

THE RIPPLE EFFECT: CREATING A WAVE OF POSITIVE CHANGE

Rev. Stacy Macris Ros

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Well, good morning again! So, you know, I tend to think that I have the pulse of the people. I try to feel out like, *"What's going on with people in my life, people around me, people in the world?"* And I've got to say, it seems like there's a lot of big feelings going on. People have a lot of big feelings. It seems like there's a lot of worry, anger, negativity.

And all of that to say the reminder -- my talk today: to be the ripple of positive change that we want to see in the world. That we are ... The truth is that we are the Divine in expression. We're here on earth, and we're called to be and create the positive change we want to see in experience. That's the truth. So, whatever it is that we want to see out there or in our lives, it starts within each and every one of us. Each and every one of us!

And there's a few places in the Bible that remind us that we are positive change agents and here to do good in the world. I chose one from Romans Chapter 12, Verse 21. It says, *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* In other words, another way of saying that would be: don't be overcome by the negativity, by the hopelessness, by the weariness, by the fear. But, instead, [ut your focus on and take action towards doing good. Doing good.

And I'm not talking about being in denial of what's happening, but to be intentional about overcoming the negative with goodness.

And you all know when you see or hear something that's not in alignment with love -- with Divine loving presence. You know when you see it or hear it. And when you do see it and hear it, that is your moment to realize, *"I'm hearing this, I'm seeing this so that I can show up and be the light -- to be the goodness -- in the world."* It's our call; it's our wake-up call.

But it takes all of us -- *all of us*. Because the more people that are working towards making a positive change, then the more of that energy is created in that direction. And that's how we create the goodness that we want to see and experience.

So, all of this got me thinking about ripples and waves and natural sources of power. And bringing this idea into: how do we collectively make a positive difference? Of course, most of us have been at a lake or a pond, and you've dropped the pebble in. Right? You drop in that pebble and you see the ripples go out. And they go forward and outward, and they more and more rings ... meaning it affects a larger and larger area.

And I was just at the beautiful Alabama coast in the Gulf Coast there, and I was watching the waves and the amazing power of the wind to create these big waves. The power of the wind to create these waves and this massive water -- body of water. And that power of the wind -- that gust of wind -- causing massive water to rise up.

And guess what? You, too, are a force of energy -- of power -- that can make waves of goodness rise up. You are a force of energy to create the positive change in the world.

Now a lot of times we start thinking, *"But I'm only one person. What can I do as just one person."* But also the pebble is just one pebble. The gust of wind is just one gust of wind. The turbine is one wind turbine. But it takes just one to get the energy to start flowing. It gets just one to start that movement. That's how it starts: one person, one action, one moment at a time.

Spiritual author Marianne Williamson said, *"Each of us has a unique part to play in the healing of the world."* Each of us has a unique part to play. So, what one person does will be different than another

person. It could be small; it can be large. But each of us has our part to play in healing the world. And if we join together -- if we stop saying, *"But I'm only one person"* and, instead, join our collective energy together -- then a larger collective good is produced.

See, we're being called. We're being called to be the peace and the love of God on earth right now. That is our call! If you're living right now ... If you're living right now, raise your hand. [Congregants laugh]

Okay, good. If someone next to you didn't raise their hand, maybe check on them. [Congregants laugh]

If you're living right now, then this is what you're being called to do and to be. It's not just *doing* it, it's *being* it. You're being called to be the peace and love of God on earth; to do good works in the world. To create harmony in the world. That is what we're all here to do. Everyone can do it in their own unique way, but we're all here to do that.

The air moves the ocean to make waves; to create energy. The air moves the turbine to generate electricity. And you are moved through Spirit: Spirit around you, Spirit within you, that breathes life through you to create that forward movement from within you to the outer world.

And we have five Unity principles. Now Unity doesn't have a lot of rigmarole, if you will, but we do have our five foundational principles. Our teaching of the five principles. And so, **our first Unity principle says this: God is everywhere and always present in every circumstance. This divine energy is the universal force of love and wisdom that underlies all of existence.**

See, it's already there. The goodness is already there. Look for it; find it. Put your focus -- put your energy -- on the love and the wisdom that underlies all of existence. And then embracing it: sending it forward. Because when you find it and you see it and you embrace it, and you start sending it forward, well now you're moving into our second Unity principle.

Our second Unity principle says: human beings are innately good, because they are connected to and an expression of Spirit. You are the energy and human form that allows this divine energy -- God -- to demonstrate on Earth.

I'll be covering my metaphysical movie series next month with *Star Wars*, but you'll recall Obi-Wan says to Luke, *"Use the Force, Luke. Use the Force, Luke."* We could say that to ourselves: *"Use the Force, Stacy."* I don't want you to say that to yourself; put your name in there. Ready?

[With congregation:] *"Use the Force."*

Yes. Use the Force! Use the divine energy that's around you, within you, and that you are to be a force for positive expression. Whether it's in words or actions, art, song, a smile, a hug; my mom gives out tootsie rolls ... Whatever it is, that you find your way to put light out there. Because it's going to be unique to each and every one of us. But you are connected to an expression of Spirit. So be it! Be it.

Unity principle number three says: our thoughts have creative power to influence events and determine our experiences. You don't control everything, but you do control how you respond to everything. You do control what you determine that experience will be.

So, if you go into a situation and you're thinking, *"This is going to have a positive outcome; this can be a win/win for everybody,"* then most likely -- because you're looking for those opportunities for positive outcome -- that's exactly what will happen. On the other hand, if you go into a situation thinking, *"This isn't going to work out; this is going to be confrontational; I'm dreading this"* ... Well, then, that's most likely what your experience will be.

So Unity co-founder, Charles Fillmore, said, *"We increase whatever we praise. The whole of creation responds to praise and is glad."* See, that's the ripple effect in action. What you praise -- what you give

energy to -- is the energy that you create and put out into the world. Because you are as powerful as a wave. Each and every one of you as powerful as a wave.

So instead of complaining, make a positive wave of change by seeing and praising the good in the world and in your life. Instead of contributing to the negativity -- because we all know there's enough of that -- make a positive wave of change with your words and your actions.

See, you get to create the life you want to experience. That's the good news. You get to create the life you want to experience. And so, what helps us keep our thoughts lifted, our consciousness lifted: our fourth Unity principle!

Our fourth Unity principle says: prayer and meditation connect and align us to our own spiritual nature and to the one great Power in the universe. See prayer and meditation -- which, in Unity, are almost the same thing ... but they help remind us and align us with our spiritual truth, with our spiritual divinity.

We can make every action -- any action in our lives -- be a prayer. Any action can be a prayer. Every word and every thought can be a prayer. It's one of our old Unity hymnals, right? Our thoughts are prayers and we are always praying.

And one time when I was in high school, someone said to me, *"You know, worrying is praying for what you don't want."* That stuck with me. Forty years later. Yeah, every action can be a prayer. Every word and thought can be a prayer. So, what energy are you wanting to sit in? You can sit in fear and worry and complain, or in love and compassion and helpfulness.

But be intentional with your words. Have your breath still you, just like we do here with our meditations on Sunday. Have your breath still you. Have your meditation time remind you of the love, the peace, and the wisdom that is within you. Be centered in your truth. When you're centered in your truth, you get quiet. You move into that heart space. Move into the heart space and remind yourself that love is what you are and love is who you want to be.

And so, it's in prayer meditation that we open ourselves up. We get still; we move to the heart; we open ourselves up. We stop the chatter; we move into the heart. And we ask the heart, *"What is mine to do? What is mine to do in this situation?"* Or, *"How can I express more of you, loving Presence? God, how can I be an agent of peace?"* And then we get quiet and we listen. We can ask God: *"Allow me to be the hands, the feet, the ears, the voice of You on earth What would you have me do now?"* And we get quiet and listen.

Now, I'll warn you: you'll get an answer. And sometimes it's interesting.

I remember I was in my late 20s. I'd just quit as a dietician -- a research outpatient dietician -- at UCLA. Going through a quarter-life crisis, I guess. And I was taking time off. And every day I was meditating. And one day I was meditating and I said, *"Okay God, here I am. What would you have me do for you? Here I am."*

And I heard, *"Have a baby."* [Congregants laugh]

And I said, *"I don't think you heard me right."* [Congregants laugh] I said, *"I'll do anything for you. Like anything."*

And once again, I heard, *"Have a baby."*

Well, Juan, my husband, was out of town ... so I went to pick him up at the airport, because I thought, *"Phhhh. We can't afford to have a baby. He's going to say, 'We can't afford to have a baby.'"*

So, I pick him up at the airport and I tell him my meditation. And he says, *"Well, I guess we have to have a baby."* [Congregants laugh] He said, *"Stacy, your intuition is always right on."*

So, we have a 25-year-old son. [Laughs]

But the idea is: that we don't just sit and pray and beg. We don't say, *"Please God, please let this happen."* No; no begging, okay? We're all going to swear off begging. But, instead, what we do in our prayer and meditation time: we ask, *"How can I embody what I want to see and experience in the world. What actions can I take to create a positive change in my life and in the world around me?"*

And then we get quiet and we listen.

And you can't change anybody. Sorry; you can't change anyone else. You can only embody what you want to experience and take action on that.

Socrates said this: *"Let him who would move the world first move himself."* See, it starts with you. It starts from within. So, we allow that prayer and meditation to center us in that heart space: in that peaceful Presence within. And it's from that place -- from that heart space, from that peaceful place -- that then we move into action.

Because then that's our fifth unity principle. **Our fifth unity principle says: it's not enough to understand spiritual teachings. We must apply our learning in all areas of life, incorporating them into our thoughts, words, and actions.**

So, I'm glad you're all here today. And I want you to take one or two things and apply it. You need to apply spiritual teachings. We need to apply our spiritual tools so that, when there's conflict, you can be the energy of harmony and understanding. When there's anger, you can be the energy of peace. When there's anxiety, you can be the energy of faith and tranquility. When you're losing hope -- when the people around you are losing hope -- then you can be the energy of God's presence on earth. You can be hopeful.

See, we learn it and then we apply it.

Each week we sing, *"Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."* See, it begins with me, and then it's a wave of peace that goes forward.

Every week we sing, *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* ... meaning it's up to us -- Thy, Thy collectively -- to create heaven on earth. It's a direct call to action to be the universal love that underlies all of existence on earth.

Every week we sing, *"Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place."* Metaphysically, Lord means that Christ consciousness: that Divine within you. Yes! The Divine is present in this place! You are the presence of that Christ consciousness in this place.

Be it here and be it out there. We don't just sing about it. We take action to be the wave of positive change in the world; in your world. That's the ripple effect. See, it starts by being the Divine on earth in your personal life -- in every conversation, in every interaction -- and then in your larger community. And then knowing that that starts that wave of positive good in the world, and that your ripple will connect with the other ripples.

You are a powerful, energetic being. You have the ability to be a force for good. And so, in everyday life -- in everyday life! -- use the tools that we learn. Use the five principles. Take something from each Sunday talk and apply it. Apply what you learn in the classes we offer. Spend time with your Unity friends or like-minded friends. We have 12 spiritual powers or attributes. Pull those into your life and apply them.

Gratitude, meditation ... Because whatever you focus on grows. The energy you put into something: it gets pushed forward out into the world.

Confucius said, *"Wherever you go, go with all your heart."* Wherever you go, go with all your heart, Because that's the energy you carry like the wind on the water of the ocean. Go with love.

So let's say our affirmation for today together again.

It's: *"I am a powerful force for good in my world."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am a powerful force for good in my world."*

And now with a whisper: [with congregants, half-voice] *"I am a powerful force for good in my world."*

Yes, you are! So, if we want positive change, we need to apply our fundamental principles and teachings and be the wave of energy that carries forth that positive change.

This is your invitation, my friends, to go out and be that powerful force for good in the world. That's who you are; be it! Thank you, everyone. Amen.

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