

COULD YOU BE LOVED (Inspired by the Bob Marley Song)

Week #2 of a 5-Week "Songs of Life" Series

Rev. Richard Maraj

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LYRICS TO 'COULD YOU BE LOVED':

Could you be loved and be loved?

Could you be loved and be loved?

Don't let them fool ya

Or even try to school ya! Oh, no!

We've got a mind of our own

So go away if what you're thinking isn't right!

Love would never leave us alone

Ay, in the darkness, there must come out to light

Could you be loved and be love?

Could you be loved, wo yeah! And be loved?

Could you be loved and be loved?

Could you be loved, wo yeah! And be loved?

The road of life is rocky and you may stumble too

So while you point your fingers someone else is judging you

Love your brotherman!

Could you be, could you be, could you be loved?

Could you be, could you be loved?

Could you be, could you be, could you be loved?

Could you be, could you be loved?

Don't let them change ya, oh!

Or even rearrange ya!

Oh, no!

We've got a life to live

{Ooh, ooh, ooh}

They say, only... only

Only the fittest of the fittest shall survive

Stay alive! Eh!

Could you be loved and be loved?

Could you be loved, whoa yeah! And be loved?

Never miss your water until your well runs dry

No matter how you treat him, the man will never be satisfied

Say something!

(Could you be - could you be - could you be loved?

Could you be - could you be loved?)

Say something! Say something!

(Could you be - could you be - could you be loved?)

Say something ...

[Repeats numerous times]

MESSAGE:

So this morning, we're going to talk about love by asking ourselves and exploring the question: Could you be loved and be love? And I think whether we're admit it or not, I think every one of us would like to feel more love in our lives. We would like to share more love, express more love, and enjoy having more love in our relationships in our lives and in our world. *"Could you be loved and be love?"* is really inviting us to go deeper: to open our hearts and tap into a more profound experience of love in all the areas of our lives.

This is Week #2 of our five-week fall version series, "The Songs of Life," where I take famous hit songs and allow them to inspire a spiritual message. And this is one of our favorites, because everybody loves music. Music is so powerful and uplifting and inspiring. I'll bet every one of us not only has a bunch of favorite songs, but songs that really got us through a difficult time: songs that comforted us through an experience of loss; songs that became an anthem of ours to help us rise in overcoming some adversity.

This morning, we're going to look at the 1979 hit, "Could You Be Loved" by Bob Marley. Marley died in 1981, only two years after the release of this album at the very young age of 36. But in that time, he produced some incredible music: 13 albums; 133 singles. And at one point – when he was really clocking it – he produced and released nine albums in eight years. And not just volume, but amazing music that still lasts to this day, which I find amazing. Forty-five years after his death, he is still famous worldwide. You could go to Thailand or India or Nigeria or France or any place, and you'll see somebody wearing a Bob Marley T-shirt, and you'll hear Bob Marley music.

His music is so loved that, when he died, he was worth \$30 million. And his estate is worth \$50 million, and it's because sales are still happening year after year. I was blessed in 1979 to see Bob Marley in concert in Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto. And it was just one of the incredible highlights of my musical love and life. And so, I got to hear him play this song and, of course, others.

Now this song, in particular, he actually wrote on an airplane while he was reflecting and thinking about his life. He was diagnosed with a rare, aggressive form of skin cancer. And so, he was really facing his own mortality. And so, when he wrote about a message of love, it was beyond a romantic love. It was a greater, deeper love. And it really is challenging us all to answer the question: Could you be loved? Could you be loved and be love? It's a spiritual challenge. It is calling us higher in an amazingly profound and personal way.

In 1 John, Chapter 4, Verse 8, it says, *"God is love, and whosoever lives in love, lives in God, and God lives in them."*

So this morning, what I'd like to do is to look at the four messages -- the four life lessons -- which I believe are aspects of love he's trying to teach us through this song, "Could You Be Loved?"

And so, **the first lesson is about THE WHOLENESS OF LOVE**. When he says, *"Could you be loved and be loved,"* he's talking about two dimensions, which are actually very poetic, as well as spiritual. But he is talking about the wholeness of love in that it's about being loved and being love.

And so, when he says, *"Could you be loved,"* he is saying: Can you allow yourself to open your heart to receive and experience a deeper level of love within yourself? Can you accept that you are worthy of love? That you are lovable just the way you are?

And I want you to think of how much love you have for yourself right now. And think about how much love are you letting in. How much are you allowing people in your life to truly love you at depth? How many people know that you could love yourself more and allow more love into your life? Anybody? I think the answer is, "Yes" to all of us.

And the second question, *"Could you be loved?"* is about: Can you stand in the fullness of love and embody love and express love more fully in all of your relationships? Again, think of how much you love the people you love in your life. And how many would agree – and I think it would be all of us – would agree that we could love more fully and more profoundly and more freely than we currently love the people in our lives. And the answer to all of us is, *"Yes."*

So, this isn't ... It sounds like a redundant phrase: *"Could you be loved and be loved?"* But what he's really trying to do is to get us connected to the wholeness of love. Sometimes we think love is just about receiving it, or love is just about giving it. And he's saying, *"No, no."* You've got to connect. If you want to know the fullness of love, you've got to connect to both giving and the receiving of love. To let love in and let love out.

Because sometimes we don't let love in. And sometimes we don't let love out. Sometimes we will withhold our love from people in our lives. Sometimes we get so busy in the routine of life and the business of life that we literally take ourselves and the people in our lives that we love for granted.

You know, when we get hurt or mistreated or told or believe that we're not enough, what we do is: we tend to shut down our hearts. We tend to close off ourselves, thinking that protecting ourselves and shutting off will somehow protect us or help us from not being hurt. And we hurt ourselves more when we close off our hearts and not love us fully and freely.

You know, when life gets hard and when people -- we have conflict in our lives -- we need to ask ourselves: Could you be loved and be loved? You know, when our hearts get broken; when we mess up; when we're struggling, we need to pause and ask: Could you be loved and be loved? Because we need to remember that! Because that's the first thing we sometimes shut down -- is our own hearts and close ourselves off to the very love that we want and need.

You know, this song is saying: open your heart to the fullness of love and allow it to flow through us by giving of that love and receiving of that love.

Sometimes we think that love is something we've got to earn; that we've got to attain; that we've got to prove ourselves for. And it is not the truth. Love is our nature. The fullness and the allness of love is already within us and around us. God is love, as Scripture says, and we are all created in the image and likeness of love. We are all expressions of love.

The greatest commandment says to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength; and to love others as ourselves. In a way, you could say the foundation of love is how well we love ourselves. Because we are the channels of love in this world! And if we are constricting the amount of love we let into our hearts and our lives, and particularly towards ourselves, we limit our ability to express more love to the people in our lives and in and through our world.

"Could you be loved" is saying: open yourself to the wholeness of love by loving yourself and being willing to receive more love and to express more love.

So, the first thing I think this song is trying to do is to open in our hearts to give and receive love and to know love in a more whole and complete way.

The second thing that I think it teaches us is THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AUTHENTIC. The importance of authenticity. To live and to experience a deeper level of love, we've got to live more authentically: to be absolutely true, to be true to who we are. But being true to ourselves and living authentically is not always easy. E. E. Cummings says that it takes a lot of courage -- and it is one of the toughest things in the world -- to be able to grow up to be who we really are. Because sometimes the world is trying to turn us into something that we're not.

I'll bet every single one of us has some people in our lives who try to tell us what to think and how to feel and how to act. Sometimes our family members, sometimes friends, sometimes our society and our culture ... you know, there is a pressure to conform to certain ways of being and certain ways of thinking and certain ways of behaving.

To live authentically is to be true to yourself. To live authentically is to be in alignment with our spirit: to what that inner voice and inner guidance and inner intelligence is telling us to do. It's about living truthfully from the inside out and not following what others say.

You know, in many ways, I would say that authenticity is about: Are you being in integrity with your spirit? Is the way you're living in integrity with who you really are within and who you came here to be?

How many people have ever said or done something to please someone else or just to get along, when you knew it was not in integrity with who you are what you wanted to do? Anybody ever? I think it's all of us!

To live in integrity with ourselves is to say: Is this in alignment with my soul? Or, where in my life am I not being honest about who I am or how I'm showing up? Or where in my life am I not doing something I know that I am absolutely called to do? Where in my life am I living out of integrity?

How many people have read Greg Baer's book, "Real Love"? Anybody remember that book? It was fabulous! And what I loved is the way he differentiated real love and imitation love. Like, sometimes we want love so much, we will work hard and pretend to be who we're not -- and tend to agree and say things we're not -- so that people will like us. And they may like us, but at deep level, it is not real love. They're just liking the image or liking the mask or liking how we make them feel. But we aren't in full integrity and don't feel the level of real love. It's imitation love.

And he says until we get honest and true -- until we're more authentic with ourselves and true to ourselves -- we will never be able to truly experience real love. And he said it's only when we connect with real love, and be the truth of who we are, that we open the door to levels of unconditional love -- you know, agape love, real love -- and a depth of love that we all truly seek ... that our souls are seeking.

And so my question of you is: Where in your life are you feeling that you are not fully in alignment with your truth? Where you're not fully authentic? And are you willing to get to that place where you feel in full integrity with who you are?

Because even if people don't like us, being true to ourselves: you know what it does? It helps us feel a sense of inner peace. It helps us feel an inner joy. And it helps us feel a sense of clarity and purpose of who we really are. Because the truth is: we came here to be who we are, not who we're not. And it's important to stop living areas that are just not really true and not really honoring of who we really are.

So, the third one. **The third aspect of love that he talks about in the song is about RESILIENCE.** I mean, sometimes we need to be tough. We need to be strong. We need to demonstrate persistence and determination and patience to move through life. Because three things I've learned about life when it comes to this situation.

Number one is: things will not always go the way we want them to go. How many people have ever had things not go the way you want it to go? [Congregants laugh] How many people know that things will not always go the way you want, but you still want it all the way ... always the way you want. [Congregants laugh]

The second thing I've learned is that: everyone will not agree with us, believe in us, support us, or like us. We would all love everyone to love and believe in us and be there for us, but that is just not the truth.

And then the third one is: that life changes. It's already been mentioned. That nothing stays the same. Everything in life will change -- like it or not, ready or not. The weather changes. Your body changes. Relationships change. Jobs change. Everything changes! And so, it requires some inner strength and resilience to deal with all the changes and all the challenges that are a natural aspect of life.

Resilience is the inner power to hold on and have spiritual strength to keep going. To keep moving forward in spite of the bumps and the obstacles and the bruises of life. Resilience is saying, *"I'm going to keep going and stay strong and centered, because I know greater things are on their way."* It's saying, *"God and I are greater than this, and this will not define me. This will not define my happiness or my success or the meaning or fulfillment of my life."*

One of his lyrics says:

**We've got a life to live ...
Only the fittest of the fittest shall survive
Stay alive!**

And he's not talking about competition. He's talking about resilience. That the way life is, you've got to hang in there. You've got to stay tough. You've got to press on. You've got to move through the tough and difficult times with your head up.

And another aspect of resilience -- we think it's always staying tough and hanging in there and be in determination. But another important aspect of resilience, and keeping going, and being able to move ahead in life, is you've got to sometimes be able to accept that some stuff just happened. You've got to make peace with the past. You've got to let it go.

And sometimes we need to go a little deeper and do some forgiveness. And that's what keeps us resilient. We can't just keep holding on to everything. Sometimes we need to let certain things that are in life -- we need to let go and release.

Nelson Mandela was in prison for 27 years, yet he emerged with a spirit of peace, a spirit of freedom, and a heart full of forgiveness. He said, *"As I walked out the door towards the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness behind, I'd still be in prison."*

So, a part of his resilience of being imprisoned unfairly for those years was his ability to let it go. His ability to forgive. His ability to make peace with those things that didn't go well and weren't right and felt unjust. To make peace with them so that he could use his energy and his joy to create something even greater.

Another lyric -- in fact, it's my favorite of the whole song, because it speaks to the whole idea of resilience. And it says:

**Love would never leave us alone
Ay, in the darkness, there must come out the light.**

And so, what it's saying is that, even in the darkness, that there is light. No matter what is going on, love is there and will always be there. No matter how tough times are, no matter how much we struggle, that in the darkness there will be light. That we can turn to love. That we can turn ... That we'll never run out of love that is there. The question is: Are we willing to turn to it?

So, the idea of resilience in this song, to me, is about two things: having the spiritual strength to hold on and endure when you need to; and also to have the strength to let go and release and make peace when we need to.

And then the final aspect of love we want to talk about is ACTION. Action. You know, in the song there are two lines that are repeated 20 times each. Twenty times – two of them! The first one, obviously, is:

Could you be loved and be loved?

You know what the second one is? Okay; I'll tell you! [Congregants laugh] It's the line:

Say something!

Say something. He asks the question: *"Could you be loved and be loved?"* And then he replies, *"Say something."* He encourages, *"Say something!"* And what he is saying by *"say something"* is a call to action. Saying: Could you be loved and be loved? But call it to action. Take some action. Speak your truth. Live boldly.

You know, it's not enough to just believe in love, but you've got to live love. You've got to speak love. You need to embody love. Love is not just passive. Love is not just a feeling. It is something we must bring to life on a daily basis. That we need to choose love and to choose how we're going to show up in life.

Maya Angelou, the great poet and author and civil rights leader, declared: *"I am a woman / Phenomenally. / Phenomenal woman, / That's me."* And she took it out there. She declared who she was, and she lived, embodied and expressed herself ... and has – and will continue to – inspire generations. She brought forth her greatness!

It is a call to action: Say something. Do something. Take some action. Make a stance for who you are. And that's why Scripture says things that echo it, like, *"Faith without works is dead."* You know, love without expression doesn't have the life and the zip that it's meant to.

And so my question for you is: What do you want to declare about yourself? What is a stand that you want to take for yourself? What is a difference that you want to make for yourself in the world? And what is a change that you want to make? What is something that you want to do? What is something that you want to express that you haven't done so yet?

And so, two things. One: What is the most loving thing that you could do for yourself today? And what is the most loving habit you can start today that would be good for you to do every day?

Sometimes we think it's something huge, but I've mentioned it several times. Making my bed every day has changed my life. [Congregants laugh] Sometimes we think it's simple, because you know what happens? When you make up your bed -- studies actually show this -- that it helps your mind get organized. And actually it psychologically works on you.

Sometimes just taking a walk in the morning or eating a little bit healthier or doing some exercise or praying with someone ... the simple things that we can declare – say something, do something, take some action – can literally change our lives greater than we realize. Sometimes we get overwhelmed: *"Aw, I can't do something big."* No! The little things that are done make a huge difference. The question is: What are you willing to do?

And then the second one is: What is a more loving way you can show up to the people in your life? As much as you might love them now, what is something -- for whether it's your partner or your friend or a family member or a neighbor or someone in your workplace -- that you can show up in a more loving way?

An efficiency expert concluded at the end of his lecture with a note of caution, *"Do not try these techniques at home."*

"Why not?" someone in the audience asked.

He said, *“Well, I watched my wife's routine making breakfast for many years.”* And then he carried on. He said, and she made a lot of trips between the refrigerator, the stove, the table and the cabinets, carrying a single item at a time.

One day I said to her, *“Honey, you could be more efficient by carrying several things instead of making so many trips.”*

And the audience member said, *“Well, did it make a difference? Did it save time?”*

He said, *“Actually, yes. It did. It used to take her 20 minutes to make breakfast. Now I do it in seven.”*
[Congregants laugh]

Love. It ain't easy! [Congregants laugh] But it is our life's work. It is our life's journey. And it is the spiritual challenge that this song is calling us to: Could you be loved and be loved?

Four things to remember that it's calling us to. It's calling us to wholeness. To say: open your heart to the flow of love. To be a good receiver and a good giver of love. Because that's how we experience the wholeness and fullness of love.

The second: authenticity. Be true to who you are. Live yourself authentically, even if people don't like you. Because it is the greatest way that we can experience the fullness of life. To be in full integrity with our spirit and who we came to be.

And finally: resilience. The importance of our inner spiritual strength. To know when to hold on. To want to keep enduring. And the same strength of knowing when to let go; when to make peace; and when to forgive the past.

And finally: action. Say something. Take some action. And bring love alive in yourself and in your relationships.

Wholeness, authenticity, resilience and action: those are the four messages and life lessons from the song, *“Could You Be Loved”*?

God bless you all.