

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE BIG?

Final Week of a 2-Week Series, "Living Big"

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Being big for God. Living big. Living more fully into who we came here to be and what we came here to do. That was our theme last week, and guess what? It is our theme for tonight, as well. And we began our exploration last week with a quote that I would like to share with you again, because it kind of sets the foundation for the importance -- the meaning -- behind this idea of living big.

And, by the way, the concept of this came -- the concept of living big came -- from a great book that I described last week written by the author of  $E^2$  and  $E^3$ . You may have heard of those two books. But she also wrote another book called *Living Big*, and the author's name is Pam Grout.

But I'm not going to quote Pam right now, I'll quote her in a little bit. But this is actually from the founder of Religious Science, Dr. Ernest Holmes, who said:

*"God is more completely expressed through those who live largely ..."*

Also known as living big!

*..." than those who live meagerly."*

So let me say that again:

*"God is more completely expressed through those who live largely than those who live meagerly."*

So living big is about living God: living as the divine expression of God that we are.

So who was here last week? Oh, yay; I love it when you come back. That's fantastic! So, I'm not going to ask you to answer these questions. I'll just tell you. And I know some of you watched online, because you told me that. So, even though you weren't here, you watched online. So great; good for you!

So last week, we looked at three ways to live big. I'm not going to test you on it. I'll tell you, especially for those who weren't here last week. The first one is **thinking big**. And thinking big was about having big, bold ideas; new ideas about who you are. And I even invited you into having a new big, bold idea about who you are.

The second thing we looked at was **imagining big**, meaning recognizing and expressing our innate creativity; knowing that we are all creative, even when we don't think we are. Even when we've told ourselves all our lives, *"I'm not creative,"* if you recall my story. We are all absolutely creative in various unique and amazing ways.

And then the third one that we looked at last week was **playing big**, which was about making choices to experience happiness and joy. And we actually did a little meditation toward the end where I asked you to have a new thought about each one of those things: a new thought about living more boldly, a new thought about awakening your creativity, whatever it looks like; and a new thought about living joy now. And again, I'm not going to put you on the spot and ask you who actually did anything about those thoughts that you had last week, but I'm hoping that you did something with at least one of those thoughts ... One of those thoughts about any one of those three and extra credit if you did more than one.

And I happen to make ... Can I say something really quick? I love it, because Michelle showed me when we were before service that many of you went out to a pottery painting. Thank you; that's what I'm trying to say. A pottery painting outing last week -- it was last Friday, so after I gave the talk on

Wednesday -- to paint pottery. And Michelle, who said she didn't consider herself artistic or creative; she showed me the pot that she painted; it was amazing! So congratulations! And she said she was thinking about the talk the whole time; like, you know, *"I am creative!"* So gold star to you for doing it. Yeah, give her a hand. That's fantastic! [Congregants applaud]

And I love that, because one of my mentors once said, "Inspiration without action is merely entertainment." Hmm. Inspiration without action is merely entertainment. And you know what? I'm not here to entertain you ... even though I hope I do a little bit anyway. But that's not why I'm here. I don't want to just entertain you. I don't want you to just go, *"Oh, that was a nice idea. Bye."* I want you to bring what we talk about every Sunday here -- not just me -- but all the ministers here. We want you to bring this into your life to create more joy-filled, powerful, God-filled lives. So keep that in mind: inspiration without action is merely entertainment.

All right, so tonight. Where are we going to go tonight? We're going to look at three more things that constitute living big. And they are, number one:  **blessing big** . And blessing big means having an attitude of kindness. Number two:  **giving big** , meaning having an attitude of service or the idea. And we'll explore this more, but the idea of being a beneficial presence on this earth. And number three:  **loving big** , which means ... well, loving big. That's what it means. There's nothing else to be said about that.

And I think those three are absolutely inter- ... they're completely interwoven with each other. It's actually hard to separate them. Because what is kindness if it isn't service and love in action, right? What is service if it isn't based on love and kindness? And what is love if not activated through kindness and service? So, they just weave together completely.

But even though they weave together completely, tonight we are going to spend a little bit of time talking about each one of them separately. And then I do want to give you a story of an impact that can happen -- that *did* happen in the story -- when those three weave together. And then I'm going to offer you an invitation on a very simple yet powerful way you can start to live big.

All right, so does that sound like a plan? That's where I want us to go tonight. You're on board? I love it, so let's start by taking a look at each of the three separately.

And the first one is **BLESSING BIG: by having an attitude of kindness**. So, I do want to quote now from Pam Grout in the book, *Living Big*. She writes:

*"There are some who might argue that, in a world of global pollution, racial cleansing and famine ..."*

And we could add more to that now, because this book was written years ago ...

*... "kindness is a soft issue, a luxury we can afford to discuss after all of our problems are solved. But until we practice kindness, all our grand schemes and posturing will be in vain. By practicing kindness -- by sticking out a hand or by offering a thumbs up to our brothers and sisters -- we can alter the world. By smiling at a stranger; by going out of our way to applaud each other, we can bind the world back together."*

Those last two sentences just give me goose bumps. God bumps. I have a friend who calls them chili chips. I'm not sure why she calls them chili chips, but that's goose bumps to her. So those two lines gave me chili chips. And so I'm going to say them again, because I want you to really take them in:

*"By practicing kindness -- by sticking out a hand or by offering a thumbs up to our brothers and sisters -- we can alter the world. By smiling at a stranger; by going out of our way to applaud each other, we can bind the world back together."*

Those are pretty profound statements. And so, I actually want to take a moment right now -- to bind the world back together -- to applaud someone. To applaud someone who is part of this community and is actually a regular soloist here at this community. And you may not know this, but this particular person was on *America's Got Talent* last night -- for those of you who have ever watched that ... [Congregants applaud] Hold there ... but wait, there's more! But wait, we will -- believe me -- we're going to applaud in a minute! She was on *America's Got Talent* last night and got the "Golden Buzzer." And that is our own Charity Lockhart! [Congregants whoop and applaud]

So, now we're going to applaud in a different way. I want us to applaud with so much vigor and excitement and enthusiasm and energy that, no matter where she is -- I don't know if she's still in LA; I don't know if she's back here; I don't know where she is -- but that she will feel something coming from this Sanctuary and know that we're with her. So, ready? Let's applaud her. [Congregants whoop and applaud loudly]

And how fun it will be to watch her journey through this! How fun it will be!

So, who remembers the book and then the movie -- which the movie came out in 2000 -- and so the book came out before that. The book was called -- and the movie -- were called *Pay It Forward*. [Congregant: "*Favorite movie ever.*"] Favorite movie ever; I love it! I love it! Favorite ... one of my favorite books.

And I love the idea. And so, those of you who don't know it, it's about a little boy who's in a class. And his teacher gives them an assignment to come up with a project that will change the world. Just a small, you know, a little small something that will change the world. And he decided that he was going to change -- *could* change the world -- by doing three acts of kindness to someone, or to three different people ... And then assign *those* three people to do three acts of kindness ... Who then assigned their three people to do three acts of kindness ... And it would ripple out into the world. That is one of the most inspiring ideas ever.

I was so excited when I saw the movie. And I was a new minister at the time. I had been a minister for about three years. I was so excited when that movie came out that I'm like, "*Oh, we've got to have a movie night. We've got to have a movie night. We've got to show that movie.*" And so, we advertised it, and people from all over came. And little children came; and their parents came; and teenagers came; and adults came; and older people came. My age now, but *then* they were older ... [Congregants laugh] And we had ... you know, our Fellowship Hall was full.

I forgot two very, very important things about that movie between when it came out on video -- which was, you know, then it took six months or something for a movie to come out and video afterwards in the theater. Here are the two important things I forgot. First of all the mother in that show -- Helen Hunt was the actress -- could make a sailor blush with her language. Every other word was profanity. [Congregants titter]

So every time she said something -- which was every time she opened her mouth ... [Congregant laughs] I know! I shrank a little more in my seat, because there's kids; there's children. And I had some parents kind of look at me like, "*What are you doing? Why are you having a movie and bringing my kids to this?*" So that was the first thing I forgot.

And the second thing I forgot is that it has a profoundly sad, heart-wrenchingly sad ending. Totally spaced that one out, too. So, it was not my finest ministerial hour to bring that movie to my community. And I do hope the parents have forgave me and their hearts, you know, quit being broken because of the way it ended.

Nonetheless, the concept -- right? -- of paying it forward ... even if it's not, you know, I do to three and then they do three and they do three ... even if we're not going that far. But just the concept of doing acts of kindness, according to Mahatma Gandhi, this is what he said about it:

*"The simplest acts of kindness are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowed in prayer."*

Wow! Now I have to confess, I'm not 100 % in agreement with that statement. I think a thousand heads bowed in prayer is pretty dang powerful. So, what I would say for that one is: it's not either/or -- it's not kindness or -- It's kindness *and* ... right? Simple acts of kindness and prayer are so incredibly powerful.

I kind of think of kindness as planting seeds, right? Seeds in a garden. And they take root and then they sprout. And they may sprout immediately; they may not. They may stay dormant for a while. We may never know how they sprout, but they will. Our acts of kindness will sprout.

Every act of kindness blesses not only the person being kind, but those who receive it. And sometimes it takes courage and strength, let's say, to bless or be kind in a challenging situation. Anyone ever had a -- you don't have to answer this; it's rhetorical -- but a challenging situation? You're dealing with somebody, and the last thing you want to do is be kind or bless them? Like, *"Mmm; yeah, I'll bless 'em, all right"* ... [Congregants laugh] Right? Sometimes we feel that way. Or, if we're in fear about something, it's hard to think about blessing them and be kind.

So, I want to give you a story from the Eastern tradition. And the main character of many, many Eastern fables or parables is Nasrudin.

*So Nasrudin had a grocery store that had been in his family for 100 years. And immediately across the street, a chain grocery store got built. Nasrudin was in dire stress. His business ... he was going to go out of business. So, he went to his guru for wisdom, for counsel, for support, for help, for ideas.*

*And the master said to him, "If you fear the owner of this chain store, you will hate him and hatred will be your undoing."*

*And so Nasrudin said, "Well, what am I supposed to do?"*

*And the master said, "Each morning, step out of your shop, turn and face your store; bless it; and pray for its prosperity."*

*And Nasrudin's like, "Yeah. I like that; that's good; that's good."*

*And then the master said, "And then turn around; face the chain store; bless it, pray for its prosperity; and every time you see an employee or one of their customers, be kind to them."*

*Now Nasrudin did not like this at all. He says, "You're telling me I should be grateful for a store that's trying to destroy me?"*

*Master said, "Yes."*

*"You're telling me that I should bless my competitor and accept abundance for a store that's going to put me out of business?"*

*"Yes."*

*"And on top of that, you're telling me to be kind to the very people who are running that store and those who are not coming to my business now, but going over there? I'm supposed to be nice to them and kind to them?"*

*"Yes."*

*So Nasrudin left, not happy at all with the wisdom that his guru gave him.*

I'm sure that when people came to see me for a spiritual counseling session, they left thinking, *"Oh no! she didn't say what I wanted her to say."* I'm sure that happened more than once. It happens, doesn't it?

*So, he left going, "I didn't like that; I didn't like that; I didn't like that."*

*Six months pass; he finally comes back to his guru, to his master. And the master is very eager to hear, "So, what happened?"*

*And Nasrudin said, "Well, I did, indeed, have to close my store. But it's not so bad because I'm now the manager of that chain store and I'm happier and more prosperous than I'd ever been in my whole life. So, it all worked out."*

You can chuckle a tiny bit about that. So, the world and your world can be transformed by blessing big through kindness.

Idea number two: **GIVING BIG: Having an attitude of service.** So, let's begin this conversation with a quote from the Dalai Lama who said: *"We are visitors on this planet. During this period, we must try to do something good, something useful with our lives."*

In the Bhagavad Gita, which is the ancient Hindu scripture ... Bhagavad Gita is actually, if not the first, *one* of the first sacred texts ever. It talks about three different kinds of life. One kind -- the first kind is a life of inertia and dullness. This is what the Gita says. It's inertia and dullness with no goals, no achievements. To me, that does not sound like living big.

The second way of living is full of action and busyness and desire. And that's an improvement over the first, but by itself is empty and dissatisfying and not the kind of living big that we're talking about tonight.

The third life, according to the Bhagavad Gita, is a life of goodness, which is not just about ourselves, but about others, as well. And this is what that scripture says: *"Through selfless service, you will always be fruitful and find the fulfillment of your desires. This is the promise of the Creator."*

Eric Butterworth -- in *Spiritual Economics* -- wrote: *"Life's innermost secret is the divine pattern in you which only you can really know when you are giving yourself in service."* Seeking to serve others, not from a should; not from a guilt -- either internal or external. Not from that perspective, but from the perspective of knowing that you're expressing your divinity when you share in service to others. That is, indeed, a key ingredient to living big.

Another way to say this is being -- and I mentioned it before -- being a beneficial presence. And I hadn't really heard that term very much until I was honored beyond words and privileged to go to Ahmedabad, India a year ago January to attend a leadership retreat based on Gandhi and leadership principles. And there were 40 leaders from around the world who attended; who were invited to attend this retreat, and I was blessed to be one of them.

But I have to tell you, I was awestruck and humbled by the leaders that were there. These were people who were doing massively big things for good in the world; being gigantic beneficial presences in the world. These were not -- and there's nothing wrong with this -- but these were not Fortune 500 CEOs, but these were people who were doing massive things. And I could talk from now until next week about all of the experiences I had and how I saw sacred service being a beneficial presence demonstrated and talked about over and over and over, but I want to give you one quick example.

So, there's a man there by the name of J. Coen Gilbert. And he -- many, many years ago -- thought, *"You know, there should be, there could be, a different kind of corporate structure."* Now, most corporations, you know -- C corps and S corps -- you've heard of those, right? C corps and S corps. And a corporation's

main focus is what? Making profit and benefiting its shareholders, right? That is the mission of a standard corporation. Benefit/profit its shareholders. He thought there needs to be a different kind of corporation. And, in fact, he and his partners were instrumental and having a new kind of corporation created.

Tell me when I say more about this, if you heard of this. I had never in my life heard of this. It's called a B corporation. So I'm seeing a couple heads. I had no idea there was such a thing as a B corporation. B stands for Beneficial. And the foundation of a B corporation is to be a beneficial presence to not just the stakeholders -- excuse me, the shareholders -- who are the people who are going to get the profits, but the stakeholders. Who are the stakeholders? Clients, customers, employees, vendors, competitors, the environment ... anything and anyone that is touched by a B Corp. Their mission is to be a benefit to all of it, above profit.

So, this man that was at this retreat was telling about that. And then he's telling us about something he and his partners created for companies who already had that designation to be certified as a B corporation. To be certified. And this certification is rigorous.

And I just want to tell you what their vision statement is for their certified companies:

*"We envision a global ...*

It's actually called their Declaration of Interdependence:

*"We envision a global economy that uses business as a force for good. This economy is comprised of a new type of corporation -- the B Corporation -- which is purpose-driven and creates benefit for all stakeholders, not just shareholders."*

**Certified** I had no idea that this existed! And then he showed us the logo for organizations that are certified B Corp. [To A/V Manager:] Hit it, Patrick; put that logo up there. Because I want you all to pay attention to companies that have this logo and buy their products; purchase their services| That is the certification logo of a B certified corporation.



**Corporation** I'm going to give you four right now, all of whom I have used ... one of them too much, and you'll probably figure out which one that is in a second. And I didn't know any of them were B Corps until I came home and saw the B Corp logo on their packaging.

So here's the first one -- the one I probably used too much: Ben and Jerry's. [Congregants laugh] It's a B Corp. These are the ones you may not have heard of, but now you're going to. One is called Uncommon Goods, which is an amazing online -- they have gifts, personalized gifts. I've used them forever. They're amazing. They're a B Corp! New Chapter, which has supplements: healthy, natural, vegan supplements. And then Garden of Life, which is protein powder and protein bars and other things like that.

There are over 10,000 B certified Corps in the world. So, look for that logo and you be a part of supporting organizations that live big by being beneficial presences.

Finally, the last dimension of living big is living big by **LOVING BIG**, which really does not need very much conversation. Because what is there to be said other than these few things? First of all, loving includes things like **caring, having compassion, appreciating, respecting, forgiving, admiring, having empathy for**. Those are all synonyms for loving.

And I love this quote from Pam Grout: "Love, folks, is the big cheese. It's who we are. It's why we're here." And then Jack and William Addington -- in their book *Your Needs Met* -- wrote, "Love walks in and opens the door where all else fails. There is no problem on earth that love cannot heal. Love is the answer to every human need." Enough said.

I want to now share a story. And I don't think it's a true story. It's out of *Living Big*. it's a parable, but it has so much truth and applicability in it. So, it's a story about a lonely little man named Mr. Hatch, and just watch how our three ideas weave into this story.

*Mr. Hatch got up every morning at 6:30 to walk the eight blocks to the shoelace factory where he worked. At lunchtime, he would sit alone in a corner, drinking coffee and munching on a cheese-and-mustard sandwich. After work, he would stop and get a paper at the newsstand, and then he would stop at the butcher and get a turkey wing for dinner. After supper, he read his paper, and then went to bed early, because he had to get up at 6:30 the next day and start all over again. It was, in fact, a very lonely life.*

*One Saturday, however, his doorbell rang and it was the postman, who delivered him a package. He had no idea who would have sent him a package, so he opened it up, and it was a box of chocolates. And in it ...*

I get excited: a box of chocolates, too. I saw your enthusiasm for that! Yeah, send me a box of chocolates. Woo!

*And in it was a simple little card that read, "Somebody loves you." Mr. Hatch was shocked. As he dusted his home that day, he kept going back to look at the package. "Was it still there? Did somebody really send me chocolates? More importantly, does somebody really love me? Who could it be?"*

*Having no idea the answer to those questions, but feeling really, really good just by thinking about them, he decided to put on a yellow tie with polka dots -- blue polka dots, in fact; splash on a little aftershave; and he went for a walk. And on his walk, he waved a friendly hello to everyone he saw ... a change that made the neighbors fall off their ladders and trip over their dogs. [Congregants laugh]*

*At work the next Monday, he took his box of chocolates to the cafeteria to share them with everyone. After work, he offered to watch the newsstand so the owner could go to an appointment. And instead of reading the paper after supper, like he always did, he decided to bake some brownies and take them to his neighbors. Mr. Hatch was a changed man, because he knew that somebody loved him.*

*But then, several weeks later, the postman came back to his home with a sheepish look and said, "Mr. Hatch, do you remember the package that I brought to you a couple of Saturdays ago?"*

*And Mr. Hatch reluctantly said, "Yes, I do."*

*And the postman said, "Well, I'm so sorry to tell you this, but I delivered it to the wrong address. And if I don't redeliver it, my boss is going to have my job."*

*So Mr. Hatch gave the postman back the box, although the chocolates were gone, and he also gave back the card that said, "Somebody loves you," which had been displayed prominently in his living room since it had been delivered. And when the postman left, Mr. Hatch realized with a heaviness in his heart that he had never felt before. "Nobody loves me, after all."*

*Heartbroken, he went back to wearing his dreary old clothes and eating his mustard and cheese sandwich for lunch alone in the corner of the cafeteria. He neglected to talk to the butcher or the news stand man. And after work, once again, he just ignored his neighbors.*

*Well, all of those co-workers and neighbors were kind of liking the new Mr. Hatch, and they started wondering what happened. And they were asking around the neighborhood what happened to Mr. Hatch. The postman heard the questions, and he finally told one of the neighbors what had*

*happened,. And then they decided -- all the neighbors and his co-workers decided -- to show up at his door one morning with a big sign that said, "Everybody loves you, Mr. Hatch."*

*Mr. Hatch cried tears of joy and stepped down off the porch to be with all of his friends.*

Now that's just a parable. But just think about the impact of kindness -- being a beneficial presence through service and love -- had on that symbolic man. How many Mr. Hatches do we actually know? Probably a lot. A lot of people -- perhaps some of *us* -- would be touched and moved beyond words to know that somebody truly, truly cared about us and loved us.

So, I have a charge. Here's my charge for you. Here's my invitation. I'm going to suggest that you do this within the next 24 hours, because if you don't, you'll forget it and you won't do it. Is that not true?

This is what I'm inviting you to do. I'm inviting you to get a note card and write a love note to someone and tell them that you love them. Now, it can be somebody that you know; that's fine! Sign your name. Maybe it's somebody you don't know. Maybe it's a neighbor three blocks down. You never met him, but you're going to leave a note: "Somebody loves you" -- or something to that effect -- in their mailbox. Maybe you go to your doctor's office and you leave such a note on one of the -- you go to the staff parking lot and leave a note of appreciation and love -- to one of those workers. That will make their day. And it will make yours, as well, because nothing feels sweeter than being kind; than being a beneficial presence; and being loving.

So, living big: this is where we've been the last two weeks. We've thought big by having big, bold thoughts about ourselves. We've imagined big by expressing and digging into our innate creativity. We've played big by saying "Yes!" to a life of happiness and joy. And then tonight, blessed big through kindness. Give big through being a service-oriented, beneficial presence. And love big by, well, loving big.

When we do that, we become even a bigger light of transformation in a world that could use us right now. And not only is the world blessed, but so are we.

Namaste.