

A NEW MIND

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I want to talk about transformation, because I believe that we are in a time of great transformation in our world. And sometimes it doesn't look like that. Sometimes it looks like the train is falling off the tracks. And so, I want to talk about how we participate in transformation; how we undergo transformation; how do we live transformation. And what does that even mean to be transformed?

Because so much of the Scripture talks about, *"BE ye transformed."* So much of the Scripture invites us into the transformation process. Metanoia means transformation. It's the whole idea that we're in a process of evolution; of changing; of evolving. But what the heck does that mean?

So, when you look at your life, do you feel like you're moving in a goodly direction -- in a godly direction - in your own personal transformation? Or do you feel like you're moving kind of in a smaller way; in a darker way; in a fearful way? Right? Because when you look at the world today -- or if you look at the news -- it's kind of like, are we moving in a way that's healthy and great? Or are we moving in a way that looks kind of a little scary?

And what I want us to see is that all transformation begins with the individual. Jesus said, *"If I be lifted up, I draw all people unto me."* And it's this idea that, as any one of us is transformed, at some level that transformation allows for a transformation of all of us. So, when you look at your life, do you feel like you're transforming in a goodly manner? And, again, what does that mean?

See, you know, one of the things that I just absolutely believe -- that I think is part of my soul's mission to teach on this planet -- is the idea that the soul either does one of two things: it either expands ... And those of you who've been listening to me for a while, you know that the other choice is to ... [congregants: "Contract."] Contract. And so, is your soul on a regular basis expanding? Are you becoming a greater and greater and greater expression of God? Or are you contracting into fear and darkness and smallness and ugliness and all the other ways that we contract into?

And, for me, that's kind of a moment-by-moment decision. You know, we can ask ourselves that question a hundred times a day: *"In this moment in this experience, am I contracting into this experience, or am I expanding into this experience? Is this experience calling me to be a greater person or greater expression of God? Or am I getting smaller by the minute as long as I stay in this situation?"*



So, part of -- for me -- transformation is allowing ourselves to become more and more of who God created us to be from the beginning of time. To be our most wonderful, expanded, alive version of ourselves.

So a few weeks ago, I posted on Facebook. Yep, let's just throw it up there. I posted on Facebook, and it said, *"Be yourself. Let people see the real, imperfect, flawed, quirky, weird, beautiful, magical person you are."*

And I got some pushback! [Congregants laugh] And I was kind of surprised! *"Pushback for me? You don't push back on me on Facebook!"* [Congregants laugh] Like, I post inspiring things, and people aren't supposed to push back on those! I got pushback!

And one lady said, *"Listen, Richard; I am not imperfect or flawed, and neither are you."*

And I thought for a minute: *"I wonder if her husband thinks that about her."* [Congregants laugh] Right? Because, like, we can all believe that we're perfect just the way we are ... But many times when we think we're perfect, are we talking about our spiritual nature? Or are we talking about our human nature?

And our ego tends to want to make our ego -- our human personality -- the part of us that's perfect. And I kind of think my personality is wonderful. [Congregants laugh] But the idea that my personality is perfect ... you people have been around me! [Congregants laugh] I mean, that's a big stretch for anyone to say that, *"My personality is perfect."* It might be interesting; occasionally it's charming; it can be a little quirky. Right? But the idea of perfect: I don't know. I think that's really reserved for my spiritual nature.

And what I want us to really look at tonight is that I think our job is to hold both.

All right, let's read it again. Let's read it together. And if it offends you, you don't have to read it. But just let's try it, right?

[With congregation:] *"Be yourself. Let people see the real, imperfect, flawed, quirky, weird, beautiful, magical person you are."*

Now, does that offend anyone here? Like, have you made peace with the fact that sometimes you're imperfect? Sometimes you're quirky; sometimes maybe even flawed! Weird; beautiful! And the part that I love the best is magical. Like, I think we have to be able to hold all of that. Like, if we can't hold all of it, like, let's get real! Right?

I know that your spirit is whole and complete and lacking in nothing. I believe that you are created in the image and likeness of God. I believe that you are in a divine expression of God's holiness. But I also think that you're 100% human. And that you're human from time to time is weird, right? [Congregants laugh] That we're quirky and awesome and wonderfully, uniquely both perfect and imperfect in the same moment! And I want us to really get to hold put our arms around that and really look at that.

I have a family member. And when he was younger, the word the family used was, *"He's a rascal."* [Congregants laugh] You know, the kid was good looking; he was smart. But he was always on the edge of getting in trouble. Do you have somebody like that in your family who was always on the edge? Man, he was too smart for his own good. He was too good looking for his own good. He was too much! Like, he was fabulously wonderful, right? And he was always getting himself into trouble.

And I, you know, as a little kid ... man, I loved this kid. I loved this kid! And I still love him. And one of the reasons I love him so much is: he so reminds me of me! Right? [Congregants laugh] And it's like ... [Laughs] You know, I say this, but my college buddies still cannot believe that I'm a minister. [Congregants laugh] And their biggest question is, *"Do they know who you are?"* [Congregants laugh]

And I say, *"Yes; they find that refreshing."* [Congregants laugh and applaud] I don't know if it's true, but that's the story I stick with, right? [Congregants laugh]

And so, what I want us to look at today is: What is your tolerance for your humanity and your celebration of your divinity? How much can you tolerate your imperfections? Because what happens when we can't tolerate our imperfections? We have to go unconscious so we don't see it. Everybody else sees it, but we stop seeing ourselves the way we're actually showing up. And we're unconscious; we're unaware of how we're showing up. So, we still show up that way, but it's a continual surprise to us! Right? And when that's the way we're living we miss the opportunity to fully be blessed.

And then our spiritual nature ... And this is one of the things that I absolutely believe is: you will hear through the course of your life a great deal about spiritual growth. That we actually believe in spiritual growth. There could not be anything that is a greater lie than spiritual growth. Spiritual growth does not exist! It is your ego trying to tell you that it's important.

Because, when you were created -- the moment you were created by God -- you were whole and complete and lacking in nothing. There is no growth in that! You came in spiritually perfect; you will die spiritually perfect.

Now, you may not know that. You may not realize that. You may be unconscious to that. But there is no part of your spirit that is growing. You are immaculate; you are divine; you are expressions of God. Your spirit is absolutely whole and complete and lacking in nothing.

Now, your personality ... [Congregants laugh] That's a work in progress. Your personality is all the ways that you show up through your ego expression, carrying that magnificent spirit. And as we transform, our humanity transforms so that we may be an ever-greater expression of God. That my God self is expressing through my human self over and over and over again. So, as I heal -- as I transform, as I become a greater expression of me -- I don't spiritually grow; I reveal the goodness; the holiness; the divine nature that is within me.

You know, when someone says to me, "*Richard, you know, you can be kind of egotistical.*" [Congregants laugh] My response is, "*Yes! Like, yes; my personality -- my ego -- can be egotistical. Yes!*" Right?

Or someone might say, "*Richard, sometimes you're forgetful.*" Yes! I forget things, right? Or somebody will say, "*Richard, you weren't very nice in that situation.*" Yes! Like, that's all part of the way I show up. I'm a Gem ... Gem ... Gem ... Say it! No, not a gentleman. I'm a Gemini. I hope to be a gentlemen, but I'm a Gemini! And, as a Gemini, if you don't like this personality, stick around for two minutes; I got another one. [Congregants laugh] Right?

And I want you just to see that part of our evolution -- part of the transformation -- is when we quit arguing about our humanity and make peace with it.

You know, one of the goals of my life is not to be cranky to my wife. [Congregants laugh] I love my wife; I love my wife with everything I am. I think she is the most amazing woman on the planet. I love her and it's amazing to me how many times I can get cranky with the person I love the most in all the world. And now, is that my spiritual nature or my human nature? Let's vote for my human nature, right? So, my human nature sometimes gets cranky. I can accept my imperfections, but it's hard for me when I see my behavior negatively impacting someone I absolutely love and care about. So, ask me how committed I am to transforming my crankiness? Very high.

So how do we do that? Well, one of the things I want you to begin to see is that when we can accept our perfections and our imperfections, we're able to move forward. And the first step in the transformational process is you have to be able to see the thing -- the behavior -- the experience as it is. You can't heal what you can't see. And when we go unconscious to any part of ourselves, we can't heal it. You actually have to be able to see yourself as you are in your perfection and your imperfection. But you have to be able to see it.

And for many of us, we have been taught that it's not okay for us to be anything less than perfect. And the reality is: we are. So, we have to get right with ourselves so that we can see our own behavior so that we can heal it.

So, the first step is that you have to be able to see it. And then you have to be able to accept it. "*Oh, I was just cranky. And is that the way I want to show up in my life?*" Well, honestly, sometimes I do! Right? But I have to be able to see my behavior, accept my behavior, and then the third aspect of the process ... Once I can see it; once I can accept it ... Because sometimes we can't accept ourselves.

Like, if you cheat on taxes. Nobody here would cheat on their taxes; I know that. No one would cheat on their taxes. But if you cheat on your taxes, I think it's safe to say you're a cheater. *"Well, no; everybody does it, Richard! That's not cheating. They expect that!"* [Congregants laugh] Right?

Or if you lie to people, right? If you lie to people. And we think, *"Well, It was a white lie; it was a nice lie. It wasn't a terrible lie."* But if you lie to people, guess what? You're a ... [congregants: "Liar!"] Liar! Right?

So, we have to be able to see it, and we have to be able to accept it. And it takes a lot of love and compassion to be able to see our goofiness when we don't want to see it. Because it's easier just to go unconscious. It's easier to try not to see it. But the problem is: everybody else sees it. Everybody else sees the way you're showing up. You just want to pretend that you don't!

So, we have to see it; we have to accept it, and then we have to heal it. And this is where we get to ask God for help. Because any part of your personality that you're not loving -- If you're willing to see it and accept it -- at that moment, you can ask God to help you heal it.

And, as we go deeper into ourselves -- and can look at those parts of us that we realize aren't fully expressing our God self -- we can actually ask God to help heal my crankiness. Help heal the places where I want to lie a little bit. Help heal the places where I want to cheat just a little bit because I get scared. You know, *"I don't want to pay all that money, so I'm just going to cheat a little bit."* Right?

And then, over and over again, what I want you to see is that we have the ability -- when we can see it; when we can accept it -- we have the ability to ask God to come right there and heal it in the most profound way so that we don't have to continue to act in a way that's unbecoming a child of God.

So we see it, we accept it, we heal it. And then we start changing our behavior. Because all healing requires a change in behavior. I'm not really healed until I can make a new choice; until I can make a new choice over and over and over again.

See, I believe that each one of us is called right now to participate in our own healing process: to ask the Spirit of God to begin to reveal those things within us that are not in keeping with who we are as a son or daughter of the Most High; as an expression of all that God is.

In 2 Corinthians 5: 17 we read, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he becomes a new creation, for the old will pass away; behold, the new has come."*

See, when you begin to really see yourself as a child of God -- as whole and complete ... When you begin to see your spiritual essence -- the fullness of who you are ... And when you can begin to hold all the ways that you're acting in a way that's not really becoming; that they don't really line up very well ... Then you can actually begin to heal this (human imperfection) so that you can express this (spiritual perfection) in greater and greater and greater ways. But we have to have our spiritual eyes open so we can see the ways that we are falling; so that we don't have to continue to trip over our own mistakes over and over and over again.

Like, it's always easier to see somebody else's shortcomings. It's always to say to a friend, *"Well, this is all you need to do."* Right? But you have no idea what they're going through in their inner life. And until they can see the problem and want to heal it, there really isn't a lot of hope for transformation.

But we are in a time in our life and in our world, where we can no longer allow ourselves to stay asleep to who we are. The problems, the challenges that we've repeated over and over again and that aren't cute anymore. How many of you know that there's a part of your personality that you don't find cute anymore? Right? It's just not adorable anymore! You could maybe get away with it when you were five but, at 80, it's not as cute anymore. And that we are called to undergo this transformation.

In Romans 12: 2 we read, "*Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind!

Today we walk holding both aspects of who we are: our humanity and our divinity. The part of us that was created in the image and likeness of God and the part of us that is our human expression of that. And as we are willing to stay awake -- to see it, to accept it, to invite the activity of God into that place and to allow ourselves to heal it -- we can make a new choice with a new behavior and change the world.

Because it's always easier to say to the world, "*The world should be different, but I don't want to change me.*" When I am as eager to change me as I am to live in a transformed world, we will live in a transformed world.

Today, what in your life have you outgrown? That it's not really enjoyable anymore not to see it? That it's time for you to become aware, awake of all those things that it's time to be transformed. And we start by just seeing it. Then we have to accept it. And then we ask God to come right there and heal it. And then we make a new choice.

Will you join with me in prayer?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. There is but one presence and one power: God, the good – God, the good! -- that created each and every one of us. Today we are here to hold our divinity: to hold our godness and our humanity -- the human part of us and the divine part of us -- and know that as those come together, we are fulfilling the mission that God sent us into the world to accomplish: to be the light unto the world.

In the name and through the power of the living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.