

DREAMERS DREAM

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This may not work. I'm going to do a talk and it may not work. And I know it may not work, but I want to do it anyway. Are you willing to let me play? Okay, here we go. Let's see if it works.

So what's the most important thing? When you look at your life, what's the most important thing? Is it your family? Is it your work? Is it your spiritual life? Is it getting everything right? Is it finally being perfect enough? Like, what's the most important thing? [Congregant: "Love!"] Love; okay. Fabulous, right?

So then the question becomes for me: the moment ... Like, what if we're working for something and it may not be the biggest deal?

Like, one of the things I believe is that, when we're not satisfied with life, we keep trying to redo it and redo it and redo it until we get it right. Have you ever had that experience? We're committed to getting it right, whether it's love right; or our career right; or our house right ... or whatever it is, right? Or our finances finally right. There's this human part of us that keeps trying to get life right.

And what if that's not the big deal? What if the big deal isn't getting life right at all? And what if we spend an enormous amount of time trying to get life right, and it's just not the purpose?

And you can say, "*Well, Richard, life's fabulous. I love life! It's beautiful. It's wonderful. It's the ups. It's the downs. That's the pain. It's the glory. I love life! I want to get life just so. I want it to be just perfect in every way.*"

Okay; that's the joy of it. You have free will. And I know that, for the last 35 years of being a minister, I've helped people build great lives. And I believe that God's a big part of that, helping people create the relationship or the work or the finances they wanted in their life.

But is that the focus? And what if, when you get everything right and you ask yourself, "*Is that all there is?*" I've had that experience where literally everything in my life was perfect; even my dog was perfect! And I said to myself, "*Hmmm. Now that it's perfect, is that really all that there is?*" And I had to say, "*I hope not!*" Right?

Because it's not about the external. It's not about getting life right. See, there's two ways to look at life. It's the external or the internal.

Carl Jung said it this way: "*Those who look outside, dream; those who look inside, awaken.*"

And I believe that, for many of us, it is no longer about putting all the work and the effort to getting life externally right. It's about -- at a deeper level -- awakening to the glory of God that's within us. And that it's an inner journey. It's turning the focus of our life off -- all the time and energy we've spent trying to get the external just right and just perfect. And we begin to move the focus inwardly to really discover who we are. To really know ourselves in a deeper, more profound way.

And, for many of us, one of the things that we have to confront is: all the ways that we have felt broken or less than. And to be willing to actually go into the journey of self: to focus on the inner life and truly begin to know ourselves in a greater way by confronting all the things that we think have been wrong with us.

Jesus said it this way in Matthew 6:33:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things will be added unto you."

Now, what does that mean? See, when we hear “kingdom,” we think it's a place. That the inner journey is getting to this place called heaven. But what if the inner kingdom is you? What if the inner kingdom is your divine self? Your holy presence? And that, when we seek first that holy presence -- when we seek first that divine self -- not only do we get our divine self, but we get everything else, as well!

And all the time and energy we've placed in trying to get our life and our world just right -- what if that's not the direction? What if the direction is within and finding the glory of God within yourself? Finding yourself the way that God created you? And then from that place everything makes better sense! That we actually create our life from the deepest place out, not from the out in.

And I think the focus, for many of us ... we've been taught to put the focus on the outer, not to put the focus on self-discovery.

So, as we look at moving into this season of gratitude, the first week I'd like you to think about: *“Thank you, God, for me!”*

Together: [with congregation] *“Thank you, God, for me!”*

One more time like we actually mean it: [with congregation] *“Thank you, God, for me!”*

“Thank you, God, for who I am!”

Together: [with congregation] *“Thank you, God, for who I am.”*

How many of you have ever been told you were not always perfect? Have any of you ever been told that you're broken or less than or ugly or stupid or just not worth anything?

See, what I want you to see is that, to go within, we have to be willing to confront our brokenness; to move through all those erroneous things that we were taught to believe about ourselves to get to the place where we can begin to see ourselves created in the image and likeness of God.

And we're so afraid that our brokenness is right; that it's true; it's accurate; that that's who we really are, that any time we turn our inwardly -- as we turn our attention within, and we begin to see something about ourselves that slightly scares us -- we stop and move the focus back on the outer world.

But the journey within is the journey that requires us to confront our brokenness and know that we are more than that: that we are created in the image and likeness of God.

How many remember the first *Star Wars*? Anybody old enough to remember the first *Star Wars*? The first *Star Wars* movie, Luke Skywalker goes to Yoda, and he wants to be trained as a Jedi knight. So, he's getting the whole Jedi Knight training, where he has to practice mind thing; and he has to carry Yoda on his back; and he has to lift the spaceship out of the muck; and he has to do all this stuff.

And there's a moment where Yoda's sitting on the edge of the swamp, and Luke says, *“I feel something; I feel darkness.”* Right?

And Yoda says, *“Well, you might ...”* This is a paraphrase, right? *“You might want to go discover that.”*

And then Luke Skywalker says, *“Well, what is it?”*

And he says, *“You will only find ...”* What is the line? *“You will only find what you take in there.”*

And then, of course, he finds what? He discovers Darth Vader; they have a battle. Lightsabers out – dddssshhh, dddssshhh, dddssshhh, dddssshhh, dddssshhh -- and as he's down, as Darth Vader is dead, his helmet rolls off, and who is he? It's Luke! Right? That he has to confront himself! He has to confront his own demon; he has to confront his own brokenness.

Because confronting our brokenness is actually a step to discovering the fullness of who you are. That, if you run from your fears of who you are, you will always be running. If you turn within and confront your demons -- if you confront the place where you feel less than or broken or unworthy or unlovable -- and are willing to move through that, you actually discover the glory of God that's within you.

In the Gospel of Thomas -- which is an uncanonized gospel, but many Bible scholars believe it's the actual words of Jesus -- we read this:

"If you bring forth that that is within you, that that is within you will heal you; will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, that that is within you will destroy you."

And I want you to look at your life, and all the challenges, and all the ups and downs, and all that you've had to walk through. And I want you to see what Jesus said is: *"The kingdom of heaven is within you."* It's not a place; it's your divine self! And as you live and begin to move and to begin to see yourself -- not as a work in progress; not broken; not less than; but created in the image and likeness of God -- we actually begin to see ourselves the way that we were created from the beginning of time. That you were created in the image and likeness of God!

And one of the places I want you to begin to look at this week is to begin to see yourself in a new way. And one of the best ways I think to do that is to ask yourself 100 times a day: *"What am I feeling? And what do I want?"*

What am I feeling? And what do I want?

Together: [with congregation] *"What am I feeling? And what do I want?"*

And I want you to actually put the focus on feeling deeper and deeper within yourself, and becoming more and more aware of who you are. And to take this journey within.

One of the amazing Scriptures is 2 Corinthians 3:16-18.

"But whenever ..."

And this is it; this is what it actually says! Every time I read it, I thought, *"Wow, this is just good."*

"But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

Now I want you to hear that! Anytime anyone turns to God; anytime anyone turns within; anytime anyone looks to the presence and power of God within you, the veil is taken away!

I mean, the veil is that that disguises ourselves from us. It is the costume that we wear so that we don't fully appreciate or know who we truly are. It says the veil is taken away.

[Continues Scripture]:

"Now the Lord is Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces ..."

We all, with unveiled faces ... so that means that you see yourself as you truly are, and you're allowing others to see you as you truly are. Not an artificial image; not in a costume; not a portion of who you are; but created in the image and likeness of God.

[Continues Scripture]:

"So when we, with unveiled faces, contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit."

I think that's amazing! That this spiritual journey has been happening for thousands of years. It's archetypal! That all of us come into this world and we begin to believe all kinds of craziness about ourselves. Some of us get a bigger dose. But, in one way or another, we all have learned to accept that which seems broken or less than about ourselves.

But our spiritual journey is to be unveiled: to see ourselves the way God sees us. To see ourselves in the image and likeness of God. To turn within -- to go within -- and actually see the fullness of who we came to be! But we have to confront all those lesser images and know that that's truly not who we are. We have to be willing -- as we go within -- to see the places where we believed in our brokenness and know that it's not true. So we go in, and then we get to experience the fullness of God.

So how do we do that? Well, I'm going to give you four today.

And the first one is: I believe that we all need **TIMES OR REFLECTION** so that we can see ourselves with new eyes. I think that time of reflection is different than the times of prayer and meditation. Time of reflection is maybe with you and a pad of paper and a pen, and you just ask yourself the question: "*Who am I?*"

And that leads us to your journaling process, right? The second one is **JOURNALING**. Journal: "*Who am I? Who am I really? Who am I deeper than my brokenness? Who am I deeper than my problems? Who am I when I'm greater? What does it mean to me to be created in the image and likeness of God?*" So you reflect; you journal.

And the third one is: I believe we take Jimmy's **DREAM INTERPRETATION** class, because one of the most profound ways that we get a window into our soul is our dreams. Our dreams are Spirit's way of revealing that which we cannot yet consciously hold. So it gives us images that allow us a path to our higher self.

And then the fourth way is probably the most vulnerable: to **ASK PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU, "HOW DO YOU SEE ME?"** "*Like, well, I don't want to know how they see me. That's really none of my business!*" Now, I'm not saying you ask this to everybody, but I'm talking about the people that love you; that are special in your life; that you trust. And I want you to be curious how they see you. Because I think they probably have a much higher opinion of you than you have for yourself. And I think it is helpful for us to actually listen to those wise souls in our life and let them articulate the truth of how they see us. Because we can't literally hold for ourselves as yet.

And, in fact, I believe that Jesus did that in Matthew 16.

"He asked his disciples, 'Who do men say the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Well, some say it's John the Baptist; others say it's Eli'jah; and others say it's Jeremiah or one of the prophets of old.' And then he said, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

"Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God.'

"And Jesus answered, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but the Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, for the power of death shall not prevail against us. And I will give you the keys to the kingdom, and whatever you bind on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall be lost in heaven.'"

And what I want you to see today is: we have a God-given right to spend all our time and energy in this life playing in life. You know; building things and destroying things. And like little five-year-olds, you know: rebuilding and rebuilding and just focusing on the externals. Right? Trying to get all the externals right.

And we can all probably acknowledge that there have been times and places where we needed the externals to be a certain way to feel like we were enough. That until the externals got – until our finances got just right; our relationship got just right; or whatever it is ... our family was just right -- then we could take a breath and say, *"Okay, now what's next?"*

But there's this journey that we do that I think your soul is waiting for you to take, which is the journey within. And the journey within requires that you confront all the places where you believe that you're broken or less than or unlovable. And all of those are steps that take you deeper into yourself until you can see yourself the way God sees you: whole and complete and lacking in nothing.

And, tonight, I want you just to play with this idea: What if my real journey is into this inner kingdom to see and to find and to live my God-ness? And what if everything I do in this world is nice and fun and enjoyable ... and, you know, it's great. But what if that's never really going to satisfy my soul? What if the thing that I need the most is to finally see myself the way God sees me. To come back to the place where I began, and to know myself as if for the first time.

I think, tonight, that we have this opportunity to celebrate our humanity. But, more importantly, to turn within and to go deeper than we've ever been before. And if you have the courage to do that, you will confront all your inner Darth Vaders: you know, all the places where you believe that you're less than or broken or ugly or bad. You have to confront them all! But there's a point in the journey where you realize that all of that was just story. And that -- at your core -- you are and will always be wholly created in God's image and God's likeness. And that when you find that inner kingdom -- that inner experience, that inner knowledge -- everything that you do from that point on is good, is enough, is true.

So, tonight, would you be willing to contemplate a slight change of course? That maybe there's a new direction. And maybe the outer world may not be as important as we were led to believe. And maybe it's really about you finding the deeper, more profound aspect of you.

Will you pray with me?

And I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. And, tonight, we give thanks for all that we've created. All the time and energy we've spent in building a wonderful life. All the ups and downs. And we acknowledge and celebrate all of it.

And yet, tonight, we go a little bit deeper. That, instead of focusing on the external, we're ready to awaken fully to who we are. We're ready to come back to ourselves and be the amazing version of God that we are.

So, in the name and through the power of the living Christ, Holy Spirit awaken my soul that I may know the truth of who I am. And so it is. Amen.