

Gratitude in Change

Week #4 of the 5-Week Series, "40 Days of Gratitude"

Nov. 13, 2019

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Okay, you ready? We got two people!

[Congregation laughs]

So, my question for you tonight is: Are you winning at life? We got three people – wooooo!

[Congregation laughs]

Okay; how many of you feel like there's an area of your life where you're winning? And how many of you feel like there's an area of your life where it's too close to call?

[Congregation laughs]

So, if you had to say, what is the defining thing that allows you to win at life? What would be that thing? What is the thing that you do that allows you to win?

You know, some of us think, *"You know the reason I win is because I'm smart."* *"You know the reason I win is because I'm cute."* *"You know the reason I win is because I just get sad and people just take pity on my soul and help me."* Right?

If you had a strategy for winning, what would your strategy be? Florence Shinn, an old time metaphysical writer, wrote this book, *The Game of Life and How to Play It*. This is the opening paragraph in the book. She said, *"Most people consider life a battle – but it is not a battle, it is a game. It is a game, however, which cannot be played successfully without the knowledge of spiritual law, and the Old and the New Testaments give the rules of the game with wonderful clearness."*

And so, what she goes on to say is that giving and receiving she thinks are the first and foremost spiritual principles – and I agree with that. Right? So, do you believe that? That as you give, so shall you receive? So, when Sally Jo is up here singing, and she's giving you everything she has, can you feel that?

Congregation: "Yes!"

Rev. Rogers: And can you feel that somebody's just going through the motions?

Congregation: "Yes!"

Rev. Rogers: And what would you want to share in: somebody who's just going through the motions or somebody who's giving you everything they have?

Congregation: "Everything!"

Rev. Rogers: Because you can feel it – Right? You can feel when somebody’s giving you everything they’ve got. And as you give so shall you receive. And that one of the challenges that we sometimes have is our ego wants to keep backing us off. You know if you gave 100% last time, well you know 92%, and then 47%, and then 22%. And you don’t realize that as you do that – who are you really cheating? Yourself! Right? Because as you give so shall you receive.

So, if that’s the number one spiritual principle – and I really believe it is – if that’s the number one spiritual principle, what you do think number two is?

Congregation shouts out words

Rev. Rogers: Love? Okay. I’m going to suggest today that I think the second most important principle in success is change. And those who can change the fastest win. And, over and over again, what I believe to be so is that our humanity wants us – or tries to get us – locked into the same. But if we look, over and over again, those people that succeed – and those organizations that change the fastest – tend to be the most successful because they’re not stuck in yesterday.

And we have such an attitude in our culture about change. You know, we have this belief that we should never have to change. Right? If it was good in 1950, it should be good now, right?

[Congregation laughs]

Right? If it was good enough for my grandpa’s, grandpa’s, grandpa’s grandpa, it should be good enough now.

And the reality is: does everybody have a God-given right to be as stuck as you want to be? Yes! Just roll over, because the dinosaurs are right behind you.

[Congregation laughs]

Okay, so I have a test for you. Which one of these two organizations changed the fastest? [Shows slide with Blockbuster and Netflix logos]

[Congregation murmurs]

Which of those two organizations changed the fastest? Netflix. Why? Now Blockbuster changed, too, because they changed themselves right out of business. Right? But Netflix, how many of you still get your CDs in the mail from Netflix? Like two! Right? How many of you have Netflix or Disney Plus or one of the digital streaming services? So, what I want you to see, over and over again, is the reason that there are no Blockbusters anywhere in Maricopa County – I don’t think they’re anywhere in the country anymore; there were a few up in Canada. They survived the longest because it’s cold the longest in Canada...

[Congregation laughs]

... was the fact that they had a model that worked for a while. That they believed somehow was going to work forever. And Netflix had a model that: I’ll send you the CDs, you don’t even have to get out of your jammies. I’ll send them – and people said, “Well, I’m not sure that I’m going to want to watch that movie

when it hits my mailbox.” So, Netflix said, “Great! Then we’ll just give you all the movies and you can watch anything. And now you can spend the whole weekend and never leave your house.”

[Congregation laughs]

Because now you can just binge one show after another. Alright, let’s go to the next one: which one changed faster? [Shows slide of triceratops and an alligator]

[Congregation laughs]

Okay – so triceratops – which is the one with the big fan and the horns – Triceratops showed up in the world 83 million years ago. And by 65 million years ago, they were gone. So, I’m sure that 19 or 18 million years is still a long run, right? It’s millions of years...but they had a run of 18 million years. Now, your alligator first appeared in the earliest version of an alligator 245 million years ago. Right? And they’re current – this version of the alligator appeared over 37 million years ago. Right? So, this alligator – while it didn’t change a lot – actually changed faster than any other dinosaur.

And that’s all you have to do. You just have to beat all the other dinosaurs.

[Congregation and minister laugh]

That’s it, right? You just have to find your niche in the swamp, and change faster than all the other dinosaurs. And what I want you to see is, over and over again, even that is more than some of us want to do. Right? Some of us want to be the most consistent dinosaur until we’re [makes explosive sound]. Right?

So, then the question here tonight is: Where is life asking you to change and are you willing to do it? Because we really have this mindset that we shouldn’t be asked that question. Like, if what I did in the sixth grade worked, I should be able to do that for the rest of my life. Right? I should be able to stay stuck in that mindset, because if it worked with the girls when I was in the sixth grade, it should still work.

[Congregation and minister laugh]

Right? And does it work, ladies? No! Right? It doesn’t work.

So, let’s look at this from a spiritual point of view. Okay. [Draws straight horizontal line across the easel pad] This is your spiritual nature. Your spiritual nature is 100 percent consistent. You were created in the image and likeness of God in the beginning, the middle and the end. That part of you never changes. You’re a spiritual being living in a spiritual world, and you are 100 percent consistent – steady eddy -- expressing God. Now, this is your spirit.

[Draws another line, this one squiggly, going up and down] This is your humanity. Your humanity is all over the place! How many of you can see that you are not showing up today the way you did 10 years ago? Right? How many of you in your work – if you work outside of the home – are having to show up in a different way at work than you’ve ever had to show up at work before? Right? Over and over again, what I want you to see is that your humanity is expected to change and evolve over and over again, and it is not stuck. It’s fluid; it’s not supposed to be stuck. Your humanity is supposed to show up in greater

and greater ways because it's really designed, honestly, to go like that. So, your humanity is designed to express God in greater and greater ways, and it constantly changes as how we are being asked to express God.

So, we have to kind of get over ourselves. Right? And I actually want you, tonight, to give thanks for all the ways that you're being asked to change, to evolve, to transform. Because it is keeping you alive! And for most of us, we have such a negative attitude about change. And we can always find another dinosaur who tells us we shouldn't have to! Who 100 percent agrees with us that it was better 10 years, 20 years ago, 80 years, 100 years ago. That the good ol' days were back there?

But we are not here for yesterday! Now, was God glorified yesterday? Yes! To the very best way we knew how. But we're evolving – we're expressing in greater and greater ways – so every time we want to go back there and do it the way we'd done it before... it's like, Spirit's not really interested in that, because you've already done it. What's really interesting is how are you being asked to do it now. And actually show up and say, *"God, how do you want to express through me now? How do you want to express through my life?"* That I'm willing to show up in a new way. Will you say that with me?

With congregation: I'm willing to show up in a new way.

One more time:

With congregation: I'm willing to show up in a new way.

One more time like we actually mean it!

With congregation: I'm willing to show up in a new way.

This is a quote from Rob Stillerman. It says, *"Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently — they're not fond of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do."*

Margaret Mead said this: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

And Albert Einstein says *"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking."*

Mary Shelley in the book, *Frankenstein*, wrote this: *"Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change."*

So, here we are living in a time of great change. Where change is happening! Like, we can't get through breakfast without change happening, right? There's not only Coco Puffs now, there's Coconut Coco Puffs – right? Like how many flavors of Coco Puffs do you really need? Right?

So change is happening over and over and over again, and we think it's wrong. We think we've made a mistake. We think that we're not doing something right; that the Universe is out of control, because it's changing so rapidly. And what I want you to see tonight is: I want you to get on the bus. I want you to be committed to change in your life. And I want you to be committed to change, even though you don't know how it's all going to work out yet.

Because really there's two levels of change: linear change and quantum change. And linear change is that five percent change that organizations do – corporations do – that say, *"You know, we're here now; we want to be here; so five percent change – Okay, we'll get there."* Quantum change is a level of change that intellectually you can't understand. It's when life and Spirit and God and events call you to change so rapidly that you don't see how it's all going to work out, but you have to change anyway.

A caterpillar cannot understand how to be a butterfly. In times of quantum change, we have to trust that there's a level of intelligence – and I believe that it's programmed in our DNA – that there's a level of intelligence within us that knows how to change that rapidly if we will simply trust the process.

So, my job tonight isn't to tell you how to change; it's to get you right with change. It's to – in any way that you've been in resistance to it, or thought it was inappropriate or bad – I need you to get over that. I need you to say "Yes!" to all the change that Spirit wants to do in your life. Because to bless you at the highest level, you have to be willing to change. Because you can't go from however great your life is in this moment to all the blessings of God, without incredible change. Did that make sense to everybody?

You cannot go to the box of your life the way it is now to the infinite goodness of God without change! Change is our path to being more blessed. Change is our path to the goodness of God. Change is our path to greater love, joy, peace – whatever we can imagine – change is our path. And when you decide to get off the path, you are no longer living the spiritual life. Because you're no longer trusting God. And you're no longer doing the inner work you must do to evolve to the next highest, greatest version of yourself.

And so, over and over again tonight I want you to hear me say: How is God – how is life, how is this moment – inviting you to show up differently? Can you trust it enough that you'd be willing to show up differently? [Mimics another person talking to him]: *"Oh, Richard, I've already done enough change in my life."* Great! Go sit with the dinosaurs!

[Congregation laughs]

[Mimics person talking to him]: *"Oh, Richard, no! I don't want that either."* Okay, but that's really our only two choices. We're either going to grow, change and evolve and transform and become greater and greater expressions of God, or we're going to get out of the loop. We're going to stop. We're going to try to resist it. And we're going to be in pain. What happens when we resist life? Change moves anyway, and it either does it without us, or we experience a great deal of pain.

Has everybody experienced the pain of resistance? Did it get better the longer you resisted it?

[Congregation laughs]

Did it finally just get to the point where it became so painful that you finally had to let go of your resistance so that the Universe could move you along? Has everybody had that often enough that you

actually know that that's the way it works? Does anybody need to go through this another 100,000 times? Because Spirit has time for you, right?

[Congregation laughs]

But my thing is: I don't want you to suffer. Right? That the more time we spend in resistance, the more time we spend suffering. So what if, tonight, you just got right with, *"Oh, I'm going to change. It's not a problem. It's the way the Universe works. I want to change. I actually look forward to change. I actually move toward change. I actually want to evolve into a higher and greater version of myself, so I know I must change. That that's actually my most important thing."*

And then, anytime I get scared or fearful – or anytime I want to go backwards – I have a prayer partner or a friend or loved one who just smacks me in the side of the head.

[Congregation laughs]

And they do it with the most love they can do, but they just get me back on the bus. And say, *"No, we're moving forward and I want you to come with me. I want you to be a part of change. I want you to be a part of change that's happening in my life and in the world. And I would miss you if you were in resistance to that, and didn't get to experience it. I would miss you if you didn't get to experience all the blessings of God."*

Now, over and over again, I am ready to change. Together:

[With congregation:] I am ready to change.

Thank you, God, for change! Together:

[With congregation:] Thank you, God, for change!

One more time:

[With congregation:] Thank you, God, for change!

So, tonight I'm going to give you seven points. And I'm going to be quick about it, but I'm going to give you seven points that I believe are fundamental in this process of change.

The first one: There's a sense of urgency in change. Now, if we want to succeed at every level of life – and I believe that there's an underlying human desire is to succeed; to be more and more blessed. Over and over again, what I want you to see is the quicker you can evolve – the quicker you can change – the higher the probability of your success. Does that make sense?

Ford Motor Company almost went out of business because of their success. Because Papa Ford believed that, if he just stuck with a car that he sold millions of, that it was still going to work. Even while other car companies began developing greater, finer cars, he stuck to that car. Ford almost took themselves out, because they stayed stuck in their first version of the car. What was that – the Model T? Right? And then they finally came up with the A, but it was the Model T that their whole growth cycle almost killed them. Right?

So, we have to see a sense of urgency in change. So, how would you live that? Every day you would wake up and say, "Okay, God; I know the Universe is changing. I want to be a part of this changing universe. Show me how I need to change today. Lead me! Guide me! Teach me! ... with a sense of urgency.

Two is: Have a clear vision. Now, why is that important in change? Well, when you have a clear vision, you actually know what you want. And it's so much easier for the Universe when you know what you want!

So, what's the most important thing for you? Do you want to be happy? Do you want to be in love? Do you want to be prosperous? What is the most important thing to you? I want that to be laser clear in your mind and your heart. What is the most important thing? You want to be happy? You want to have overflowing joy? You want to be abundantly blessed financially? What's the most important thing to you?

Having a clear vision is so much easier – right? The Universe doesn't have to say to you, over and over again, "*Decide.*" Because you actually know what you want. So, if you had to list one thing: one thing. If you only got one thing for the rest of your life, what is that one thing that you want the most? Do you want to be happy? Do you want to be loved? Do you want to be at peace? Do you want to be free of fear? Do you want to live abundantly? What is your one thing? And what I want you to see is: there's no judgement on that. You just have to know what it is – what's your most important thing.

Because what I want you to see is: we don't really multi-task well. You know, we go this direction and we go this direction and we go this direction, and we don't really make as much progress as we could if we just get really clear. I want to be happy. Or I want to be peaceful. Or I want to feel profoundly loved. Or I want to be abundant. If you were to pick one thing, what one thing would be the most important to you?

Let's go to three. Not only is it important that you have a clear vision, but that you're committed to your vision. See, if you know what your vision is – and that's really the most important thing in your life – you're willing to go through an immense amount of change. Because the thing that you care about is so important that you're willing to change over and over and over to get to the most important thing.

So, it's not enough to just know what you want; you actually have to be committed to what you want. Have you ever known what you want, but it was a low level of commitment? And so, what happens is you don't really make progress toward that thing because you know what it is, but it's just really not that important to you. "*Yeah, I want peace, but not enough to really give up my drama.*"

[Congregation laughs]

Right? "*I really do want to be in love, but they have to know how right I am all the time.*"

[Congregation laughs]

Right? "*So, I want to be in a relationship – I want to feel just incredible amount of love – but they really just need to tell me how right I am all the time.*" You know, or whatever it is.

What I want you to see is that clarity is power, but commitment moves the bus. Right? So, not only do you have to know what you want, but you have to be committed to it... even in times of change. So that even when your life is evolving – even when it's transforming – your commitment keeps you moving.

Let's go to number four; four is about celebrating the wins. Now, in times of change, do you ever go into your drama that this is hard? You do, right? So, if we're actually going to be involved in a great deal of change, every little win we have to celebrate. Every time we move even a half a baby step in the direction we want to go, we have to celebrate it. We have to celebrate our wins over and over and over again! We have to celebrate the little wins because the little wins build big wins.

So, we have to really celebrate our little wins ... and most of us are terrible at this. Like, if we don't hit a homerun, we don't celebrate. We don't celebrate just the fact that we had the courage to get in the batter's box. Or we don't celebrate if we just tell a little dribbler to first base. Right? We only celebrate if we get a homerun. So, we don't celebrate a lot.

So, over and over again, what I want you to see is that, if you're not celebrating every day – if you're not acknowledging your blessings every day; if you're not acknowledging all the little things that are moving your life forward every day – you're really missing how great God is. You're really missing the opportunity to build your faith through little steps every day that make your life better. So, you got to celebrate all the little wins.

Five: [Developing a mindset of change]. This is the one that I think is maybe the most important one. When you make peace with change, everything in your life gets better. If you know that everything in your life is going to change, you don't miss one moment. Right? If you know that your relationship is going to change, you don't miss the great moments that you have, because you know they're not going to last forever. Does that make sense? When we put on the mindset of change – and we make peace with change, we make friends with change – then we live in the state of Spirit being spiritually awake, because we don't want to miss a moment. We don't want to miss an experience. We don't want to take one thing in life for granted, because we know it's going to change.

One time I heard, you know who Ram Dass is? Richard Alpert... you know, the guy in the '60s: *"Tune on, tune out, tune away,"* or whatever it was. *"Be here now."* I heard him speak once. Not recently; I heard him speak 20 years ago now. And what he said was, a woman came up to him and said, *"I don't know how to live today after my son died. I just don't know how to do it."* And he had a water glass in his hand and he said, *"You know, I thank this water glass for being a water glass, but I know this water glass is not going to last forever. That there is going to be a moment when it breaks, and it's not going to be in my life. I'm not going to have it."* And in that simple example he was trying to teach that life is temporary. Physical life in a three-dimensional form is 100%temporary. Right?

And as we develop the mindset of change, we actually get more present in every moment to enjoy every moment... because we know there's no guarantee for any other moment. That this is 100% maybe all we ever get, and we don't want to miss a second of it. Does that make sense? So, once we begin to put the mindset of change on, we actually begin to live in the present – fully and completely – because we know that every moment is going to pass. Amen?

Okay, six: Persistence. So have you ever had a goal that was so important to you – or a desire that was so important to you – that you had to do something more than once? Has everybody had that experience? So, one of the themes that I realized I've been teaching this year is this idea of persistence.

Because the spiritual being: sometimes if we don't get it fully the first time, we think, "*Well, something's, wrong and this must not be my path because I didn't nail it the first time.*" Right?

And so, we have this mindset that everything... That if you're doing spiritual work, it should always come to you easily and quickly. And if it doesn't come easily and quickly, "*Well, that must not be my path.*" I don't know where we got that idea, right? Because what I see is the most successful people are incredibly persistent. They just keep showing up. They keep showing up every day: doing what they need to do every day. They cut water – I mean chop wood, carry water – every day. Like cut water, chop, carry wood, or whatever it is.

[Congregation laughs]

It's a good Buddhist thing. They do what they do, right?

And, every day, I want you to really see: what would I be asked to do today – fully and completely – if I knew I was going to succeed? Even if I knew I wasn't going to succeed fully today, would I be willing to do this day after day after day to increase my probability of success? That persistence, over and over again, teaches us how to live a greater life.

And the last one is number seven: Gratitude. Right? That when we really live in the moment – when we can really give thanks, when we can really be with God right here, right now – we are incredibly grateful.

So, are you ready for your homework? So, I want you to see if there's any area in your life where you know you've been living in resistance. And instead of trying to back away from the change that God's calling you into – instead of trying to run out the other door – I actually want you to start moving toward change. I want you to put on the mindset of change, and actually move toward that change so that you can be more fully blessed. Because if it is true that change is a requirement for you to be more fully blessed, I need you actually to be moving toward change, not away from it.

And I know that you can find many, many people in your life – in your company, in your work, in your family, in your neighborhood – who are really just angry about change. You know, one of the reasons I think we have so many angry people is that they're angry about how much change they've gone through. They're in grief and they're angry about it. And what I want you to actually look at in your own life is that you're a person who moves toward change. That you're a person who's living so fully in the moment – enjoying all the blessings of God so fully right here right now – that you're actually moving toward change in the highest and best way so that you get to be the most blessed. Are you willing to try?

So, I want you to pick on area in your life where you know Spirit's calling you to change and, instead of backing away from it slowly, actually move toward it. Are you willing?

Let's pray:

I invite you to open your minds, your hearts, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. That God is fully, completely present in your life and that you can trust God. You can believe in God: that God's got you. So, instead of being afraid of life and backing away from change, I want you to move into it with the understanding that, if God is with you now, God will be with you tomorrow and every day

that follows. That you can trust the Lord, your God, to be with you in all things. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

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Thank you to volunteer Hollie Nelson for transcribing this message.