

I AM ASKING

Feb. 19, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Okay; have you ever had a spiritual contradiction with an idea or a principle? That at one level made sense, and at another level you're going, "What?" Has anybody had that experience? Where you look at a principle and you go, "I think it's true, but then it looks like it competes or it's not quite in alignment with this principle..."

Like, what about the idea that we want to hold to our faith: have you ever heard that idea? That we want to hold on – that you don't want to give up before your miracle. Have you ever heard of that idea? Like, that we're supposed to walk in faith and not give up, and keep on keepin' on. And we're supposed to do that. But then there's also this other spiritual idea that says we're supposed to let go and let God. Right? And so, sometimes, am I supposed to let go? Or am I supposed to hold on?

[Congregation laughs]

Right? Because, sometimes, do you ever get spiritually confused? Sometimes it looks confusing! It's like, "Okay; in this moment, am I supposed to let go into something, or am I supposed to hold fast?"

And what about the idea: are you supposed to ask, or are you supposed to affirm? Right? Because, how many of you know that Unity teaches affirmative prayer? Right? And affirmative prayer is this idea that you decree a thing: you decree a spiritual idea. Right? But then we also teach that we ask. Over 30 times in Scripture, Jesus says ask. Ask, ask, ask, ask, ask! So then the question becomes: are we supposed to decree a spiritual idea or are we supposed to ask for what we want?

How many want to vote? How many vote that we're just supposed to decree, decree, decree want we want? Affirm, affirm, affirm. We've got one solid vote; we've got a half dozen votes. How many want to vote for ask? Ask, ask, ask, ask, ask? How many of you don't want to vote because you don't want to be wrong?

[Congregation and Rev. Rogers laugh]

So I want to talk about this today. Because in Job 22:28 it says, "*Thou shall decree a thing, and it will be established unto thee, and the light will shine upon your ways.*" And that's why we teach affirmative prayer. But over and over again, Jesus said ask! Right? So are we supposed to ask or are we supposed to decree?

And then we read in Matthew 17:20, what it looks like he's saying both! "*Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will be done. For nothing will be impossible for you.*"

So what I want us to look at today is really how we do both. Because I think that sometimes our prayers are too wimpy. Can I say that? Like, the promise is – Jesus said that – it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Right? And so, sometimes, I think that we're so timid in our prayer life that we're not really asking – we're not really decreeing – for what we want. We're kind of being, "*Well, if it's not too much trouble...*" Right? Instead of really just claiming the level of good that we want. And sometimes I think that we just need to ask in a much bigger way than some of us are asking.

How many of you were raised in a family where it wasn't okay to ask for too much? Like, there was a little bit of family shaming going on if you asked for too much: like, "*Who do you think you are asking for all that? You should just be happy with whatever you get.*" Right? Anybody else? Nobody was raised like that?

Okay, so what happens is: we come into spiritual community, and we think, "*Well, I don't want to be a little, greedy piggy, so I'm not going to ask for too much; I'm not going to declare too much. I'm going to be kind of timid, because I don't want to be ungrateful. You know, God's getting older...*"

[Congregation laughs]

"You know... Maybe there's not as much 'infinite' as there used to be, and so I don't want to be too much... I don't want to stretch the envelope. I don't want to seem ungrateful. So, my prayer life: I'm just going to kind of ratchet it down."

Well, this year we made a commitment to elevate our lives! And what I want you to see is, over and over again, that you can't elevate your life without also elevating your prayer life. That over and over again, what I want you to see is, I rarely think the problem is that you're asking for too much. I really believe that the problem is our understanding of how and why prayer works. Because over and over again, I want you to be asking. Because there is something about asking! If you don't ask, then there's a level of life that you're not really laying hold of. There's a sign of maturity that – when you're willing to ask for the next level of good – the Universe knows that you're actually ready for that level of good. But if you're not asking for it...

I remember I made the mistake one time – when I was like 5th grade, Mr. Frazier. I was complaining about my reading group. I don't know why I was complaining about my reading group, but I remember I was complaining about my reading group. And he said, "*Fine; I'll move you.*" And so then he moved me to the highest reading group. Now, I'm of the age where they had reading groups. And so the highest reading group: these kids read for enjoyment. **[Mugs looking shocked]**

[Congregation laughs]

I didn't know who these people were, right? Like, I read to get things done, right? I wasn't reading just for grins! I wasn't looking for a book to take home! There were a lot more fun things I could think to do than reading for enjoyment! And he put me in this group of people who were reading for enjoyment; they wanted more reading assignments! **[Mugs looking shocked and bewildered]**

[Congregation laughs]

I was way over my head! I mean, I've learned to become a reader, but by the sixth grade, I was not a reader! It was not... this was weird, right? And what got me into the situation? Asking! Right? There's a moment when your soul knows that you've outgrown the little pond that you're living in, and you ask. And the Universe says, "*Finally! You're ready for a bigger life! I know how to get you there!*"

And so we have to ask! For all the places where our lives have become too small, too ordinary, too regular, too confined, we ask! And at that moment, the Universe knows to move us to the next highest reading group, where people actually read for entertainment! And it will blow your mind! Because you'll find a whole other circle of people who are not living your old existence! Where they don't even understand that existence, because they've moved beyond that existence miles ago! And then you

actually find your new people! You find your new soulmates! You find the people who respond to this new level of life. If you don't ask, you keep hanging in the shallow end of the pool, waiting for something to happen. And over and over again, Spirit just says, "Ask!!!!" Jesus said ask, ask, ask, ask, ask!

And then, when you ask, there is a process of us decreeing. Somebody give me one of your favorite restaurants that has pie. The restaurant has to have pie. So give me a restaurant – favorite restaurant – that has pie.

[Congregation shouts out answers]

Village Inn. Okay ... Village Inn ...

So if you walk into Village Inn – at pretty much any time, 24 hours a day – if you walk into Village Inn, and you ask for a piece of pie, are they going to give it to you?

Congregant: "If you pay!" [Congregation laughs]

Rev. Rogers: Well, they don't even know when you ask for it if you're going to pay for it, right? If you ask for it, they will bring it to you. True? Is that true? Right? Because their business is to sell you pie. Right? That's their business! They make money if they sell you pie!

Now, when you walk into Village Inn, do you have to be pathetic to ask for it? Do you have to shame or go into your dark place or your wounded place? Or do you have to go into a long, drawn out story of why you think you need pie?

[Congregation laughs]

Do you just walk into a Village Inn, they sit you down, and you say, "Bring me a slice of blueberry pie"? And if they have it, will they bring it to you? **That is your prayer life.** I want you to see that that is 100% your prayer life. That, in God's infinite Universe, you don't have to shame yourself; you don't have to beseech God; you don't have to get pathetic. You don't have to go into your victim place. You don't have to go to your wounded place. You walk into a field of infinite possibilities, and if you want blueberry pie, you ask for it! And if the Universe has blueberry pie in that moment for you, it is provided! You don't get any bonus points for being pathetic. And, in fact, the wait staff in the Universe don't want you to be pathetic. They're tired of you being pathetic! They're tired of you groveling around the corners, instead of asking for what you want. They're tired of you mumbling and being small. They want you to ask for what you want: to decree that, if the Universe has blueberry pie, it's going to bring you blueberry pie.

Now, if you go shopping... Say you're looking for a watch. And they bring you a watch. And you say, "I need a watch with more diamonds. Do you have a watch with more diamonds?" Are they going to find you a watch with more diamonds? Now, do you have to sound sad and pathetic, or just because you asked for more diamonds, will they do everything in their power to find a watch with more diamonds? And if they bring you out a watch with more diamonds, and you say, "Don't you have more diamonds that are bigger than this?" Will they find you a watch with diamonds bigger than the watch they're handing to you? And it might have a little Rolex sign on it, or whatever.

[Congregation laughs]

They will upgrade for you! And what I want you to see is that the Universe is designed to provide for you when you have the willingness to ask for what you want. See, over and over again, what I want you to see when it comes to prayer, is there's two aspects of prayer: there's FOR and FROM. Okay?

So, when you're praying, do you want to know what you're praying for? **[Laughs]** Can you imagine that it's helpful to know what you're praying for? Can you imagine that... You don't call up an 800 number to Land's End and say, *"Just send me a shirt."*

[Congregation laughs]

Right? They like it better when you actually have the order number of the shirt you want. Can you imagine? And if you know your size and the style number, they think you're a rock star. Because then they just get you off the phone, and then they go work sending you the shirt. The thing that I want you to really focus on is that the FOR is important, but also the FROM. The FROM is what? The FROM is you!

Like, when we're praying FROM our woundedness... Can you imagine that, if you're praying from your woundedness or your brokenness – or if you're praying from your greatest pain – as you put that prayer out in the Universe, it is going to come back to you weird. Right? Because what you're putting out is from your deepest wound! Over and over again, what I want you to see is that we have a role in prayer. It's to really get ourselves "right" before we pray. Because if we're not right – if we don't believe...

How many of you have heard the idea that we live in an infinite Universe? To whatever degree, we all believe it to some degree or another, right? We live in an infinite Universe. So, if we live in an infinite Universe, by definition, anything that you could pray for is already present. Does that make sense. Anything that you can pray for already has to be within the Infinite, or the Infinite is no longer infinite. Right? Infinite, defined, means a lot of everything.

[Congregation laughs]

Right? Can you just give me that one? So whatever your FOR is, the more we pray FROM a realization that it's already present in my life – I'm just not experiencing, I'm not seeing it, or I don't believe it yet. So the FROM is changing so that we can realize that we live in an infinite Universe, governed by spiritual principles. And when we get our FROM right, we always get our FOR right! But when we pray from our sad, broken, empty, little place, right? We think, *"God save us from this! And please give me that! And I need one with cherries on top! And it would be nice if it had all four wheels..."* Right? When we pray from our wounded FROM, everything gets weird. Can I get an "Amen?"

[Congregation: "Amen!"]

There is a principle called the "Matthew Effect." And the Matthew Effect pretty much says that, whatever you are, more of that will be given to you. Okay? It comes out of the Bible. But there's a lot of scientific research which shows that wealthy people have an easier time of attracting wealth. Happier people have an easier time of attracting happiness. Healthy people have an easier time of creating health. There's a principle in science that is called this Matthew principle. And the idea is: whatever we are, we have an easier time of experiencing.

Does this seem like a crazy concept to anybody? No! I mean, at some level, we all know this. At some level, we all believe it.

Let me just go to some Scripture: *“For everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance. But for him who has not, even that which he has will be taken away.”* Now, does that sound fair? No! So what it is saying? When you pray from a place of lack and limitation, no matter what you’re asking FOR, you’re not going to experience it until you get right with the infinite goodness of God that is all around you! We keep thinking that we can change the world by changing something “out there.” It never works that way!

We actually have to do our prayer work first on ourselves! *“God, let me see the abundance that’s all around me. Let me see the good that is all around me. Let me see the abundance that’s available to me in this moment. Let me experience the love that is all around me.”* We actually have to begin our prayer life with ourselves, and not in a timid way! *“Heal any broken part of me so that I can know my fullness; so that I can know the glory of God!”*

Also from Luke 19:26: *“I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for him who has not, even that will be taken away.”* Woo hoo! Right? It looks cosmically unfair! It doesn’t look like it should be that way. But it is that way! That we actually have to start with ourselves. *“Heal me!”*

Now, even saying, *“Heal me”* implies what? That I’m broken! Right? So we actually have to get to the point where we see that we are the center of a whole, healthy, dynamic, prosperous Universe. And, as we pray for ourselves, that we may be the channel – the expression – of the Living God. Then everything in our lives begins to transform.

Mark 4:25: *“For him who has, more will be given; and for him who has not, even that will be taken away...”*

“And he answered them saying, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but not to them.’ It was not given to them! *“For to him who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but for him who has not, even that which has will be taken away.”* From Matthew 13.

Here’s the deal: I want you to have the most wonderful, prosperous, loving, happy, healthy, amazing life that’s possible. I want you to be asking for that! I want you to be decreeing that! I want you to be claiming that! I want you to be affirming that! I want you to knowing the truth of that! And I also want you to see that it’s already fully present. Jesus said, *“The kingdom of heaven is all around you, but men see it not.”*

As I said many times, the implication is that every woman does, and every man cannot... The kingdom of heaven is all around you, and men see it not. ***[Gesturing as if to say, ‘Do you get the joke?']***

[Congregation laughs]

I’m working too hard tonight!

[Congregation laughs]

Okay! So here’s the deal, right? I want you to start with you: *“God, heal any disbelief. Heal any woundedness. Heal anyplace where I don’t believe or think that I’m worthy of it.”* Let’s start here, and then we can move out in all directions. But if we think that it’s “out there,” and we’re going to try to grab it and stick it in here ***[points to heart]***, it never works well. It has to start from within!

“I am an abundant expression of God!” Together:

With congregation: *“I am an abundant expression of God.”*

Rev. Rogers: *“All that the Father has is mine! Together:*

With congregation: *“All that the Father has is mine!”*

Rev. Rogers: Now, is that present tense or future tense?

Congregation: Present!

Rev. Rogers: Those kids taught me that! Isn't that fabulous? Is it future tense or present tense? It's present tense! It means that the whole Universe is in you already! Waiting for you to claim it! Ready for you to declare it! Ready for you to pray for it! Because over and over again, when we get our own house right – when we get our own soul right – the entire Universe flows into us. Because it's already there!

“I live in an abundant Universe.” Will you say that with me?

With congregation: *“I live in an abundant Universe.”*

Rev. Rogers: Okay, so are you ready for your homework? I want you to change the way you pray: no small thing. And I want you to start with you. I want you to get your own house right. Before you start trying to change your life, I want you to heal anyplace within you that doesn't believe in abundance, that doesn't believe in love, that doesn't believe there's enough, that doesn't believe. I want you to start here [**points to his heart**]. And as you start here, then everything flows. If we start out there, trying to get it to jam in here, it never works.

“God is with me.” Together:

With congregation: *“God is with me.”*

Rev. Rogers: *“All that the Father has is mine.”* Together:

With congregation: *“All that the Father has is mine.”*

Rev. Rogers: *“Open my eyes that I may see the Infinite.”* Together:

With congregation: *“Open my eyes that I may see the Infinite.”*

Rev. Rogers: Let's pray.

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. There is only One: One Presence, One Power, One God, One Good, right here, right now, manifesting through all of us. Today we let go of the illusion that somehow it's “out there,” and that we have to go get it; we have to go pray harder or pray more. And today we stay at home: we stay in ourselves, we stay in our own soul to realize that everything is within us. Everything is within us. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is.

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