

THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Week #2 of a series on "Unity's Foundational Teachings"

Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024

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Do you ever get lost in the details of your life? Tonight I want us to look at the full scope of who you are. When we look at the full scope of your life, do you see a theme? Sometimes you get so involved in all the details of our life that we sometimes miss the bigger picture -- the bigger theme -- that we're living in and through. But when we can learn to take a step back, we can see ... like, when you look at your life, what has been the theme over and over again that your soul has been embracing in this life experience?

Some of us have been about being blessed. Some of us have been about... overcoming obstacles. Some of us have been about exploring relationships. Some of us have been about mastering money or experiencing greater joy or health or peace. Maybe the theme of your life has been an exploration of love and its many facets.

So life is a journey. But being able to hold both the details and the bigger themes really makes life more interesting. That sometimes we're so involved in just getting through the next problem or the next challenge or the next situation that we never really lift our head up enough to say, *"Like, I've been here before. I've done this before. I noticed that I'm back to where I've been once or twice before. And I'm just curious why my soul keeps picking this experience. What am I missing here?"*

Because if you miss it, it's okay. You'll just circle back around. [Congregants laugh] Right? If you didn't get all the lessons from number one, you'll get a number two. Yay!!! Right?

And so what I want us to look at tonight is both the big picture and the little details. Last week we looked at the big picture of God, but also we brought it down to your breath, which is the little picture. So we experienced God in the breath, and yet we experienced the fullness of God in the breath.

So what I want you to think about doing is doing a life chart; a life review. And if you were to look at your whole life, what themes keep popping up over and over and over again? Like, you were going to do a life chart on love and what you've learned from love, you might start with your family. What did you learn from your family growing up as a child? What did you learn about love from your father, your mother, your brothers, your sisters? What did you learn from your first relationship? What did you learn from your marriage? What did you learn from your children? Or what did you learn from family and friends? And to really look at how you have experienced love over the course of your life? And really what has your soul experienced so that you don't miss it!

Because if we don't really integrate the lessons -- the blessings -- we have to repeat them over and over again. And that's really a *"Thank you, God!"* Because we have to keep integrating life until we really own it as part of who we are.

So what's the big picture when you look at your life? And what do you think the big picture is for the collective of us? For all of us? What do you think we're all here to experience during this time? Why did God create us?

Genesis 1 .26 we read, then God said, *"Let us make man in our image and after our likeness."* You know it's kind of a heady statement. Let us make man in our image and in our likeness.

And I want you to see that for many years, centuries, decades, millenniums even, we've kind of returned the favor. You know, we've kind of made God in our image. And the God that most of us grew up with was a very human God. Many of us were taught that God looked just like us, was up in the clouds somewhere and acted just like us and got angry just like us. And, you know, needed an anger

management class just like us. [Congregants laugh] Right? So we, we had a very, human God because we were feeling very human.

But as we awaken spiritually, I believe that we are in the process of really activating our spiritual -- or our divine self, if you will. And I want you to see that as a theme for all of humanity is how we are awakening our divine self. How we are becoming the realization of being made in the image and likeness of God.

"I am here to become more God-like."

Will you say that with me? [With congregation:] *"I am here to become more God-like."*

One more time, like we actually mean it! [With congregation:] *"I am here to be more God-like."*

"I am here to express my divine nature."

Together: [with congregation] *"I am here to express my divine nature."*

Now, the question is: Do you believe that? Four of us, yay! Here we go. [Congregants laugh] Four of us; four committed souls. That's fabulous, right?

So this isn't a process about growing into something that's new, but discovering what has always been there. That we are discovering this divine nature within us. And in this process of discovery, we are awakening to deeper and deeper levels of who we are.

When we look at Scripture, there's been these roadmaps -- these signs -- that are pointing to something more and more important. Psalms 82:6 said, *"Have I said, ye are gods; all of you are children of the Most High."* Now, in Psalms 82, "gods" is a lowercase "g." And I want to make sure you hear that. What they're saying is not capital "G"; we are not saying that *"I am God."* We are saying that we are -- ye are -- gods. Lower case g. That we have all the qualities and attributes of the divine. That you have within you everything that God is. That you are the living, moving expressions of the Divine.

And it was so important to Jesus that he amplified that statement in John 10:34. Jesus answered them, saying, *"Is it not written in your law? I said ye are gods."* Like, that was so important to him that he amplified that text so that we could hear it. So that we would hear it not only in the Old Testament and the Hebrew Scripture, but that he brought it into the New Testament so that we could hear it for ourselves.

Because for many of us, that is way too much! It is so much easier to believe that we are broken and a sinner than to believe that we are created in the image and likeness of God. It is so much easier to believe what is wrong with you than what is right with you.

And I told you this year we were going to look at some of Unity's fundamental teachings. And I began with our understanding of God last week. And this week I want to talk about who you are, and how much of you can you truly hold? Can you hold a portion of you? Or can you hold the sum total that God created you -- in God's image and in God's likeness?

Because that's no small thing! You know, it's easier to believe that we're somewhere in between. Like, I'm not as bad as I used to be, right? But I'm not really that much. I'm somewhere here. But the reality is that you were given a full dose! You were given the full thing.

Paul said it this way: *"Christ in you, your hope of glory."* That we were created in the image and likeness of God! And we're being asked by God to realize that; to allow it. The entire creation is to here to assist us in the process of becoming more God-like.

And what if everything in your life -- every obstacle, every challenge, every situation, every relationship - was actually here to awaken your God-like nature? That everything is here to move you from a broken image of yourself to seeing yourself the way that God sees you: whole and complete and lacking in nothing?

Like, this is hard! Because we always think, *"Well, I can't really be that much."* *"Oh, Richard, that's kind of egotistical. I'm just gonna be right here, as kind of this happy, broken little guy. And that'll be enough for me."*

But what if the truth is that you have a divine nature? That you were created to express the infiniteness of God? And that every human situation and activity is here to call you to a higher level of being. What if every problem and challenge is here to launch you into a higher level of consciousness so that you can establish in your mind and your heart the full realization that "ye are divine"?! Holy, sacred expressions of God!

"Richard, just tune it down a little bit." Right? *"Just don't go that big."* Because it's a little scary to be that much. Like, when you're given an infinite potential, it's like, *"It's kind of hard to live into. I'm just gonna be a sluggo over here and just hope it all works out."*

But what if you were more? What if, literally, you were infinitely more than that and everything in life is trying to wake you up? Could you be that much? Could you believe that much about yourself and the people around you? Could you hold the Divine within your own mind and heart and soul to give expression to all that God is within you?

This is no small thing. It's no small work. It's no small mission to say, *"Look, you're going to come into a world where most people have no idea of this. Most people don't believe it. Most people would riot if you actually say it out loud."* And you're here to know the truth and allow that truth to set not only you free, but everyone around you free! That you are here to live and demonstrate the glory of God, not as some strange vision, but as the fullness that Jesus lived.

Matthew 6: *"Therefore, do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we drink? For even the Gentiles seek these things."* [Pats his chest and mouths, *"That's us."* Congregants laugh] *"And your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek ye first his kingdom and its righteousness and all these things will be yours, as well. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow. For tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let today's own troubles be sufficient for today."*

So what's important about this? I believe that what's important about this is: There's really three levels of life. And the first level of life is when we're living life from our human point of view and we're just trying to solve our problems in the best way we know how. And we all know this one: where we're human beings having human problems that we're trying to just get through today so that we can get into tomorrow. And then tomorrow there's a whole another set of problems, and we're doing the very best we can. We're peddling as fast as we can to get through one problem after another. It's the first level of life.

Second level of life is when we discover spiritual principles. And we begin to use spiritual principles. So we sometimes use our human tools, and sometimes we use our spiritual tools. But we're still just trying to solve the problems of life. But now we're using spiritual tools to solve the problems of life. And so we just go from problem to problem; we reach into our spiritual toolbox. And sometimes this toolbox works, and sometimes this toolbox works. But we're still just at the level where we're just trying to solve problems so that we can get through today and get into tomorrow.

Third level of life is when the purpose of life is no longer just to solve the problems and we're not using spiritual principles to solve problems, we are actually living to awaken. And the moment we move from

just solving problems to living to awaken, everything begins to change ... because the purpose of solving problems isn't just to get into tomorrow; it's to reveal the glory of God that we were created to express!

And sometimes we get so used to thinking that we're solving problems with spiritual principles that that's all there is. And that's not all there is! That we are literally here to use every situation, every challenge, every problem as a launching point into the glory of God. To allow ourselves to reveal who we are to ourselves. To be living, moving, expressions of the Divine.

When we "seek ye first the kingdom and it's righteousness," then all the stuff that we're going through actually takes on meaning. It's like, "Why do I have problems?" To awaken the glory of God within you! It's not to punish you; it's not because you did something wrong. It's not because God doesn't like you. No, that's not it! Everything in life is here to awaken the divine within you. To make you more God-like. And every time you overcome a challenge or a situation or a need or a problem, the idea is to allow everything to reveal this divine nature -- this God-like nature.

The Peace Program. Anybody remember the Peace Program? Peace program, if you don't know. She was a 70s-era woman who gave up her life, put on, like, a little apron that said "Peace Program" on it. She had one toothbrush, and she began to walk the country. And the only time she would eat or have a place to sleep, other than just outside, was because of the generosity of others. And she believed that her purpose was to be a stand for peace. And she believed that, in helping people get to know her, was learning to overcome our fear of strangers.

And so she walked this country, I don't know how many times: from end to end to end to end, back and forth. And she would just walk the roads and people would take care of her. This is what she had to say: "My appointed work is to awaken the divine nature that is within."

See, what I want you to see: That's all of our purpose! We are here to awaken to our divine nature within. We are here to grow and become more and more God-like every day, every week, with every problem, with every challenge. That everything that is in your life right now is designed to awaken you to the glory of God. And that glory of God is not outside of you; it's trying to be revealed through you. you, as you. That you're it!

Joseph Campbell said, "When we quit thinking primarily about ourselves and our own self-preservation, we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness."

M. Scott Peck: "The great awareness comes slowly, piece by piece. The path of spiritual growth is a path of lifelong learning. The experience of spiritual power is basically a joyous one."

Thich Nhat Hanh said, "Enlightenment, joy, peace can never be given to you by another. That is an inside job."

Charles Fillmore, the co-founder of Unity, said this. And this was in a sermon that he gave September 1913:

"The natural man perceiveth not the things of the spirit. Man is a progressive being. He was born as an idea in God. That idea must be brought through, which is done through the natural until it backs into the spiritual. So when Paul said, 'First, that which is the natural, then which is the spiritual.'

"Now we find the human race today, in these two great phases of consciousness, like students in school. The first -- or the primary -- grade is the natural man. He sees the phenomenal world as real, looks upon the natural, looks upon the natural. as a body and as parts and a personality. But as he comes into his spiritual nature, a change takes place. He finds that these outer appearances are but representations that there is a deeper, wider, higher man -- the spiritual man -- and that all the religious literature is written from these two viewpoints. First is the natural man. And we can read

that historically. But there is an inner, spiritual phase -- the esoteric, the hidden -- that is the spiritual man in us all."

And I want you just to see: Where do you see yourself in this process? Are you dabbling in spiritual principles and wanting to understand them more? And there's nothing wrong with that, right? Or have you made the step of, *"No; I'm not here just to learn spiritual principles. I want to use spiritual principles to awaken my divine self. To see myself from that point of view. I want to see myself the way God sees me."*

So what is that process? The first is ... The first way is when we make a commitment -- a soul commitment, a heart commitment, a mind commitment. **When we make a commitment that awakening our God nature is the most important thing.** When we get up every day and realize that awakening our God nature is actually more important than all the details and all the errands and all the stuff and all the problems and all the challenges. That awakening our God nature is our highest priority.

And the moment we make that commitment, it actually moves us to a different level of life. That we're actually now functioning from a spiritual point of view that is solely a spiritual point of view. So when we make that commitment to truly awaken our God-ness, everything in our life takes on a different meaning. It's crazy how everything begins to change. Slowly, surely in the beginning, but it becomes faster and faster. So the first thing is: Are you willing to make a commitment to awaken to your divine self?

Two: **You've got to ask for help.** There's so much divine assistance, but it cannot be called forth until you ask for help. One of the premises of the universe is that we all have free will. So you have a God-given right to do it completely on your own. You have a God-given right to be as miserable as you need to be. [Congregants laugh] Right?

But the moment you make this commitment to revealing your true spiritual nature, the opportunity is to ask for help. Jesus said at one point, *"Could I not call forth legions of angels that would come to me?" my assistance?"* And I want you to think about the amazing amount of spiritual support that is available to you when awakening your spirit is your most important thing. That there is so much help for you, it's almost overwhelming! That no matter what you're going through: *"God, I need help right here!"* Whether it's in your finances; whether it's with your health; whether it's in a relationship: *"God, I need help right here!"* Like, you don't have to take one step -- you don't have to take one breath -- without asking for help. That the assistance that God can provide for you is amazing! But you have to ask for it.

Third. This is our favorite. **We have to forgive everybody for everything.** Like, the easiest, the quickest way to accelerate your spiritual development is forgive everyone for everything, including yourself. Forgive yourself. Yes! Yes! It was, *"Wow; I could have had a V-8."* [Congregants laugh] Yes! Forgive everyone for everything, including yourself.

Four: **Wherever you are is exactly in the right place.** I want you to hear that! Wherever you are, you are in exactly the right place. Because what I want you to see is that your mind sometimes tells you life should be different. Anybody? Have you ever think, *"No, it shouldn't ... This is not my life."* [Congregants laugh] Right? *"My life should look like that."* Right?

But the reality is: exactly the way your life is is your launching point. Now, could it look better? Yes! But you have to be right where you are to get to where you want to go. And exactly the way it is right now is your point of launching into this next level of life.

"Thank you, God, for my life exactly the way it is."

Together: [with congregants] *"Thank you, God, for my life exactly the way it is."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"Thank you, God, for my life exactly the way it is."*

Now, are you ready for your homework? Last week's homework was so easy; I just had you breathe for 10 minutes. You all were radically successful in that, whether you did it consciously or not. [Congregants laugh] Right? But today – this week -- I want it to be conscious.

See, we're all awakening to the Divine, but most of us are doing it unconsciously. Most of us are growing spiritually, but unconsciously. What I want this to be for us is that you're doing it consciously. That you actually are aware that you know that you know that everything that is in front of you -- everything that's going on in your life -- is here as a launching point to reveal your God-ness, your divine nature, the Holy of Holies within you.

See, so we're all going to do this, but most of the world is doing it asleep at the wheel. So they're actually making progress, but they don't even realize they're making progress. But we're going to wake up! And we're going say every day, *"Holy Spirit, awaken my soul. Awaken my God-like nature. Awaken my divine self."*

And then, you know, the moment you make that commitment that everything in your life is there by divine appointment to help you awaken, whether you like it or not, whether you ask for it or not. It's there only because your soul needed it as a launching point. And as you keep looking at the things in your life -- not from the old mindset that they're here to take you out -- but they're here to lift you higher. And then life begins to change. Deeply, profoundly change. And we stop being in resistance. We stop living in resistance to the flow, and we start going with the flow. And we begin to feel the grace and the ease of trusting God and going with the Divine plan. And it actually gets easier; maybe easier than it's ever been before.

So tonight, would you be willing to commit to awakening to your divine nature? To actually doing it now, not sometime, but now? And to feel that spiritual process, to sense it, to know it, to see it unfolding within you?

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul, to the activity of God that is right here right now. That we are in this divine journey, this divine process, this process of awakening. And for years and years, we did it unconsciously. And then we began to notice one thing after another, and we realized that life just wasn't about solving problems. And then we started learning spiritual principles, and we began to practice spiritual principles. And life got better! And then we realized that it wasn't just about solving problems at all, but the full purpose of life was to awaken to who we truly have always been ... but to do it consciously. To see the process unfolding through us. So in the name and through the power of the living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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