

## **JAWS – DON'T LET YOUR FEARS SWALLOW YOU**

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Well, happy Sunday, everybody! Welcome!

So, this is our two-week series of “Movies of Summer,” where we take a look at the favorite movies in our lives, and I do a little metaphysical twist on it. And I see: how can we apply these movies to our daily lives? I started this, as I mentioned last week, about four years ago at my previous church. I was inspired by Rev. Richard Maraj with his “Songs of Summer,” which is now his “Songs of Life” series.

So just a little reminder; here's how this goes. I'm going to recap the movie for us, because a lot of times we haven't seen the movie since it came out ... or maybe not at all. So I'll get us up to speed. And then we're going to look at the characters and what they represent to us and our lives. And in particular today, we're going to be looking at these characters and how they approach fear. And so, maybe you might want to start thinking about --as I'm speaking: *“How do I approach fear? Which character am I in this story?”* And then I will summarize and give you a lot of goodies -- spiritual tools -- to take home with you today.

So, last week I covered the 1982 classic “E.T.,” which was all about that reminder to return to the divine home within and make sure you are always shining your heart light.

Today, I tackle another Steven Spielberg classic. It's the 1975 film, “Jaws.” Can you believe it's almost 50 years old? [Congregants murmur] Yeah; it's 49 years old! It's almost 50 years old. Hard to believe!

This movie made people not want to go to the ocean. [Congregants laugh] Made people afraid of sharks. It made me as a child not want to swim in swimming pools. [Congregants laugh] I was afraid in the deep end that that shark might come up through the drain. [Congregants laugh] It's possible! My brother still teases me about it today.

But I had a very vivid imagination as a child, and I feel that really speaks into what this movie is all about ... which is: How are we going to approach fear? How are we going to approach fearful situations in our lives? Are we going to let our imaginations get the best of us, and we make it bigger and scarier than it actually is? Are we going to just stay in denial about it? Maybe not look at it? Avoid it all together? Are we going to only stay in our heads to solve it? Not listen to our hearts? Or will we forget to get still and really listen to that inner guidance? That intuition?

So let's recap how this movie plays out since it's almost 50 years old. The movie takes place near the New England tourist town of Amity Island. Now, there's a bunch of high school kids; they're on the beach. They're having a party, and one of the girls decides to go for a swim. She's out swimming in the ocean when suddenly she's violently pulled under the water and is killed by the shark.

Now there's a new police chief, Martin Brody, played by Roy Scheider. And he wants to close the beaches. This makes sense, right? But the mayor overrules him, because the mayor is saying, *“We've never had a shark attack here before. Do we even know it's a shark attack? Also, it happens to be the upcoming 4th of July weekend, so we'll be losing a lot of revenue if we close the beaches.”* He doesn't want to shut the beaches down.

So the police chief, against his own intuition, decides to open the beaches again. Now we're at the holiday, and guess what? Now a boy is killed in broad daylight by the shark, so there's no denying it.

And there's also a \$10,000 bounty on the head of the shark. That's 1975 money, everybody!  
[Congregants laugh] I mean, I'd go for that now! I figured it out; it's like \$58,000. Who's with me?  
[Congregants laugh] Okay!

So, here's our three characters. In enters the marine biologist Matt Hooper, played by the wonderful Richard Dreyfus. And then we also have this very grisly ship captain played by Robert Shaw. His name's Quint, and they come in to offer help to the police officer, Roy Scheider, to capture the shark. And then we are on to -- the trio is engaged in -- an epic battle of man versus beast on the open waters. And away we go.

So, when I watched this movie, two questions really emerged: How do we usually approach fear? And how can we approach fear in a more conscious way? In a way that it doesn't get the best of us so that we can stay spiritually grounded and keep our inner peace, even when the scary, anxiety-producing moments in our life are right in front of us?

So if "Jaws" -- that big, scary shark -- represents those big scary events in our life ... And this can also be our goals! Because sometimes we have dreams and goals, and they're scary! And we get scared to even move forward with them, right?

So, this could be any big scary event. And we can either let it pull us down, or we can use our spiritual tools. We can use our spiritual wisdom. We can remember our innate spiritual gifts and overcome the fear, and remember the spiritual, powerful beings that we are.

And these characters are so fantastic in this movie, because they're great examples and represent four different ways that we often approach fear. We can approach fear in denial; with anxiety; with intellect only; or with wild abandon. We're just throwing everything at it, right? So, let's take a closer look at each one.

So, first up is the mayor. Here's a picture of him. I call him "Mayor Denial." [Congregants laugh] He wants business as usual. He doesn't want to face the facts. He just wants to send the people back to the water. It might not be a shark; it's probably a boating accident! Right? He doesn't want to hear any information about this. He has what we call "magical thinking" -- that, if I just say it's fine, it will just go away and the issue will resolve itself.

So, some examples of how this might show up in our lives ... It could be that our bank account is running in the red, but we go to Starbucks and we say, "Well, I'm prosperous!" [congregants laugh] instead of maybe looking at the actionable steps that we can take to decrease our spending or increase our revenue. Or maybe we get blood work back that shows our cholesterol high. So we walk around and say, "Well, but I'm healthy, happy and whole!" instead of, again, taking action; maybe changes with our exercise or our diet.

So, it's denying that the issue is there. "There's no shark; it's a boat!" But that's not how it works. We know that's not how it works. You can't just sit on your affirmations. [Congregants laugh, whoop and applaud] We need to look at the facts. We need to make a plan and then step out in faith, knowing that the ideas that came to us for the solutions are our divine guidance. That's our divine guidance!

There's an ancient Chinese saying that goes, "Embrace tiger; return to mountain." So, if the mountain is a place of stability; of peace; of harmony, then we know that -- along the way to get to the mountain -- there's going to be some tigers in our path that we must embrace. And it's when the action reflects the belief that we can then move forward with an affirmation of, "I am healthy, whole, and strong." And that's now supporting the truth of the situation. That's when we're really looking the tiger in the eye, or the shark in the eye, and we're taking actions to get to that more stable, peaceful way of life and living.

Russell Kemp, in his book *Live Youthfully Now*, wrote that it is action – action along with affirmations – that bring beauty and happiness in life.

So, if you're relating to Mayor Denial when it comes to fear, acknowledge that you're scared. Acknowledge your feelings. Sometimes in Unity or in new thought spirituality, we think that we can't have negative emotions. I'm here to say there's no negative emotions. But what you sow in life is the feeling behind the thought. So, you can say all the positive words -- all the positive affirmations -- you'd like, but it's the feeling behind that will get manifested. So, if the feeling behind the words is fear, that is what you will sow. That is what will be manifested.

So, it's about acknowledging the feelings and then asking: What am I afraid to look at? When it comes to this situation or this area in my life -- really being honest with ourselves -- what about this is bringing up so much fear? And then we can tap into our innate attribute -- spiritual attribute, spiritual gift of wisdom -- using that divine wisdom that lives within each and every one of us to support us when we do face situations that may make us uncomfortable and scare us.

That's when -- once we've acknowledged, we've really looked at it -- we tap into that wisdom; then we can take the actions with the affirmation forward into the problem, into the challenge. That's number one.

The second way sometimes we approach fear is through anxiety. Like, *"There's a shark in the pool!"* [Congregants laugh] This is our police chief. There's a picture of him. I call him "Officer Anxiety." [Congregants laugh] This is when we let our imagination make our fears worse. It's when our imagination ... we use it to visualize the worst outcome, instead of the best outcome.

Now our spiritual power of imagination, folks; that's how we manifest. So, we can use it to manifest the good, or we can use it to manifest the bad. And when our imagination gets the best of us, we start to get into overwhelm. And then that fear can keep us like the deer in the headlights. Right? Where we're not moving forward; we can't make any decision; we forget that we even have this innate will -- willpower -- within us to move forward and, instead, we get very stagnated and just overwhelmed with what's in front of us.

As Officer Anxiety, we may forget that we're spiritual beings and that we do have mastery over our thoughts, words and actions. You often hear, *"Thoughts held in mind produce after their kind."* But here's how I like to say this: *"Thoughts held in mind -- coupled with strong emotion -- produce after their kind."* So what is the emotion behind it? And if it's fear, that's what's going to be going forward.

So if you identify with Officer Anxiety ... I mean, I'll admit; this is my character here. And when I catch myself spiraling, what do I do? I remind myself right away: I am using this innate spiritual gift that I have - - this gift of imagination -- in a way that is harmful to me. This is my power to manifest. I'm using it in a harmful way. So, I stop and I breathe. We stop; we breathe. We remind ourselves that we're part of the divine energy of life; that we are a divine being. That we remind ourselves that we do have the dominion over our thoughts, words, actions and reactions.

Again, we're not denying the feelings; the feelings are there. But we're also not going to set up camp and live there. It's about acknowledging it, and then moving. And realizing that we may not have control over what happens to us – there's sharks in the water -- but we do have control over our reaction to the sharks in the water.

So, after you calm yourself -- reminding yourself of your divinity -- then it's about turning back to faith. Where do I want to place my faith? Do I want to put my faith in the big scary sharks of life? The big situations that scare me? Or will I remember I am connected to all of life? That God is strength; therefore, I am strength. And I can be spiritually strong in the face of fear. That God is wisdom; therefore,

I am wise. And I know that divine wisdom is supporting me in this situation. That God is peace; therefore, I am peace. And I can be peaceful in all situations. Where do I want to place my belief? How do I want to use my imagination to manifest that belief? So that's our Officer Anxiety.

Our next character – the next way that we can sometimes come to fearful situations – is through Richard Dreyfus. Here's a photo of him. I just love him! I mean, he looks like a baby, right? [Laughs] This is when we're intellect only. He's the marine biologist and he is only in his mind. He's educated; he's looking at the situation rationally. He's just in his head. He's making sure he shares -- lets everyone know -- that he has the latest technology; it's the very expensive technology. He has all the science we're going to need with all this technology. And, of course, there's this very funny line where our grizzled ship captain, he says to him, *"Well, I'm not sure what the shark will do with all that. Eat it, I suppose."* [Congregants laugh]

In other words, we can come to our fears with all the education and facts in the world, but we need to come into our heart. We need to bring our hearts into it: our intuition, our divinity into the situation. It's important that we don't get so out of our head that we forget to connect to our heart. It's important that we sit in the stillness and listen. If this is our character, then we may be spending time appraising and reading and studying ... and forgetting to listen to divine guidance.

Unity's teacher of teachers, Emilie Cady -- and this is paraphrased -- but she said there comes a time when you've got to put down the books. We read; we read; we study; we come here on Sundays. And there comes a time when you've got to put it down. And then you've got to be. You've got to be with it, and then you've got to be it. Let the studying -- let all the spiritual wisdom, study, readings -- let it settle in. Marinate in it; be still and really listen; and then live what you've learned.

This is our fifth Unity principle. We have five Unity principles. The fifth one says: it's not enough just to know spiritual knowledge and understanding; you've got to live the truth you know. That's putting our feet to the faith. So, if you are one of these all-in-my-head scientist types who, that's how you approach fear, big situations, then my recommendation would be to immerse yourself -- going back to a meditation practice, and immersing yourself in meditation and prayer -- and then combining that with your discernment, your intellectual self. But to get out of your head and into your intuitive self.

I often say: take that elevator ride from the head into the heart. Spend your time in silence so you can listen to your GPS – GPS, meaning your God Protection System. That's your divine guidance! Because then you can put your intuition and your inner wisdom together to discern what is best to do. Then you have a balance of mind and spirit working together. So that's our third approach.

Our fourth approach to fear is our crazy, chaotic ship captain. Here's a picture of him, played by Robert Shaw. He just goes at it with enthusiasm, wild abandon. He's just very all-over-the-place. He's so enthusiastic and excited about catching this shark that – spoiler alert! – that it destroys the boat and it's the death of him.

It's similar to when we face a fearful situation and we just jump right in. We jump right in without taking the time for wisdom, discernment, intuition. We forget to anchor ourselves in our calm, faith-filled center.

So, in our lives, this can look like: I'm afraid of feeling alone or being alone, and so you just jump right into a relationship. Or you jump into a friendship without taking that time of discernment. Or maybe there are money issues and, instead of taking time to really network to get a job or to look at how you can cut expenditures, you just invest what little bit you have left into this kind of shady investment that's easy to do, instead of really taking the time to investigate that. It can also look like talking and talking and

talking with no action. It can also look like addictions. It can be anything that takes away the feeling that you are not wanting to feel: in this case, fear.

So, if you approach fear as “Captain Enthusiastic,” instead of just jumping right in to slay the problem or the issue, the fear ... slow down; pause; feel; reflect. And then take action. And this is where I would again suggest adding a meditation practice and a journaling practice. And we have this journaling small group starting here, too, which is perfect! Because then you can get the feelings onto the page: out of the body, onto the page.

I also love to do meditative journaling. So, I start with a blank page and a pen, and I just write, “*Divine Love, what do you have for me today? Loving spirit, what do I need to hear? God, go for it!*” And I just get still and listen and let the pen do the work.

But it's about slowing down and really listening, instead bouncing around into a situation from a place of fear. Instead taking a breath and knowing that the Universe is supporting you. God is supporting you! And as an expression of the Universe, not only is It a part of you, but you are part of It! You cannot be separate from It! You are It! And, therefore, it is supporting you. So pausing and remembering exactly who you are.

So those are the four ways we often approach fear through these characters, in particular. But here's what's so interesting at the end of the movie. So if you haven't ... this is a real spoiler alert now. [Congregants laugh] But the boat is going down. Our ship captain, Mr. Crazy Chaotic guy; he's been eaten by Jaws. The marine biologist got knocked out of his deep sea cage, and he's now hiding at the bottom of the ocean in his scuba gear. And now it's just the police chief. Now it's just our Officer Anxiety.

Of course, he wanted to call for help a whole, long time ago, before everything got destroyed that would make it possible to get help. So now he's just there all by himself; it's all up to him. The boat is almost completely underwater, meaning his foundation is shaky. It's almost gone. He's on the crow's nest; he has a shotgun; he needs to aim for an oxygen tank that's in the mouth of the shark.

So the Police Chief Anxiety: he now looks the fear -- his fear -- in the eye. He has mastered his thoughts about this situation. He's mastered his thoughts about this fear. Because he's now using his imagination to envision what he can do to overcome the situation. He's steady; he's sure; he's tapping into his inner strength. He musters up his faith. He might not have 100 % faith, but he only needs faith as big as a mustard seed! He aims; he shoots; and Kaboom! Jaws -- the great fear -- is destroyed.

It's a great reminder that we have all that we need within us to conquer our greatest fears, whatever those fears might be. Maybe you don't have a fear of sharks; but maybe you have a fear or some worry, anxiety around finances; or relationships; or your health. A job; retirement; the next phase of your life ... whatever it is!

But the movie, “Jaws,” can remind us that, when fear comes swimming at you -- circling you, consuming you -- stop. Don't jump ahead. Don't jump away. Don't deny it. Look it in the eye, as the police chief does, and call it what it is: fear, worry, doubt. And then we meditate and remember our oneness with the One Power and Presence of the universe ... and that that is your foundation and source.

And then we take action. We don't stay stuck; we move forward. Maybe that's asking and applying for jobs. Maybe that's asking friends and family for help. But we take the action and move forward. And no matter what character you find yourself relating to, it's when we remember our divine nature that we overcome our fears.

So Zig Ziglar said -- and maybe you've heard this before -- that fear has two meanings: Forget Everything And Run or Face Everything And Rise. When we connect to the knowing -- the spiritual expression of God that we are -- we are rising. You are a part of the divine energy of life!

As Eric Butterworth says, *"The support of the universe is constant in you."*

So, fear is uncomfortable. And it's okay to be scared. But don't allow yourself to get swallowed in it. It's okay if the trip feels rocky. It's okay if it feels like you're in a small boat in the middle of the sea, and it's sinking, and the shark is circling. Because you know what? You're not a bad Unity student. Sometimes life just throws sharks in the water of life at us. It just does!

So, we're turning back to spending time in the silence and really listening to your inner divine guidance. Blending your head and your heart together for the decision-making; not one or the other, but both. And using your imagination to create what you do want to experience; how you do want the outcome to be.

Because when we remember our divine identity and the powerful spiritual beings that we are, then we can face everything and rise. And then, like our heroic police chief, we too can overcome our challenges, our fears, and swim safely to shore.

And that, everybody, concludes our first "Movies of Summer" series. Blessings, everyone!

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