

# I CAN'T WAIT!!!!

Dec. 15, 2019

Rev. Richard Maraj

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** For weeks, I've been thinking I can't wait to get back. For weeks, I have been thinking about I can't wait. You know we always use that expression, "*I can't wait!*" for things we are excited that we like. I mean kids are saying, "*I can't wait 'till Christmas!*" Or we go, "*I can't wait 'till our vacation! I can't wait 'till I lose 20 lbs. I can't wait 'till I meet Mr. Right.*" You know, we can't wait until whatever good thing it is that we want to happen. "*I can't wait until the year ends. I can't wait until my finances improve.*" We can't wait for things that we love and we're excited about.

So, my question for you is: What is it is your life that you can't wait for? What can't you wait to happen? What can't you wait to experience or become or achieve or create in your life? You know, when we say, "*I can't wait!*," it's an expression of our excitement, our joy, our anticipation and looking forward to some greater good – some greater thing we think will improve our lives, bring us greater joy or happiness.

But I also believe the phrase, "*I can't wait!*" says some other stuff, not just about eagerness and anticipating good. I think "*I can't wait!*" also plays into the truth that we sometimes want to rush and get what we want quicker than whatever the natural time and period of process of it happening. I think "*I can't wait!*" speaks to a little bit of impatience, and even a resistance to even allow things to happen in their natural and appropriate way. It is a desire to rush and get quicker to that thing and to say, "*I can't wait!*"

And I think it also plays to the fact that most of us don't like to wait. Anybody ever been in a long line at the DMV? Waiting in the long line?

**[Congregation laughs]**

You know; have you ever had to be at the doctor's office – and it's 45 minutes past time – and you're just getting irritated waiting? You know; waiting on hold with the insurance company for a long time. Waiting for your partner to get ready to go out to an event. Waiting for the rush hour traffic to open up. Waiting for the test results. Waiting to get over that flu that's been so pesky. Waiting for slow service in a restaurant. Waiting sometimes even for our phone to charge! We can't wait – we get kind of impatient.

So, not only do we not like to wait, how many people here have ever gotten impatient, frustrated and cranky waiting too long? Anybody ever have that experience? A few. I think we can all relate to this one: we're at an elevator, we press the button, we wait and we know that you only need to press it once!

**[Congregation laughs]**

You wait and the elevator will come. We know that. We know pressing more doesn't work. But how many people would admit that you went to press a second time even harder than the first, because you were impatient?

**[Congregation laughs]**

And how many dove into the pool a third time and not only pressed harder, but pressed more frequently?

**[Congregation laughs]**

We don't like to wait! I think Tom Petty had it right when he said, *"The waiting is the hardest part."*

We have a tough time waiting in our culture, and I'm thinking, *"Why? Why is waiting so hard?"* The first one is, I think, we live in a culture that really kind of teaches instant gratification. *"I want it; I want it now!"* Sometimes you'll hear somebody say, *"I want it yesterday."* I think that kind of impatience is built in and the kind of culture we have.

Another reason we don't like to wait is we sometimes think, *"If I don't get it now, I may not get it at all. If I have to wait that long, maybe I just won't get it."*

Another one is: we think – when we're waiting that long or something's taking that long – something's wrong. Something is wrong! We're not doing something right. Our consciousness isn't right. We're not working hard enough. If it's taking long; something must be wrong.

And then the last one is: we don't like waiting, because waiting feels like it's out of control. And if we have a control issue – which I know no one here does...

**[Congregation laughs]**

...but I hear there are some people somewhere! That waiting becomes excruciating because it's uncertain and it is unknown.

Waiting in our culture is not an easy thing, but I would say it is a valuable and important to understand and learn how to wait. One of the most powerful Scriptures I remember as a kid when I first heard it, is Isaiah 40:31: *"They that wait upon the Lord..."* Three things will happen. They shall renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

So, by waiting on God, we get renewed strength by feeling that connection and Oneness. We get a higher perspective, a greater awareness. And then in our efforts, we don't get worn out... because we're energized, because we're doing it from a spiritual place.

Waiting is a powerful practice, a powerful gift. But many of us don't like to do it! We think waiting is passive. Waiting is weak. Waiting is soft. We need to make it happen and make it now! And yeah, there are times for that, but we – blanket statement – don't like to wait.

So, I want you to think about waiting. What is your relationship with waiting? What are your thoughts and feelings about waiting? And how well do you wait? How many people would admit that there's probably ways you could improve and maybe even benefit by learning how to wait in a greater and better way?

You know the thing about waiting I find is that waiting – the idea, when I think about waiting in its fullest sense – kind of oozes patience and calmness and serenity and openness. And being grounded and centered to really wait connotes all of those ideas. And if I were to say one word that really makes

waiting possible, that word would be TRUST. See when you trust, it's easy to relax and wait. Because most of the time we're tense and anxious, impatient.

But when you trust, we can actually relax into it and be calm, and be patient, and be more open. When you trust that everything's going to be okay... when you trust that God has a plan and a purpose for your life... When you trust that God loves you, trust that the Lord is my shepherd... (*"I shall not want."*) When you trust that the Universe is supporting you and guiding you at all times, waiting actually becomes an easier and more joyful experience.

Now, waiting becomes harder when you don't trust. Waiting becomes harder when you don't believe. You feel disconnected from the Source, or feel like things aren't going to work out. Waiting becomes harder when you start worrying and becoming anxious about all the details. Now, that support and trust is always there. It's just we don't always feel it. We aren't always connected to it. You know, sometimes our minds can do some funky things that make us feel distant and disconnected, feel hopeless. You know, feel so stuck. Feel like, *"I'll never get a break. Things are never going to work out."*

Anybody ever have a time where you felt you were in a bit of a funk, and even though you are a regular meditator, you were meditating and you still didn't feel connected? Anybody ever have that? Okay, three; that's good.

***[Congregation laughs]***

Or you're doing your spiritual practice, but you're just not feeling it? You know... That your mind is just anxious and you're obsessing about every little thing? And you just can't seem to stop it? And then we get frustrated about our lives and we start arguing about what happened. You know, *"This shouldn't have happened, and I hate that that happened. I can't believe she said that to me."* We start getting caught up in all of these things.

Getting angry that we got sick or angry that we're not healing as quick. Or angry that our family's in conflict. Angry about the divorce. Angry that our legs are hurting or our back is hurting, or this isn't working or that isn't working... or our finances are... And we just keep going over and over. And our minds can really take us to a place where we literally feel distant and disconnected from God. Because we're fighting against life, it seems, with our thoughts and our minds.

I saw this sign; it said, *"Don't try to teach a pig to sing."*

***[Congregation laughs]***

And there are two reasons. The first one is: it's never going to happen, and you're only going to get frustrated. The second reason: it really annoys the pig.

***[Congregation and Rev. Maraj laugh]***

So, I had this heel thing happen in October. And initially, I was here for four or five weeks in the chair; thought everything was going cool. And then things started going south. So trying to protect the heel, I hurt some other part of my leg. And then, things kept getting a little worse and worse and worse to the point that I had to be on full bedrest, that I couldn't even be here in this situation! And I got so down. I've got to tell you: it's probably the deepest down I've been in in years. Feeling like a failure. Feeling everybody getting mad at me. Feeling like I'm not capable. Feeling ashamed of myself. Feeling frustrated

that I haven't really left my house much in a year. I mean there are things, if we could just get to a place. You know and not that I'm saying that it was like Chicken Little, but it was close!

***[Congregation laughs]***

In my little world, you know! And I was so consumed with it! My head, it was hard to feel connected.

Years I've been doing this! You know, I felt really, really stuck in a major, major way. And I wasn't quite sure how to handle it. I felt embarrassed about it, to be honest, in so many ways. So, I wasn't sure what to do, because I'm trying to go through the motions and do all this stuff, and it's not working. Feels like everything's going the opposite direction of the way I want.

So, I think you all know I have this love-hate relationship with the squirrels in my backyard.

***[Congregation laughs]***

And since my mind was all over the place already, I was already complaining about them. And while I started complaining, I hadn't seen them in a long time.

***[Congregation laughs]***

I literally – literally that same day – saw the squirrel for the first time in a while. And he started running across the fence. And he usually runs across the entire fence. And there's mainly window in the kitchen, but there's a little gap. So, I saw him and there would have been a space, and I was expecting to see him on the other side. But I went and I'm thinking, "Where'd he go?" And he didn't go far; he just stayed on the top, on the brick part of this pillar on the fence.

And so, I came to where the sink is and I'm just looking at this squirrel. And it's just sitting there. And it's sitting such an inordinate amount of time, I'm thinking, "My God; squirrels don't do that!"

***[Congregation laughs]***

It was so long, I actually started timing it on my phone!

***[Congregation laughs]***

That's how incredible this was! Three minutes! That squirrel didn't move. And then, it didn't scurry away, it just hopped away and went behind the shed. And I haven't seen it since. And it's funny, because I'd read a Scripture that said, "Be still, and wait upon the Lord." That it is in the stillness and the quietness that we can reconnect to the Truth that's always there.

See, my head has been so disconnected, that I have not been able to feel: not been able to really connect or feel joy or feel a sense of Oneness. And so, it's like that squirrel! And I know it sounds ridiculous: it was like the perfect thing I needed to remind me. Because if a little squirrel, for goodness' sake, could be that still, then it really was a calling to me. And actually, what I started doing was meditating, but I also started doing some journaling, because it was just a way to feel a little more grounded, a little more connected.

Things have definitely lightened and helped me along that process. But one of the things it helped me realize is that that peace is always there. The quietness kind of quiets the mind and brings down the walls to just naturally feel what's there. I didn't have to force feeling God's love, or force feeling that the Universe is supporting me. And what it is, is trust.

The book of Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding, but in all ways, acknowledge God and he will make straight your path."* So, I had to try and tell myself to stop thinking about what I'm thinking, or at least stop letting what I'm thinking bother me.

I'd like to say I'm doing it exquisitely well right now... but at least I'm doing it better than I was. But you know the funny thing is, the more we trust, the more we can calm down and wait and just know that all things are working together for our highest good.

The soul knows how to wait, but the human mind can get a little impatient. And that's why bringing them together in quietness is the greatest thing we can do to bring some ease, and to help ourselves not be as impatient, but to literally wait with trust. Because trust is the thing that brings it, and only stillness and quietness can do that.

I remember when I saw, *"Be still and know that I am God,"* but it's really to still your mind. And yes, stilling the body helps, but the most important thing is how to still and quiet the mind. Because when we do, that trust, that connection, that Oneness is there.

The second thing I want to talk about is to wait with UNDERSTANDING. Do you know all the great leaders in the Bible – whether it was Moses, or Abraham, or Joseph, or David, or Paul – had difficult times? They had struggles! They had times where they felt lost in the wilderness. They felt disconnected from anything. They didn't feel that God loved them. They didn't feel that they could do anything great.

And one thing I've come to realize that life has certain seasons. That there is the spring, and the summer, and the fall and the winter. That everything has seasons and processes like the planting season, the growing season, the harvest season and then the renewing season. It even says in the Old Testament that in Egypt there was going to be seven years of feast and seven years of famine.

There are ebbs and flows in our lives and the immediate thing for us is to think, *"Well, I'm failing. I'm clearly doing something wrong. Something bad and negative is happening."* And the fact is, it is just a part of our process. It is a part of our journey and our experience.

Anybody ever have something you thought you'd already dealt with come back and start bothering you and disturbing you? And you thought, *"Hey, I thought I was over that thing!"* Or you ever have somebody say something to you that doesn't normally upset you, but suddenly it did upset you? Or you even have an old decision – some regret, or investment, or something you did – come back and you get mad at yourself all over again, even though it's been years?

And we sometimes think, *"Oh, my God, I thought I'd done that! I guess I didn't do my spiritual work."* And blah, blah, blah. And the answer is no. It is just your soul is ready for a deeper healing and cleansing of that particular thing. You know how grief takes years? It's because it takes time for those layers of sadness and pain and hurt to be processed. And sometimes, some of those things that we've done some good work in before: when they pop up, it's not a sign of failure. It's a sign you've got some work and

your soul's ready to cleanse and release, and open yourself to bring more light and more joy, and more goodness into the world.

You know these things happen to help us on a deeper level. That they are a part of our journey. Everybody know Dave Chappell? So, he had a successful show, a \$50 million contract, but he was upset and sad. He was disillusioned. He didn't feel he was being treated well, and he checked out of that. He went away for 10 years! And people say, "*Wow, something went wrong. That was a bad thing.*" But Dave Chappell came back 10 years later happier than he's ever been. Funnier, if that is even possible, than he's ever been. More successful in so many – all! – areas of his life. And so, was that a mistake? Was that a bad thing or was that part of his journey?

Sometimes we think that, because it's a detour, it's a devastation. But it's really a discovery. It's a discovery of different aspects of ourselves. And sometimes things aren't linear, and sometimes the picture doesn't look as pretty as we'd like. But instead of looking at the picture, dig a little deeper and find out what it is trying to teach us. What it is trying to show us and reveal to us?

Last night, Tiger Woods. Captain of the President's Cup team. And they won, and he played pretty good. But I remember about two weeks ago, they were showing the 10th anniversary of his car crash and all the ways his life literally crumbled. Interesting thing is, I think people like him more than they ever have. His teammates like him more. He seems happier. He's a great father. But maybe that stuff humbled him in a way that made this possible.

Life doesn't always look and fit into an ABC and a 123 formula that looks as smooth as we'd like. And we need to not blame or beat ourselves up, because it isn't going as well. We need to look deeper at what's going on.

Anybody remember the movie, *Click*, with Adam Sandler? Love that thing! He had this universal remote that could fast forward or pause all the unpleasant things in life. Kids are kind of acting up: fast forward. Wife nagging at him: pause.

***[Congregation laughs]***

And he started liking that so much he kept doing it. The thing I thought was so interesting: at the end of his life, what he realized is he didn't know them or feel as close. Because when you just skip over the arguments, skip over all the negative stuff, you miss some of the texture that creates perspective and strength and understanding. That makes your life as whole and complete.

I bet every one of us has something in our lives right now that you'd like to fast forward. But I guarantee– in some way, and you may not know it now, because that's the way sometimes life is – you've got to live through it all. And then you see it in retrospect, and it's like, "*Ah; that's what that was trying to teach me.*"

Whatever it is going on in our lives right now – and for me, even feeling this stuck... which I feel some stuck-ness still – I know is a part of my journey. I know whatever we're all going through is a part of our journey, and we need to not let the mind and stuff distract us from going deeper and learning what it's here to teach us.

Sometimes you can think this... If you love somebody, you think to them, *"I don't want anything to go wrong in your life. I want everything to go smooth. I don't want you to have struggles. I don't want you to ever have to wait."* But is that going to bring them the best thing and make them the full person that they came to be? I would suggest it's because of all those things. We want to fast forward, that life can be as great as it is.

When I look at all the people in my life that I admire the most, it's how they handle those moments. It's not that they didn't have them; they had them. It's how they stood and faced them, and processed and moved through them. And, yeah, we have a tendency to sometimes feel sorry for ourselves. And we could have a good little cry... but we need to get back to that deeper work of understanding what it came to teach. Understanding what it came to show. Understanding how to live through those seasons that aren't exactly the ones that we want to be living. But the one we need to be living is right in front of us.

The third thing I want to talk about it is to wait with EXPECTANCY. So, there's wait with trust, wait with understanding; this one's wait with expectancy. The fact is, when you wait with trust and you wait with understanding, the next natural thing is to wait with a joyful expectancy of what else is coming into our lives.

You know, they did this study about expectation: the expectation effect. And they had two groups, and they had some mice and a maze. And the first group got told they had amazing mice, brilliant mice. And they had to teach them how to do this maze. The other one they said you have some dull, dim, not bright mice.

***[Congregation laughs]***

They both got time to teach them in the maze. And wouldn't you know it: the ones they expected to be good, were better. And the ones they expected to not be so good, weren't so good. They were all the same mice!!!

Expectation does make a difference. It really has an impact on our lives. The Bible is filled with things about expectancy. To me, expectancy is faith with enthusiasm and optimism. It is all rolled in together to know that life can and will and does get better. That possibility and potential's always available for us.

Look at the words, *"Ask and ye shall receive."* There's an expectancy of possibility there. *"Seek and ye shall find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you. With God, all things are possible."* I could go on and on. It's there! So, we can wait in an expectancy that – even if we can't see it now – there will be a point. That there will be some greater good. That there will be solution.

I found a quote; I love it! Gail Gaither said this: *"Live with expectancy, but not with expectations."* Hear that one: live with expectancy, but not expectations. See, sometimes when we have these exact expectations of this should happen Tuesday but this time or this person shouldn't act like that, we'll get disappointed. But when you live with expectancy – that something good, that some learning, some progress, something underlying will bring forth something better, even if it's not under my own timing – then we change how we live. We change each day.

I always say one of my great heroes is the woman who was hemorrhaging for 12 years. Who on that day, got up and penetrated the crowd that was around Jesus, and touched the hem of his garment... and was

healed. I always think of that: man, 12 years! Twelve years – every day for twelve years – things not going well. And you wake up on that day – with expectancy and faith and optimism – that you would go and press into a crowd of people to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment. But here’s my bigger question: How do you think she woke up every day? Could she have woken up every day with an expectancy? And whether it’s not necessarily of being healed... but some expectancy of good? Some expectancy of living life? Some expectancy of positivity?

And so, what are you expecting from your life? What are you expecting from your day? And I love that line: it’s about expectancy and not expectations. Because expectancy is a mindset, an attitude, an outlook. And yeah, we’re going to fall out of it, but the more we can get back into it – as frequently as we can – will make the days enjoyable, and move us toward greater things.

The final one is going to be the opposite of waiting, which is to not wait. Because sometimes we keep waiting... until the kids grow up. We keep waiting until they leave the house. We keep waiting until the summer. Waiting until we make enough money. Waiting until we meet the right one. We’re waiting a lot to give ourselves permission to be happy, and excited, and joyful. We’re waiting to call ourselves a success. We’re waiting to call ourselves happy. We’re waiting... And we need to just not wait, and just enjoy the fullness of life right now.

I love what that Scripture says: *“Lift up your eyes and see that the fields are already ripe for harvest.”* Because they really are! And sometimes we’re not in the most ideal situation: not leaving my house in a long time, in a year. We all have situations where you’ve got to find the happy in your space – of not trying to look for it somewhere else – wherever we are.

Last week we had our staff party at my house. Man, did we have a good time! I love working with these folks, but I love even more having them in my house and being more joyful. We had some wild and crazy things happen, but we have a rule: what happens at the staff Christmas party, stays at the Christmas party.

***[Congregation laughs]***

But that’s one wild bunch, let me just leave it at that.

***[Congregation laughs]***

I also, my workout partner: we haven’t gotten a chance to work out all year. I think Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> was the only day we worked out this year! And I got to see her and her boyfriend; they came over and we had some laughs, and it just felt so nice. All those notes you all wrote me, I read every single one of them, and they just warmed my heart. One of the greatest things we have to remind us how good life is are the people in our lives to celebrate, to connect, to appreciate and just have a nice laugh and enjoy some time together.

You know, I want to preface this other one by saying that I am really not a very competitive person. And then I want to preface that by saying: you ever notice people who say, *“I’m really not like that”* or about to tell a story that makes it clear that they really are like that.

***[Congregation laughs]***

So, I'm not a competitive person, but last Super Bowl, Rev. Rogers came to my house. Now, I tell you that I had bought eight poinsettias, and six of them were still alive in February. And I was trying to keep them alive, but the two that happened to be dead, happened to be right at the front of the... As soon as you open the door, you couldn't help but see them. And so, he comes in, Mr. Smart Aleck, and he says, *"Oh that's quite the green thumb you got there, Richard."*

***[Congregation laughs]***

And something in me was like, *"Oh yeah?????"*

***[Congregation laughs]***

*"I'll bet you I can keep the other six alive and they'll be looking fabulous for next Christmas."* And so, I have been trying to take care of these plants for this long.

***[Photo pops up on the screen of a green poinsettia plant. Congregation laughs]***

And I think I kind of planned that they'd be red again. Well, only a week ago or a week and a half ago, I Googled how to make them red. And it said it takes six to 10 weeks with 14 hours in the dark. And I'm, like, way behind the eight ball!

***[Congregation laughs]***

But, I would say, that's proof that that sucker's still alive.

***[Photo pops up of a close-up of the plants' leaves, which shows the stems are red. Congregation laughs]***

And only the stem – the little stem part – is red, but it will be red. It may not be in time, but I have to say, in my little world, this is an exciting victory.

***[Congregation laughs]***

That I kept a plant alive!

***[Congregation applauds]***

I mean, I am really not Mr. Green Thumb Guy! I mean so this was quite an accomplishment.

Last thing: somebody from the congregation gave me a book entitled, *The Pretty Good Joke Book*.

***[Congregation laughs]***

And since I love you – and I'm a giver and I love to share – here we go. And these are all waiting jokes:

*"So, a lawyer and his friend are in line at the bank and five robbers tell everybody to get on the floor and get all your jewelry and money out, and we're going to collect it. And they hadn't reached the lawyer and his friend yet. And the lawyer pulls out a wad of money and hands it to his friend and he says, 'Here's the thousand dollars that I owe you.'"*

***[Congregation laughs]***

Okay....

*"You know I took a speed waiting class and now I can wait an hour in just ten minutes.*

***[Congregation laughs]***

OK, I just want to point out something: that the book is called, *The Pretty Good Joke Book*.

***[Congregation laughs]***

They apparently ran out of *The Very Good Joke Book*, and this is what I got. So, when you put it in perspective, those aren't bad jokes.

***[Congregation laughs]***

Big finish!

*"A duck is standing by a busy roadside waiting for a break in the traffic to cross. A chicken walks up to him and says, 'Don't do it, Bud; you'll never hear the end of it.'*

***[Congregation laughs]***

They're all waiting jokes! I know what you're thinking: *"It wasn't worth the wait."* But...

***[Congregation laughs]***

And so, waiting for us is not an easy thing. Waiting is the hardest part. But I really believe there's also a great blessing and lesson in this gift that we have of waiting.

The more that we can wait with understanding, the more we can wait with trust, the more we can wait with expectancy and then NOT wait to live and enjoy our lives, we will mount up with wings like eagles. We will run and not grow weary. We will walk and not faint. Because we will be living our waiting... and that is a big part of life.

God bless you, everybody!

**Copyright 2019 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Maraj**

***Thanks to volunteer Hollie Nelson for transcribing this message.***