and greater experience of life.

And that is the lesson from the song, "The Happening." God bless you all!

*Copyright 2024 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Maraj*