

THE PERSISTENT LIFE

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So my question is: Is it better to be fast or consistent? Come on! Nobody's going to vote for fast? [Congregants laugh] We've got one person in the back who's voting for fast. Right? Because what I have experienced in my own life is there's a huge human part of me that wants to do life fast. Right?

Now, when you were 20, did you want to do life consistently or did you want to do it fast? [Congregants laugh] Right? I think we want to do it fast! And many of us have reached the point in our life where we're not quite as fast as we used to be. [Congregants laugh] Anybody resonate with that?

And so, tonight I want to talk about the difference between living fast and living consistent. Has anybody ever played the game Farkle? Farkle is a hoot. Farkle is six dice. It's kind of like Yahtzee; it's six dice. And my wife and I learned ... we were in our in-laws in Michigan a couple years ago, and they had brought this game: Farkle. And so, we were all sitting around the kitchen table playing Farkle.

And the idea of Farkle is: you get six dice. You put it in a cup; you shake the cup like Yahtzee; you throw the dice down. And you want to pair up. You want to get as many, like, you know, ones or twos or threes; you want to pair them up. And whatever's paired up, you kind of push those aside. You take the remainder of your dice, and you can keep rolling as long as, with every roll, at least one of the die matches the dice that you're trying to pair up, right? And if you don't -- if you roll the dice and not one of the dice matches -- you Farkle. [Congregants laugh]

And the way the game is played -- at least in our house -- is you yell at each other, "*Farkle! You Farkled!*" Right? And that's the most fun part of the game is just shouting at each other, "*Farkle!*" Right? Because it's just such a fun thing to say.

But what's interesting about that game is how many of my family members, like, are conservative; and they'll get three or four dice all the same number, and they stop. And how many will keep rolling in to see if they can get all six the same number before they Farkle. And you find out pretty quickly who are your high rollers and who are your more conservatives, right? And I found out that I am fairly conservative. I know; it surprised me too! Right? But if I get, like, four or five or even three or four all the same number, I notice I get less and less likely to throw the dice again. Because I know they're going to yell Farkle and then I don't get any points at all for that roll.

And I -- tonight -- I am not wanting to empower you to be fearful of life. That's not my job! But my job is to really look at what moves your life forward in the greatest possible way. Because when we're young, we think there's a time limit. And we have to get whatever we're going; we may have to make sure that we get there quickly; and that we get there before everybody else, because we're sure there's a competition in this. And we want to make life happen! And how quickly can I get from point A to point B so that I'm winner; I'm the best; I'm the most amazing! And how much can I do that?

And yet, in my experience, it's really not about that. It's really about: Can I consistently move in the direction of my goals? Can I every day show up and take another step in the direction that I deemed is the most important for me and my life and my family and my world?

And some days -- if you're like me -- it doesn't look like we get very far. You know we take a step or a half step or sometimes we even feel like we're taking a step backwards. But there's something about having the faith and the courage to go in the same direction over and over again. Because, in my experience, my ego wants whatever's new. Like, there's lots of like shiny, fun things that are new. And there's a part of

me that wants to go in all those directions and not always be consistent toward the good that I've decided is the best for me.

How many remember the story of "The Hare and the Tortoise?" Aesop's Fables. I'm going to read it, because it's only a couple of paragraphs and it's ... you know, I don't know when the last time you've heard this story, but for me, it was a while.

So the hare was making fun of the tortoise one day for being so slow.

"Do you ever get anywhere?" he asked mockingly?

"Yes," replied the tortoise, "and I get there sooner than you think. In fact, I'll run you a race to prove it."

The hare was much amused by the idea of running a race with the tortoise but, for the fun of the thing, he agreed. So the fox consented to act as the judge, marked the distance, and started the race off.

The hare was soon far out of sight, and to make the tortoise feel how deeply ridiculous it was for running the race with the hare, he laid down beside the course to take a nap until the tortoise would catch up.

The tortoise, meanwhile, kept going slowly but steadily and, after a time, passed the place where the hare was sleeping. But the hare's sleep was so peaceful that he stayed asleep and did not awake. So, the tortoise was near the end -- near the goal -- and the hare ran his swiftest but could not overtake the tortoise in time.

And then the last line is:

"The race is not always won by the swift."

So what I want to do tonight is open a space for us to look at the places in our life where we think we are burning time; where we are wasting time; where we're not getting enough done; we're not accomplishing enough; we're not being as productive as we should be or as we need to be. And would we be willing tonight to look at our life from a different point of view.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 says, *"Again I say that, under the sun, the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor the bread to the wise, nor the riches to the intelligent, nor the favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all."*

So, if we look at the story of "The Tortoise and the Hare" from a spiritual point of view -- from a metaphysical, if you will, point of view -- what does the hare represent and what does the tortoise represent? How many of you want to vote that the hare represents our ego's need to be fast and done and get after it? Anybody want to vote for that one? How many of us want to believe that our spirit is the tortoise, who believes that we can just plod along that we have eternity; that there is no hurry; and that all things will get done in God's way; in God's time; and that we can trust that divine process. How many of you want to believe that one?

See, what I want us to see today is that we are always in the process of mastering what sometimes doesn't work for us. The ego wants things done fast. The spirit knows that we have eternity, and that we can plod along taking one step after another, and that we will absolutely in faith receive all the blessings of God. But our ego is basically afraid that we're going to miss something; that something good isn't going to happen if we don't keep moving faster and faster and faster ... and, in fact, we're not just moving fast enough.

But some of the greatest, most successful minds of all times have taught us about the power of being persistent.

Benjamin Franklin said, "*Energy and persistence conquer all things.*" Energy and persistence conquers all things. That the role in life is just to keep on keeping on.

Bill Bradley: "*Ambition is the path to success, but persistence is the vehicle that you arrive in.*" I love that quote, right? I love it! Ambition is the path to success, but persistence is the vehicle you arrive in! That whatever is in front of you -- whatever your soul has decided is your life work; whatever you are called to do -- part of our spiritual journey is just showing up every day and taking the next step. Trusting that the step after that and the step after that will be revealed and we will move forward.

"Character consists of what you do on the third and fourth tries," said James Michener.

"It does not matter how slowly you go about, as long as you do not stop." ~Brian Keane.

Julie Andrews said, "*Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding on the 20th.*"

Napoleon Hill says, "*Failure cannot cope with persistency.*"

So, what I want you to see tonight was: What's important enough for you that you'd be willing to take one step at a time until you achieve that desire? Because I think there's a fear in many of us that, if we don't hurry up, we'll miss it. If we don't run and make sure all gets done today or by noon, we know that it's going to be taken away from us.

But what if that's absolutely an illusion of your ego? What if the things that God wants to bless you with are absolutely yours, but there is a spiritual activity that invites us to keep taking the next step over and over and over again?

What is important to you? Persistently go in that direction. Even if you don't know how! Even if you fail! Even if no one else believes in you, God will see you through. **The persistent life is the soul's desire to experience more God every day.**

You know, there's a famous Zen teaching that says, "*Before enlightenment, chop wood and carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood and carry water.*" Right? And it's this idea that so many of the things that our ego makes important -- that our ego says are time-sensitive that it has to get done ... Right? How many emails have you gotten read that said, "*This is highly time-sensitive and it needs to be done,*" and then you rush around and get it done and then the person you hand it to says, "*Oh, we don't really need that anymore*"?

And it's like, it happens over and over again, because there's this idea that everything is time-sensitive! And the things of spirit simply are not time-sensitive. What's the most important thing? And to be willing to go after that over and over again!

See, there's two levels of life: The having level of life and the being level of life -- when we're into being to experience more and more God.

See, I believe that God has placed something within all of our hearts that really is ours to do. That it's ours to be, it's ours to live, it's a gift that God has given to all of us. And that every day that gift -- that blessing -- is so great, so wonderful, and sometimes so big that we can't do it in one day or one month or even one year. That our soul has to get up every day and take the steps in that direction, knowing that it will be fulfilled, even though we don't always know when. We have to be willing to trust that there is an activity of God at work and our job is to simply plod along in a direction until it's revealed; that it happens in a way that is beyond sometimes our ability to understand.

So what greatness in your life are you willing to move in that direction, even if it takes more than a moment? A week, a month, a year? But that that greatness is so important to your soul that you would be willing to do it even if it took forever?

See, I believe that our souls aren't here for the amount of time that we think. That we are eternal spiritual beings expressing God. And that, if we only do the things that we can do in a moment, oftentimes we miss out on blessings that are great. And every day your soul is called to persist.

And there are times ... Well, I'm going to read from Katherine Ponder. Katherine Ponder is one of my favorite authors. She's a Unity author. She began writing in the '50s. Her books: I think we've got all of them in the bookstore. Her books are just ... adorable.

And this is on page 49 of *Dare to Prosper*:

"Here's the final point to remember. Success has a way of coming in a hurry after you've endured a long haul of plodding along slowly."

Like, how many groups can we think that they say that they were a one-hit wonder, or that they just instantly became famous, and they've been working small clubs and small concerts for years? And then, all of a sudden, they become famous.

"... plodding along slowly. As you quietly persist toward your goal, prepare yourself for quick and exciting success-filled results. Have your plans made as to what you will do when success arrives. Because just when it seems least likely, the tide will turn for you. Then it will be necessary for you to take a deep breath and proceed to accept the abundance that God has for you."

As fulfillment comes, you must let go and not unbalance yourself. Be alert; be ready to accept it. Otherwise, it will slip away and leave you to begin all over again. If you have a master plan, it will be easy for you to accept your success and maintain it. To paraphrase the words of Paul, 'Forget the things that lie behind you and press forward towards your goal.' Now, as you work out your master plan of success, I want us to do this prayer."

Then she goes and gives us this prayer. And I'd like you to read it with me. Can you see it? It says:

"Divine Intelligence ..."

Together:

[With congregation] *"Divine Intelligence, let the master plan of my life now reveal itself in me. Let the master plan of my life now begin working for me. I give thanks for the perfect results of the master plan. With God's help, I now begin to experience the results of my master plan."*

See, what I want us to see today is that our job is just to keep taking the next step. And if we have the courage to keep taking the next step, there's a moment where everything opens up and all the work that you've done -- all the steps that you've taken -- reveal this master plan ... this possibility for you that absolutely in your conscious mind you may not even have been aware of could be had! And that, in a moment, it is fulfilled!

So let's read it again:

[With congregation] *"Divine Intelligence, let the master plan of my life now reveal itself in me. Let the master plan of my life now begin working for me. I give thanks for the perfect results of the master plan. With God's help, I now begin to experience the results of my master plan."*

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to this divine activity. I want you to see that God does have a plan for you in your life, and that we are activating that divine plan. And we just keep taking one step after another as we are open and receptive to God's master plan being revealed through us.

So now we celebrate our persistency. We celebrate that we can keep on keeping on. And we know that, through our daily activities, greater good is being revealed.

So in all things we look to God and in all things we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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