

## ENJOY

Final Week of the 4-Week Series, "Living Your Best Life"

Rev. Richard Rogers

Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2025

*When a star is born  
You possess a wish or two  
One of them is this  
You have the power  
To make a wish come true.*

*When you wish upon a star  
Makes no difference who you are  
Anything your heart desires  
Will come to you*

*If your heart is in your dream  
No request is too extreme  
When you wish upon a star  
As dreamers do*

*Fate is kind  
She brings to those who love  
The sweet fulfillment of  
Their secret longing*

*Like a bolt out of the blue  
Fate steps in and sees you through  
When you wish upon a star  
Your dreams come true*

You know that song is, is, is ... [Laughs] is very important to me. And there's a line; it's the first line: "When you wish upon a star, it makes no difference who you are." It gets me every time. When I was a young person -- a child really -- hearing that song I wanted to believe that. I wanted to believe that it didn't matter where we were or where we came from; that I could wish upon a star -- that I could believe in something that seems so big -- and that it would actually come true.

Because it seems kind of naïve; it seems kind of childish to believe that your dreams can come true. But there's something so powerful about a soul who believes in their dreams. It's attractive. In the best possible way of that word, it is attractive. It draws to it everything that it needs.

And that song with its simple lyrics and its cute melody was my theology. It's what I believed about God. It's what I believed about life. It's what I believed about myself. It's what I believed: that you could believe in something that seemed bigger and greater, and you could live into it.

This ministry for the last ... Well, I got here 33 years ago, and I've been here 26 of those years, has been the out picture of that dream for me. That we could take a little church on Northern Avenue that had a couple hundred people. How many of you have ever been to that little church on Northern? God bless you! [Congregants laugh]

I said the average age of that congregation when I got there was about a hundred. [Congregants laugh] So, all of you that are raising your hand were the ones who were bringing the average down! [Congregants laugh] And I said the average hair color was blue! [Congregants laugh] Joanie, tell me I'm not lying!

And those crazy people believed in a dream: that we could build a ministry that would be bigger than anything that we had experienced before. And it happened!

And the reason I'm back for the last 12 years that has blessed my wife and my kids and my family is for one reason and one man -- Rev. Richard Maraj [congregants applaud] -- who had the courage to invite me back. [Congregants laugh]

You remember that first Sunday? Richard invited me back, and it was just 12 years ago. And it was January, and it was about 40 degrees outside. It was cold. Jimmie was here; Jimmie remembers! We were laughing about it. And I got up there and said, *"Well, I guess they were right."*

And they said, *"What do you mean?"*

I said, *"Well, there were a lot of you who thought I wouldn't come back here until hell froze over, and I guess you won!"* [Laughs along with congregants]

The last 12 years have been fabulous! [Congregant: "Hear, hear!"] Hear; hear.

You know, this job ... Most of you know that my wife had breast cancer twice in the last 12 years. And the first time she had breast cancer, they gave her a medication that, for most women, was just fine. For her, it impacted the sheathing of her nerves. For 18 months, she never left a dark room; no sound. And it was because of this job that I could take care of her. That I only had to be gone for two hours a week.

And you never know what's going to happen. You never know why saying yes to coming back here was such an important part. And yet, Spirit called us to come back here. And without this job -- if I was trying to work 40 hours a week -- that would have never happened. Because of what Richard did, and because of the opportunity gave me, I could be her caregiver and watch her progressively get better.

So tonight, I want to talk about joy. Because this place is my place of joy.

And I've been doing a series based on building your best life and "Living Your Best Life." And sometimes we think about ... that joy should be this overflowing experience that we should just have from one moment after another. And in my experience, it doesn't always work that way. Sometimes we had to dig deep for joy.

Have you ever been in a time or a phase in your life where joy kind of seemed far away? And it's like, the way that we were taught about joy sometimes is this idea that we're just supposed to be "giggly happy" all the time. I wish that was the case.

So, living your best life requires that we learn what I think is one of the fundamental truths about joy: and it's that joy is not about addition; it's about subtraction. And most of us have been taught that joy is an addition problem. You know, if I get everything right in my life -- if I have the right house and the right car and the right job and the right spouse and the right dog ... and my kids act right ... and my parents get off my back, or whatever it is, right? Then I'm going to be happy.

And so we keep this idea of adding and adding and adding, thinking the next thing is going to finally make us happy. And then the new car gets scratched or we have a problem at work or our spouse tells us to pick up our underwear off the floor and ... [congregants laugh] ... and the thrill is gone. [Congregants laugh]

And then we realize that joy is not about addition; that you can never get enough to truly be happy. You can never get enough to truly be happy. Did everybody hear that? You can never get enough to be truly happy. The joy is a subtraction problem: what thought, what belief would I have to let go of in this moment to be radically happy?

And then it's an inside game! And then, no matter what shows up -- no matter what's happening in our life -- we can ask ourselves that question: What would I have to let go of in this moment to be radically happy?

And that happiness is so deep within us, because we realize that the only thing that's ever keeping us from being happy is our own thoughts and our own judgments and our own attitudes and our own behavior. And then we realize that happiness is always, always, always, always an inside job.

Last week I gave you ... [Laughs] I gave you five teaching points. And I went way over on time. In fact, Richard and I were teasing about it. It's like, *"He was 20 minutes in, and he was only on his second point. I thought we were going to be here all night!"* [Congregants laugh]

So tonight, I'm not going to give you five points; I'm going to give you 11. [Congregants laugh] So, buckle up, kiddoes; here we go! Right?

The first one -- the one thing that I think is probably the most important; the thing that I learned from my wife and has changed my life -- is **CELEBRATE EVERYTHING**. You want to be happy? Celebrate everything. Celebrate everything!

Some of you remember my wife when she used to go, *"Wooooo!"* Right? She used to get us all going! Everybody, let's do it: [with congregation] *"Wooooo!"* Right? And it is this idea: like, why are you like that? [Congregants laugh]

I remember my brother and my mother coming to meet Jill for the first time, because they had heard me talk about that she was the happiest person I knew. And they wanted to know what that looked like.

Celebrate everything. Celebrate every win. Celebrate every moment.

You know, many times in the morning when I've been going up to Prescott, one of the things I would celebrate is if my socks were the same color. [Congregants laugh] You know, when you're getting dressed in the dark, having the same colored socks is no small feat, right? You can't touch them and tell which one's brown and which one's black! You've got to just take it on faith.

You know, in the work that I've been doing coaching in executive communities, one of the things that we work on always is celebrating their wins. Because one of the things that happens if you're a high "A Personality" like I was is you didn't have time to slow down and celebrate your wins. Because you were always on to the next thing. It looked like a waste of time to celebrate your wins, because you should always be on the next thing. No matter how successful -- no matter what you're doing -- you should always be on to the next thing. And it was only when I learned to stop and celebrate every win that my life got profoundly better.

Two: **REST AND REJUVENATE**. Prioritize time to rest throughout the day, give your body and mind a break from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. One of the things I realized through a vacation going to the South ... Anybody ever lived or gone to the South? Like the south South. We're talking the south South.

We went and visited a friend on vacation one time and, after we had dinner, we had to "sit a spell." [Congregants laugh] I didn't know what that meant! I mean, we had to "sit a spell." So, we all ate all this

good ... And they have gravy at every meal; and I loved it down there! Gravy at every meal! I thought I'd ...

So then we'd go out on the porch, and we'd have to "sit a spell." Now, at this time, I was a Type A Personality. I would never sit a spell. Right? Sit a spell? And, like, how long is a spell? [Congregants laugh] Like, is it ...? Like, they don't define it. You just sit for a while. And I wasn't sure when it was over [congregants laugh] or if I was even halfway done yet. Like, you would just sit there!

And that night in prayer, Spirit said to me, "*You are eternal.*"

I thought, "*Holy crap! If I can't sit for two hours on a porch, how am I going to deal with eternity? How can I slow this drive down and actually be in the moment?*" And I realized that I was living upside down. I was trying to get it all done, and you could never get it all done. You can never get it all done.

You have eternity. You're an eternal spiritual being. You have eternity. So rest; rejuvenate; enjoy the drive; and allow your soul to catch up and enjoy the process. And the more that you rest -- the more that you allow the process to unfold -- the more it's a statement of faith.

When you can sit and trust that God's going to work it out, that is a statement of faith that demands the highest level of understanding. Because from our insecure self, we just keep wanting to move. But from a statement of faith, we can stop and let a moment unfold, trusting that that moment is the perfect moment. It's going to lead to the next perfect moment, and the next perfect moment. And it's all going to work out. Two: rest and rejuvenate,

Three: **INVEST IN PERSONAL GROWTH.** Invest in yourself. Invest in what helps you live your best life. Whether it's a therapist; whether it's a coach; whether it's a workshop; whether it's a class, invest in you. Invest in being happy. Put the time and the money and the energy in what's going to help you do and be the best version of you. Invest in yourself. Invest in personal growth.

[Congregant applauds loudly; Rev. Rogers whispers, "*Thank you; five bucks later.*" Congregants laugh]

Four: **BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND EXPAND YOUR CIRCLE.** How many of you have noticed as you're getting older that your circle tends to get a little smaller? And what I want to say about that: as we are getting older, we have to be absolutely mindful of building positive relationship and expanding our circle. Because we need each other! To be happy, we have to be working and expanding our circle, and not allowing the same old people that we've known for 100 years and are slowly dying off, to be all that we have around us.

We need to be building new friendships; new relationships. We need to be reaching out to neighbors. We need to be reaching out to other people so that we are building an expanded circle of positive relationships. Positive people. Positive people who inspire you, who are still living, who are still being amazing. That you're building positive relationships and expanding your circle.

Five: **INVEST IN EXPERIENCES AND TRY SOMETHING NEW.** As I mentioned earlier, Richard and I went out for sushi last Wednesday. What was it you ordered? Firecracker something? That was a new experience for me! [Congregants laugh] Now, I love sushi, right? I love sushi! You give me dead fish any time and I love it. [Congregants laugh] But that whole firecracker thing, right?

And part of it is: we have to be willing to try new things; drive down new roads; try new foods; meet new people; talk to people. You know, one of the things that I read that we are losing is that we don't even talk to people anymore when we're in line. And this person went on and on: did a whole blog about the need that we have to be talking to the people around us -- who are in front of us or behind us.

And, you know, it's even more fun if you do that in England! Because, in England, no one talks to each other. [Congregants laugh] My sister lives in England, and I would go into the grocery store and just say "Hello" to everybody. She finally said, "Richard, if you do that again, I'm taking you home." [Congregants laugh] Invest in new experiences and try new things.

Six: **STAY ACTIVE**. Move and move more. Regular physical activity -- movement -- is great for your body, for your mood, for your mind, for your soul, for your spirit. Move and move often.

Seven: **CONNECT WITH NATURE**. Spend time in nature. Spend time outside. Listen to the birds. Feel the energy of being away from all the noise and confusion, and that your soul has time to expand and experience God and life connect with nature.

Eight: **HELP OTHERS**. Volunteering; serving in local community. Giving the gift of you; helping others; being a helping hand. It gains a sense of purpose and happiness.

You know, one of the things that is so true is that ministry does not function without volunteers. Right? There's not enough staff at any ministry anywhere to do all the work of ministry if you had to pay everybody. Ministry depends on you volunteering, because you believe in the work of this ministry and you want to be a part of it. Help others; it will bless you.

Nine: **SET GOALS AND KEEP DREAMING**. Don't stop! No matter how silly it seems, keep setting goals and keep dreaming, because those are the things that keep us alive.

Ten: **PRACTICE GRATITUDE**. Regularly think about what you're grateful for. Make a list at the end of each day. Write down two or three or four things every day that keep you grateful. It allows you to look for the good in your life.

And 11: **LIVE IN THE MOMENT**. Stay present; enjoy each moment. We worry too much about the past or the future and it can distract us from this current moment.

Here's what I want to say in closing. Do you know there's cameras in this room? There's cameras in this room. So, here's what I want you to hear me say: that, when I'm in Florida, I want to be able to look on these videos and see your face, right? Because this ministry is not me; it's us. It's always been us!~

And for this ministry to be healthy and vibrant and alive, you have to show up. You have to show up and make a difference. Because your energy makes a difference.

You know, one of my little pet peeves, right? Now that we're talking ... I'm leaving. So, you can't be upset with me, because I'm leaving. [Congregants laugh] Right? So, one of my pet peeves is when someone would say to me, "Oh, I was feeling so good this week, I didn't go to church." [Congregants laugh]

And it's like, "Pffffff." [Congregants laugh] Like, I just want to smack them, right? I don't; Gandhi would be proud of me.

And it's like, well ... I get it: that you were full and you didn't need to come to church. But my experience is: when you're feeling good, God's going to put next to you or behind you or in front of you somebody who's not. And your energy is there to create an experience that's better for all of us. Right? So, when you show up, you bring your energy into this room; you bring your consciousness into this room; you bring your life into this room. And that's an experience that we all feed on!

If you depend on the minister, the speaker, the singer, or [Music Director] Steve to be the source of all the juice in this room, it's going to be tinny. But when you bring your juice -- when you bring your presence; when you bring your aliveness -- even if you're having a really bad day ... if you bring it into this room, you make it special for all of us.

This is a special place. This is a very special place. And a lot of people have spent a lot of time and energy and money so that this place would be here for you. And our job is to enjoy every minute of it. To show up, to be a part, and help create a dynamic spiritual community that is blessing and changing lives.

And I want to know when I'm watching the Wednesday night service that I'm going to see your little face. So you can wave to the camera and I'll be waving back. Is that a deal? [Congregants applaud and say, "Yeah!"]

Will you pray with me? Let's pray:

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That there is but one Presence and one Power. And tonight, we celebrate all that life is.

And sometimes in life, it's hard to find our joy, and we have to dig deep. But in the activity of digging deep -- going deeper within our soul -- and finding our joy actually frees us, liberates us from the ups and downs of life.

Tonight, go deep. Where's your joy? What thought, what belief, what judgment would you have to let go of tonight to live in the joy of who you are? To be more joyous, more content, more at peace than you ever have before?

Thank you, God, for overflowing joy.

Together: [with congregants] "Thank you, God, for overflowing joy."

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

All right, this is the time of giving of our gifts and tithes. You ready?

[With congregation]: Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive. And so it is. Amen.