

GOD IS GREATER

Week #5 of a "Gratitude" Series

November 16, 2022

Rev. Richard Rogers

I want to talk about God. What a concept! He wants to talk about God! Huh! [Congregation laughs] Who would have thought, Mo?

I want to talk about four relationships. And I want to use human relationships as kind of a metaphor for our relationship with God. And I'm going to share four different kind of human relationships, and I want you to see which one kind of matches your relationship with God the best.

So the first relationship is like a family member that you don't see very often. Maybe like an aunt or an uncle; a cousin; someone who lives on the other side of the country. Right? You don't see them very often. You like them; you always think about calling them or you think about connecting with them, and then a year gets by; two years get by. Maybe you send them a postcard or a Christmas card. And you love 'em! You like 'em! You enjoy 'em! But it's a distant, distant relationship.

The next one is maybe a neighborhood friend. A neighborhood friend that you wave to them when you see them driving in and out of the neighborhood. Or maybe you've been to their house for a barbecue. You like them; they're fun! You enjoy being with them. But you know if there was an emergency or a need in your life for family, you'd never call them. Right? You're just kind of ... You're "waving friends." Do you have waving friends? You know, people you wave at going in and out of the neighborhood. And that's really the whole sum total of the relationship. You like 'em; they're fun and they're nice. But you just wave at 'em as you're going in and out of your life. And you don't expect too much; in fact, you don't expect anything at all. You've just kept the relationship, and you see them. And, "*You know, we really should get together more often,*" but you know it's not going to happen. Right?

The third one is someone you work with. Who maybe you might socialize with, and maybe you've gone out to dinner with them maybe once. Or maybe you've done a couple of work projects. And maybe you've revealed some personal stuff about yourself, but it's a work relationship. So you don't get too personal. They don't know too much about you. Maybe if the kids are really acting up you might say, "*Oh, that Joey; he's a piece of work!*" And they know something about you, but it's a work relationship, so it only goes so deep. But you know 'em; you like 'em. And you know, but there's limits.

And then there's the best friend status. And the best friend status is: you love them and they love you. And they know that you can be kind of a piece of work from time to time, and they just love you anyway. It's that best friend status where you know that you know that you can call them about anything, and they would be there. And in fact, if you pick up the phone and they can hear something's going on in your voice, you don't even have to ask; they're on their way. Right? That's the best friend status, where there's so much love; there's much commitment; there's so much time. They know you; you know them. And this is best friend status.

So when you look at your relationship with God, are you kind of like distant cousins? That see each other maybe at a funeral or at a wedding every 20, 15 years or so? Are you like neighbors that wave as you go through the neighborhood? Are you like, maybe somebody you work with? Maybe God's been there when you needed him, but it wasn't really an active relationship; it was more like a work project. Or is God, for you, your best friend that you share everything with? That you know that you know that you know if you needed something that God would move heaven and earth for you? That it's a relationship that you count on; that you feel God's love for you; you feel that connection; that you feel that presence

in your life. That it's an active presence that means something to you; that's important to you; that you rely on.

Because today I want to talk about our relationship with God. And there's two things that I really want to focus on: intimacy and activity. Because there's something about having a friend that knows you, that really knows you. That knows you on your ups and downs; that knows when you've been on top of the world and when you were so low you couldn't drag yourself from underneath the bottom of a whatever ... Right?

And there's something about activity. Like, the people that are the closest to us: we want to hang with them. We want them to be a part of our life. We want them to be part of the things that are important to us: to our activities; to our daily life.

And today I want you to really look at: where is God fitting in? Because I actually believe that God is greater. I believe that God is greater than anything that's going on in our life; anything that's going on in the world. But that each and every one of us ... That the activity of God has to come through us. Like, that's significant.

Because some of us have prayed for a situation, and we want the miracle to kind of land in our lap. Or we want it to show up in our driveway. Or we want it just to show up. Like we just pray to God and have it just kind of plop in our lap. But for most of us, we really know at some deep profound level that if our life is going to change, it's got to change through us. That we are instruments for the Divine. We are channels for God. We are part of the process.

Every month at Silent Unity -- which is Unity's 24-hours-a-day prayer ministry back in Unity Village in Missouri -- there's a monthly prayer service they do. And there's a line in it almost at the very beginning of this prayer service each month that says, "*It's not I but the Father within that does the work.*" And I think that that's fundamentally important when we come to truly understand that God is greater: that God is greater through us.

And that many of us were taught to pray to a God "out there," and that God "out there" was just going to drop good stuff into our life. But the way that it seems to work -- the way that it truly works -- is that God opens us a space within us and that activity of God moves through us. And that doesn't happen outside of us; it happens through us; as us. And this is a profound step when we move our ego out of the way so that God can use us in greater and greater ways to heal; to bless. And that we actually allow the glory of God to move through us to do that which we could not do on our own.

Because when we think that "*I can do it,*" oftentimes we're responding to life from our ego. "*I can do this; I can fix this; I can heal this; I can change this.*" But there's things in our life that we know that our ego can't do. And that's when we have to be willing -- hopefully -- to move our ego out of the way and say, "*It's not I, but the Father within. It's not me, but the activity of God. It's not me, but Grace; it's the Divine moving through me that begins to make everything happen.*" And that's how we heal and prosper and transform our life and our world.

We read in Scripture, "*With God, all things are possible.*" But that's through me! Right? To really activate the power of God in our life, it's not a power outside of us, but it's a power in us that moves through us to do that which we cannot do on our own. God is greater than anything in the world, but it has to happen through us.

We can't remove ourselves from the miracle. We can't remove ourselves from the process. We have to be the channel; we have to be the instruments; we have to be the hands and the feet to allow the glory of God to be made manifest in our life.

And sometimes we don't want it to be that way. We just want Big Daddy God to fix it. But the Spirit of God has to move through us.

Reading from John 14, when Jesus said, *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells within me does his work."*

Like, Jesus was really clear that his job was to open; to be a channel for the glory of God. His job was to show up every day; to suit up, to dress up, to get out of bed and to do the will and the work of God. That's our job!

But our job is not just to show up. Our job is to show up with the mindset that God -- through me -- can make all things happen. That over and over again, when we show up to life, we have to show up from the place, *"With God, all things are possible"* ... if I'm willing to get my ego out of my way to be an instrument for something greater.

Over and over again, it's our opportunity to really know that we are instruments for the Divine. For the holy. For the sacred. For that which is greater.

John 5 we read: *"But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working still, and I am working.'" And this is why the Jews sought -- and this is also in John 18; John 5 and John 18 ... This is why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but he also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.*

See, that's not what Jesus was saying! What he's saying is that the Father is still working and I am working. He understood that he had a role in this; he had a part in this. He had to show up; he had to do his part. But that the greater activity of God was the part that moved through him; that worked through him; that did the miracles through him.

In John 14 he said, *"You heard me say, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' And if you love me, you will also rejoice, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I."*

I want you to hear that! Like, this is Jesus acknowledging that God is greater than him. But that he was willing to be an instrument for that greater activity of God and to use that power to do the amazing.

That there are two aspects of any relationship: there's God and then there's you. There's your friend and then there's you. And we have to be open and receptive to this divine activity that wants to use us. And the more we can put our ego aside, and not claim ownership of it, the more powerful it is.

Because if you walk around saying, *"Look! I healed this person and I healed this person. And look at the miracle I did over there! Check this out; watch this!"* Right? It's really hard not to be pretty self-absorbed. But if every day we realize that we are channels for the Divine -- that every day our job is to get our personality out of the way and allow the Divine to move through us -- over and over again, life gets better!

But it doesn't happen without you! You cannot remove yourself from the process of God being made manifest, because you are God's hands; you are God's feet; you are God's activity here and now. Whatever problem we see in the world -- poverty, homelessness, racism, sickness, death, hatred -- those problems are not going to be changed until we are open to being the activity of God in the world! Nothing changes in the world until we are willing to be instruments for the transformation! We have to show up!

God is greater than anything in the world, but we have to show up to be instruments for that divine activity, or nothing will ever change. Every problem; every situation; every condition in the world, God

is greater than that. But it only changes when we are willing to be instruments of that greater activity; of that divine activity; of that holy activity.

You know, one of my favorite things that Jesus did was: he sent out his disciples out into the countryside. And he sent them out two by two. And I believe that was a fundamental step in their own spiritual development. Because for three years, they were watching Jesus be amazing. Right? And for three years, they watched him do all this stuff.

And it would really be easy to believe that, "He could do it, but I can't do it!" Like, the Spirit of God is bigger in him; or greater in him; or different in him. But what Jesus did was: he sent the 12 out in the countryside and he said, "*Go do the works that I do.*"

And he sent them out two by two. Why did he do that? Because he knew that they were going to freak out. And again, that's a spiritual term. [Congregation laughs] Right? But he knew that they were going to freak out. You can't be called out by Jesus, who said, "*Go out in the countryside and do everything I'm doing. Good luck; God bless you.*" Right? And there were going to be situations and people and conditions that they were like, "*I can't do that! Like, no; it's not going to work! The Spirit of God in me isn't big enough for that, or it's not great enough for that. It's not going to work!*"

But he sent them out two by two so they always had somebody's hand to hold on to. So when they were having their moment, one of them could turn to the other one and say, "*Okay, so I know I can't do it, but maybe together we can.*"

And then, when the 12 back and some of them had great stories and some had not-so-great stories, and some of them had healed things and some of them didn't. They had their whole thing. Once he got them all on the same page, then he sent out 72 "regular Joes and Janes." And again, he sent them out two by two and said, "*Go out and do the work that I'm doing.*" And they trotted out. They didn't take anything; they didn't have any ATM cards or anything. He sent them out to the countryside and just said, "*Go do this work.*" And they just went!

And I want you to see how spiritually important that was. Because not only did they believe in Jesus, and they believed in activity of God at work in his life, but they had to believe it in themselves! That that same Spirit -- that same power of God -- was moving through them!

And sometimes it's easier to believe that God is going to use somebody else than it is to believe that God's is going to use us. Sometimes it's easier to say, "*Well, they've got a special relationship*" or "*They have a special divine connection*" or "*God's just big in them.*" But what changes us -- what changes everything -- is when we are the ones that are willing to go forth and say, "*That same Spirit of God is in me, and if God wants me to do it, I will surrender my ego and I will be a channel for the Divine.*" Because that takes courage. That takes real faith. That takes opportunity to open a bigger space for the activity of God.

In the Hebrew writings of the Old Testament, there's the story of Joseph. And Joseph was the favorite of his father, Jacob. And his brothers didn't really like that so much. And Joseph got a special coat, and he got a special outfit. And his brothers got jealous and they got petty and small.

So one time he sent Joseph into the field to take food to his brothers, and his brothers had had enough. Their jealousy, their pettiness got the best of them, and so they threw him in a well. They sold him to the Egyptians as a slave. And they got animal blood, poured it on the coat, and told their father that he'd been killed by a wild animal.

And Joseph then went to Egypt and he was sold to an Egyptian. And when he was in captivity, he had a dream about seven years of abundance and seven years of famine. And Joseph interpreted the dream,

and they put Joseph in front of the House of Egypt to take care of the Pharaoh's house. And when the great famine came upon, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to hopefully get food. And Joseph made sure that they got food.

And there was this whole story. There was this whole experience where God used Joseph for something special. Because he was willing to be used! And there was a part of Joseph that absolutely could have felt like a victim. Because I want you to see is that sometimes in the places where we feel the most like a victim is the place where God wants to use us. Like, it's the place where we feel taken advantage is the place where God wants to use us the most!

And in Genesis 5, it says *"Joseph's brothers all came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are now your servants.; But Joseph said to them, 'Fear not, for I am in the place where God has placed me. As for you, you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, to bring about that people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not be afraid; I will provide for you and for your little ones.' Thus he assured them and comforted them."*

Joseph was a divine messenger; he was in a divine process. But he had to show up! And over and over again, he had to be willing to be the hands; to be the feet; to be the expression of God.

So here are five things I want us to look at this week.

The first one is: I believe **the place where God is calling you to do your greatest work is the place where you can feel like a victim, or is in that situation that looks like it's not right; it's not fair.** *"If I give to them, I'm being a sucker or I'm doing too much."* I want you to see that oftentimes the place where God most wants you to serve, your humanity doesn't want to do it. *"No! I'll give to anybody, but my own family is out! Like, I'll give to all of you folks, but no!"* Right? Or whatever it is, right? We get ourselves in that place where we just feel justified in having a victim mindset and really living from that victim place.

So the first thing we have to look at to really be the hands and activity of God expressing is: Where am I holding my victim mindset? And would I be willing to let go of that? Where do I feel like it's not right or they shouldn't ask of me? Am I willing to let go of that?

And then two: Can I **recognize that all of life is a spiritual process?** So that whatever I am -- whatever is going on in my life -- is exactly where I'm supposed to be to be an instrument of God. That literally wherever I am is exactly where I'm supposed to be to be an instrument of God. It's not supposed to be better; it's not supposed to be different it's not supposed to happen next week. Wherever I am, that is exactly where I'm supposed to be an instrument of God. It is always a spiritual process. No matter where you are, that's the place where God wants you to show up in a divinely blessed way.

Three: Never forget to ask for help. No matter how bad the situation looks -- no matter how scary; how overwhelming; how crazy; how chaotic it looks -- never forget to ask God for help. The moment that you ask God for help, the fullness of God comes to your assistance. But because we have free will, we have to ask. We have to ask for help.

One of my favorite lines is in the Garden, when Jesus' disciples wanted to come to his aid. Peter wanted to pull out his sword and take them out. And Jesus says to his disciples, *"Could I not call forth legions of angels that would come to my aid?"*

Never forget to ask God for help. In the darkest, craziest moments where you're sure everything is going to fall apart, have the courage right there to ask God for help. For healings; for relationship; for prosperity. Ask God for help! Like, you're not supposed to do it on your own! You're the activity of God expressing; you're supposed to ask for help. It was never intended to be you all alone! Ask for help! No matter how it looks to you; ask for help! Allow the fullness of God to be at work in your life; ask for help!

And four: over and over again, **acknowledge that you are an instrument for something greater.** That you're not here for your own; you are here for the activity of God. Acknowledge over and over again, *"Thank you, God, that I'm an instrument for your good. Thank you, God, that I am a channel for your good."* Acknowledge that you are an instrument for something greater.

And five: as we're celebrating this season of gratitude: Thank you, God. When you are blessed; when you see the miracle; when you have the transformation; when it works, **acknowledge God as your Source.** Acknowledge when you ask for help, and the help comes. When a transformation, when a healing, when a miracle happens, give thanks for it, because it will strengthen your faith.

Okay, you ready? I want you to pick one situation in your life. I don't care what it is! It can be a family thing; it can be a financial thing; it can be a work thing. I want you to pick one thing in your life where you'd be willing to show up in a greater ways an instrument for God. Not to bedazzle friends with how spiritual you are. You know, not to say, *"Yeah, I've been working on my prayer life."* [Tosses head; congregation laughs] *"Check what I'm about to do out."* Right? That's not it!

I want you to pick one area in your life and say, *"God, use me. Use me right here. Use me in this situation. Use me in this moment. Use me in this condition. Use me! And I need help, because I don't know how to do it; I don't know how to fix it; I don't know how to heal it; I don't know how to transform it. But use me right here, and I will do whatever you want to do through me."* And then give thanks and watch as God uses you. And again and again and again, God will use you. Because you're becoming a greater and greater instrument of the Divine.

We are here for God. We're not here just to glorify our own ego! We're here to be channels for the Divine. But we actually have to engage the process. God never requires this; it's only through our own spiritual maturity that we say yes to the process.

"Holy Spirit, use me! Holy Spirit, do amazing things through me -- not for my ego, but so the glory of God will be made manifest."

Will you pray with me?

I want you to take a deep breath. And I want you to feel the glory of God that's right here. And I promise you tonight that God has an area in your life where you are being called to be a greater instrument. Where you are being called to manifest; to express; to heal; to transform in a greater way. But you get to decide. You get to decide tonight whether you want to be used or whether you want to be a part of the divine process. Or if you're willing to be of assistance in a greater and greater way. So God is greater than anything in the world, but God needs you to transform life and to make it holy again. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

Copyright 2022 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Rogers