

LIVING IN THE NOW

Wednesday, July 24, 2024

Rev. Richard Rogers

What if I could help you eliminate 90% of the drama and worry and upset in your life? Would you be interested in that? [Congregants: "Yes!"] Well, somebody wants 100%; now you're just being a little greedy. [Congregants laugh]

Okay. So what we're going to talk about tonight is that activity of moving out of the past, and out of the future, and just living in this moment: in the now.

Now, you think, "Well, that sounds just easy! I just don't have to figure about the past anymore. I just let it go, the past. I don't focus on the future. I just move fully into this moment. And if I move fully into this moment, somehow it's all supposed to work out." Right?

Now, how many of you does that profoundly scare? If you're not manipulating the future, it's not going to work out? Right? For most of us, we have this fear: if we just start getting into the moment and we bring all of our focus and all of our attention right here, right now ... you know, everything's going to kind of just blow up! Because we're so busy focusing on what's going to happen next or what happened before (so it doesn't happen again). And we kind of keep our eye on the past and we're always dabbling in the future: thinking, worrying about, fearing what could possibly happen in the future.

And what begins to happen is all of our energy gets so spread out that we miss the miracle of this moment.

And what if your only job was vastly easier than you were ever led to believe? What if your only real spiritual job is to be in the moment -- fully present in the moment -- and enjoy the blessings of that moment? Could you just begin to believe, at some level, that if you fully enjoyed the moment you're in, the next moment would also come with a blessing. And then the next moment, and the next moment, and the next moment. And it would just be one blessing after another! And you wouldn't even have to be involved in manipulating or controlling or even creating it. You would just get to experience one holy moment after another holy moment.

One of the things that I've always loved -- and I've talked a lot about it -- is that, when the Israelites were moving from bondage ... and I want you to hear this as a metaphor for your life! When the Israelites were moving from bondage in Egypt, through the wilderness into the Promised Land, for them to get into the Promised Land, every day God would drop manna so that they would survive for that day.

Now, I want you to see this as a metaphor for your life. Like, the way that we get into the Promised Land is not worrying about the Promised Land. The way that we get into the Promised Land is not even to try to create the Promised Land. The Promised Land is already fully created! And the way that the Israelites got prepared for the Promised Land is: every day the manna would drop for that day and that day, alone.

And they had to get so good at living just in one day at a time. And the idea was that they couldn't step into the Promised Land until they got just so clear that, every day, the good in that day would be sufficient for that day. They didn't worry about if they ever got to the Promised Land; they didn't have to worry about tomorrow. And, in fact, on the Sabbath, two days of manna would fall so they didn't even have to work on the Sabbath. And the whole idea was that their focus had to be really brought in to one day.

And I want you to see this from your spiritual life: from your point of view. How much of your time and energy is mentally focused on some time out in the future: worrying, fretting, planning, controlling,

manipulating, trying to make sure that your future has everything that you want in it? And how much time of your energy is spent on the past: thinking about it, regretting it, upset about it, not forgiving it? And how much of that time -- when you look at how much of your time is spent but in the future and how much your time is in the past -- how much of your energy is spent in this moment?

And what if you just trusted that right now is all you need to be focused on?

You know, we've been talking the last couple months that there's really three ways that most people process life. The first way that people process life is that they do it mentally. And they think about it, and they have beliefs and constructs and ideas. And they process life through their mental dimension, and they think about it. And they're really smart and they organize it mentally. And they have all these ideas and beliefs and understanding how life works. And everything kind of gets filtered through that mental construct.

The second group are people that everything in life is filtered through their emotions: how it feels to be them. And everything is either emotional -- you know, it's either a good feeling, a bad feeling. But most people, in one way or another, have these feelings.

And the third group is people that physically feel life.

And you think, *"Well, the mental people are more spiritual."* Because that's what mental people believe: that they're thinking about God and they're constructing the great ideas about God. And they know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, because they've thought about it. And they know the seven levels of heaven. And they know all the spiritual principles and they can recite them. And they're smart like that.

And the people that feel God; you know, like, they feel the presence of God. And the people that are physical are really just having an experience. And we think of them as being less spiritual, because they're just having their experience.

And what I want you to see, tonight: What if the whole purpose of life is to have an experience? What if your soul decided to come into three-dimensional form just to have an experience? Not to think about an experience; not to plan for an experience; not even to wish for an experience. What if the reason your soul came into three-dimensional form was to have an experience? Not to have feelings about the experience, but to have the experience.

And could you trust that God could give you one great experience after another if you just moved all your attention into the present moment?

And it's so tough for us, because we truly believe that we're safer when we're thinking about life. We're safer when we've got it all planned out and all figured out. And what if -- right here, right now -- you decide to bring all your energy into this moment and just be fully present in this moment?

So how do you do that? I've got some ideas. What a surprise! [Congregants laugh]

First one is: one of the first ways that we move into this moment is when we begin to **NOTICE WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND US**. Have you ever, like, driven all the way home from something and realized, *"I have no idea how I got here?"* Like, we were so unconscious in our driving that we could actually drive from work -- or church or whatever -- and get home and wonder, *"Well, I'm here; I'm okay; my car is still intact."* Right? So, we have this capacity to be very unconscious.

But when we begin to notice our surroundings -- where we are -- and we just kind of breathe into our surroundings, we actually begin to notice, *"Oh, I'm here. I'm sitting in a purple chair. It's purple! It's really purple!"* Right? And then we begin to breathe into that moment. It's amazing what happens when

we just allow ourselves to move into the experience and notice our surroundings. *“Oh, I'm safe. I'm really safe. I'm really safe! I just breathe into this moment, sitting in my purple chair; listening to him go on and on and on incessantly ...”* [Congregants laugh] *“And I'm safe! And I'm having an experience. And I kind of like the experience. It's kind of cool in here. It's not hot; it's fabulous!”*

And then we begin to notice at a deeper level: *“Oh, in this experience that I'm having right now, I actually have everything that I need.”* Like, there's enough oxygen in this room for all of us. Like, in this moment -- if you stay in the moment -- it's the only place that we can truly feel the infiniteness of God. Because in this moment, you have everything that you need. So, we just move into the experience of our surroundings.

Two: We begin to **FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME**. We do one thing at a time. How many of you have loved to be a multi-tasker? I have loved being a multi-tasker! Like, I can be on the phone -- and we're not supposed to! -- and drive and I can do all kinds ... I'm a multi-tasker, right?

The problem is: to do that, I have to -- at some level -- I have to fragment. My awareness has to go for multiple things, and I have to separate at some level ... and I'm not doing any of them fully and completely in the moment. And so, if we want to move fully into the now, we do one thing at a time. We quit trying to juggle multiple tasks and just move completely into the moment and pay our full attention.

And that's why learning a new skill can be so spiritually powerful. Because if we learn a new skill, we actually have to bring our full attention into learning that new skill. We can't just kind of go through it unconsciously. We actually have to be fully present in that moment.

Three: when we actually ... Three is **BEING GRATEFUL FOR WHAT YOU HAVE**. When you bring your full attention into a moment, you actually notice how much you have; how much good is around you; how beautiful the moment is; how powerful the moment is; how special the moment is. That, when we move our focus into this moment, we actually can unleash an enormous amount of gratitude. Because in this moment, you have everything that you need for.

Four: one of the other ways that we are fully moving to the moment is to **ACCEPT THE MOMENT AS IT IS**. Have you ever had the thought: *“It shouldn't be this way?”* Like, *“My neighbor shouldn't be that way; I shouldn't be this way, my spouse shouldn't be this way.”* And the moment we live from that place -- *“It shouldn't be this way”* -- instantly, we are not in the moment. Because the moment is designed to be perfect the way it is.

And so when we show acceptance -- when we move into the moment and accept the moment exactly the way it is, and quit arguing with the moment -- we actually allow the blessings of the moment to reveal themselves.

And you can't be in the thought process of saying, *“It shouldn't be this way!”* and fully receive the miracle in every moment. To fully receive the miracle in every moment, you have to accept the moment exactly the way it is. And when you say to yourself, *“Well, I thought it was going to be different.”* Well, good! *“It shouldn't be this way; it should be this way.”* The moment our mind begins to argue with reality, it creates a disconnect. And what want to do is: we want to move into the moment and accept it fully and receive the blessings -- all the blessings! -- of this moment.

Five: **PRACTICE MINDFUL MEDITATION**. Now, what does practice mindful meditation mean? Mindful meditation is the idea of focusing on your breath, not on your thoughts, and moving your awareness so that all you're really focused on is the breath going in and out. And noticing that, as you focus on your breath over and over again, that it demands -- it focuses -- your mind on the moment and all that can happen in that moment. And that moment opens up by just focusing on your breath.

Six: **SURROUND YOURSELF WITH GOOD PEOPLE**. One of the things that happens when we surround ourselves with good people is that we stop judging. We stop judging ourselves; we stop judging them. We are in the moment. We don't have to worry about defending ourselves or protecting ourselves. When we surround ourselves with good people, we actually allow ourselves to be fully present.

And one of the amazing things that happens when we surround ourselves with good people is that we actually then begin to look at the people around us. We actually see them. We actually listen to them. And in that experience, we feel lifted up. We feel better. We feel blessed.

Eight: Practice ... And this is a variation on the mindfulness meditation ... But **PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING REGULARLY AND OFTEN**. Just breathe. Breathe into this moment. Breathe into this experience. Breathe into your life.

Nine: **TURN OFF TECHNOLOGY**. Have you ever just picked up your phone and realized that you just lost 20-32 hours because you were so involved in the technology in front of you? That, when we when we can get so focused on technology that we actually miss the moment. That we're so focused on whatever's happening on our phone -- or whatever's happening on social media -- that we actually miss the moment. And we're actually unconscious and not in the experience that we're having.

And ten. Ten is: **GET INTO NATURE**. Regular exercise; taking a walk. Nature invites us into the moment, because nature invites us to wake up.

So: you ready for your homework? This week, I want to challenge you. Because for many of us, this is the hardest spiritual practice. Because for many of us, we don't really completely trust life. And to move into the moment means that we actually are going to have to trust that, if we bring all of our focus and all of our energy and all of our attention into this moment, that we're going to be okay.

And so many times, we want to think, *"Well, I've got to plan for tomorrow. I've got to make sure that I'm okay. Well, how am I going to do this? And how am I going to get by? And how's this going to look?"*

That, mentally, we find ourselves pushing life further and further out. But when we move into the moment, we actually experience freedom for the first time. Because, when we move into the moment, literally the drama stops. And our mind gets quiet, and our heart becomes still.

So, I want you to practice something with me. You willing? I want you just to be in the experience of right now. Feel -- how's it feel to wiggle down into your seat? Are you safe? Are you comfortable? Is it cool enough? Is it too hot? Is it too cold? Can you feel the experience that you're having? And what if, over and over again, you allow this moment to move into the next, to move into the next ... and you felt the presence of God as never before?

See, for many of us, there's been this question: Why are we here? Why are we here? And I believe it's for us to have a three-dimensional experience of God: to experience God in form. And if we keep thinking about the future, keep thinking about the past, we actually miss the gift that we were given. In the three-dimensional world -- in this world -- we can actually experience God in form: in the world around us; in the experience that we're having. We can actually move into an experience of the presence of God right where we are.

You know, there's stories in the Old Testament -- and in the New -- where the individual stumbles across a holy place. And when they stumble across this holy place, the Spirit of God says to them in one way or another, *"Take off your shoes, for where you are standing is holy ground."* And there's really ... there's usually some acknowledgement in the Scripture that says, *"You know, I didn't know I was standing on holy ground!"*

And for many of us, we're kind of living our life that way. That we don't realize that every moment is holy ground. It's a holy experience! And so, we kind of move through them unconsciously -- unaware; focusing on the future; focusing on something else -- and we miss these holy moments that are always available to us.

So, what if today you bring all your attention right here? You just bring it all into this moment. And you get every bit of juice out of this moment; you get every bit of good out of this moment. And then this moment will lead to the next moment, and the next moment, and the next moment. And you didn't even plan for that; you didn't even create a "to do" list for that. You were just in the moment, fully present, and God was totally here.

And you experienced that; you didn't miss it! So, when your loved one smiles at you, you actually see them smiling at you! When you hear a child giggle, you actually are present and hear that child giggle! When the sunset is beautiful, you're in the moment, and you actually experience the beauty of that sunset!

The moment we move fully into the moment, we actually begin to live in a greater way.

So your homework this week is: I want you to wiggle down into the moment, and be in the moment so fully that you experience the miracles of God.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That tonight, we don't want to miss it. We don't want to miss one blessing. We don't want to miss one moment. We don't want to be so focused on the future or the past that we miss the miracle of right now.

Let my mind become still, and let my heart become quiet. And let me learn to live with my full focus on right here, right now. In the name and through the power of the living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

Copyright 2024 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Rogers