

LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY

March 18, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Welcome! I'm Richard Rogers; this is the Wednesday night service, and I'm so glad you're here, even if it's virtually! You know, our online presence is important to us: that we be reaching people, especially in their time of need. So I want to thank you for being a part of this ministry, and if you want to support this ministry, please donate today, because we want to make sure that this ministry is able to do all the work that we are called to do in the world.

So, we don't really have a lot of announcements for you, other than the campus is closed today. And we are doing this virtually, so there's nobody in the room. It's just Sue, Craig, Zack in the back and myself; and we're here!

So, are you ready for a great experience? I want you to open your mind and heart right now to have a great experience of the presence of God.

MEDITATION:

So we're going to move into this time of meditation, that we really open our minds and our hearts in this uncertain time, that we know that God is our constant presence. So I invite you to close your eyes, take a deep breath, and as we move into this time of meditation that you feel the presence and power of God that is within you and all around you. That you truly feel the presence of God. Sometimes our mind begins to tell us the story that we're all alone. And, yet, the truth is that God is always there. That whatever is going on in your life, today God is right there. God is with me. And I want you to say those words silently with me: God is with me. God is with me! Right here, right now.

Whatever is going on – whatever the situation may be – whatever the need is, God is with me. The power and presence of God that is within me and all around me is guiding me and directing me in every situation of life. Just take another deep breath, and feel the presence of God right where you are. Right here, right now, God is right there. And sometimes it even kind of surprises us: God is with me! In all those times when I felt alone and disappointed and frustrated, even angry, God was right there. And how much would ever moment have changed if I could have felt the presence of God right there? So, today, what would happen if you let go of your sense of separation? If you let go of that idea that you're alone? And you opened your mind, your heart, your soul to all that God is? God is right here, right now!

There is only presence and one power at work in the Universe and my life: God the good. And God is right here. God is right now. Whatever the need – whatever the situation – thank you, God, for being right here, right now, and providing everything I need. Thank you for all the times when I get out of my self-defeating thinking or my scared ideas or beliefs, and I move into a greater experience of what could be. Thank you, God! Thank you, God, that I'm living a bigger, greater life than I've ever lived before. Thank you, God, that even in this time, I can go deeper into my connection. That, if I'm spending more time alone, I can actually use it as spiritual practice to go deeper and deeper into my connection. Thank you, God! For the abundance that fills my life... For the good and the greater good... For a life that is even better than I had ever imagined. Thank you, God, for being right here: right where I am. Right where I need you the most. You are my God; you are my Source and my inspiration.

So, today, I walk in your presence; I live in your presence; I move in your presence. And, over and over again, my first and last thought is thank you, thank you, God. Thank you, God; thank you, God! Thank you, God, for all that is, all that is being called to be, and all that I'm using this time to really deepen my spiritual life. Thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

MESSAGE:

So my question for you today is: How do you live in uncertain times? You know, there's a part of us that wants to control everything. Do you ever have that feeling in your life? Where you just want to control everything. You want to control what's happening. You want to control how other people behave. You want to control what happens at work. You want to control how the holidays go; how your family goes. There's a part of us – out of a place, I think, of deep insecurity – that wants to control everything and everyone, every moment. And our ego would just love that experience of just absolutely being in control of everything. **[Chuckles]** We would love it! Our ego would be so happy if we got to be the absolute king or queen of our life, and control everything down to the detail.

“No; you can't do that! You've got to do this! You can't – no! You can't make that choice; you've got to make this choice! No! It can't rain today; it's got to be sunny!”

And there's a part of us that absolutely wants to control life at that level. But I don't think that's our spirit. I don't think our spirit comes into this world thinking that we need to be in control of everything. See, I think our spirit knows God. I think our spirit trusts God! I think that our spirit actually wants to have this experience of living life with a high degree of uncertainty... because that's why we came! So our ego wants to be in control, and our spirit just absolutely trusts that God is at work, and wants to participate in the way life is.

So, today, the question that I want to place before you is: How are you dealing with uncertainty? How are you doing it? How are you dealing with walking in this life from a place of vulnerability. Because there's really two ways that we can deal with this. If you look on the spectrum of life, this is **[draws face with hair on fire]** “hair on fire.” Right? Hair on fire. This is hair on fire. Right? And, for some of us, we know how to deal with uncertainty with our hair on fire. Because we're freaked out; we're scared. We're running around; we're calling people. We're in our drama. We're in one situation after another, and our hair is on fire, and we're screaming, and we don't know why. This is the “Chicken Little” approach, right? And we don't know why everybody else isn't as freaked out as we are, because – with everything that's going on in the world today – you should be freaked out. Right? So that's one extreme.

The other extreme is that we're just in deep peace. **[Draws happy smiley face]** Right? We know, from a place of deep peace, that everything's going to work out. We don't always know how it's going to work out; sometimes we don't even need to know how it's going to work out. But the other extreme of just “hair on fire” is living life in deep peace.

Now, when we're in the “hair on fire” place – in that state of mind where our hair's on fire – we really are Chicken Little. We want the whole world to know that the sky is falling. And when we look at people who are in deep peace, we just think that they're too stupid to get it. That they're just not smart enough to know that the sky is falling. And so we try to gin up our drama – our fear, our anxiety – so that they can really appreciate how scary this moment is. Right?

And then the deep peace person – that persona within us – this deep peace place is just a place of being curious. Right? You're just kind of curious how the next thing's going to work, and how the next moment's going to unfold. And you're open; you're receptive. You're in a place of deep peace. And what happens is, physiologically, the deep peace person's blood pressure is pretty much at normal. Right? Where the "hair on fire" person – their adrenalin's kicked in; their blood pressure's up; their pulse is racing; their mind is moving at a million miles an hour.

But, of these two places, which do you think actually can discern divine guidance best? Right? Which one do you think can really stay connected to that still, small inner voice? Because, in my experience – when my hair's on fire – I am not responding from a deeper level of truth! **[Chuckles]** When my hair is on fire, I just want to run; I want to get as many things done as I can. I want to get out of the building. I just want to try to save myself, you know. **[Chuckles]** And I don't really care who I have to toss out of my way... Because my hair is on fire, and my number one job when my hair is on fire is to survive. I mean, that's where I'm living from! I'm living from this deep sense that everything's not okay, and I just have to survive.

But when I'm in the place of deep peace, like... There's, like, calm. My blood pressure is normal. My pulse is normal. I'm staying connected to my own place of power. Staying connected to the voice of God within me. I'm making good choices, because I'm not operating out of a place of being freaked out. There's just a deeper level of truth. Because I know, from this place, that I'm having a relationship with God.

So, today, what I want to do is: I want to talk about five aspects that I think kind of move us to a deeper level of peace. Five aspects that allow us to live a greater experience of life.

And the first one is **BREATHE**. I want us to breathe. Sometimes when our hair is on fire, our breath is so high in our body – is so shallow, it's so like panting – that we just need to take a breath, and move the focus back into our body, back into our... Move the energy down – lower than our screaming head – and just take a deep breath.

So what I want you to do right now is: I want you just to take three deep breaths with me. Just three long, deep breaths. Let's take a breath together. **[Breathes in]** In. **[Breathes out]** Out. **[Breathes in]** In. **[Breathes out]** Out. **[Breathes in]** In. **[Breathes out]** Out. And just feel that the moment that we begin to pay attention to our breath, everything in our life becomes calmer and easier.

And so one of the things that I want you to see – that, during this time of uncertainty – I want you to pay attention to how you're breathing. Are you doing really heavy, shallow head breathing? Or, if you move the focus of your attention down to your belly, and I want you to take some deep breaths.

My grandmother had a lot of what I would call superstitions. She had a lot of things about what you had to do: about throwing salt over your shoulder, or whatever. Things that you had to practice or it was going to be bad luck, or things were going to happen. And she had a lot of these stories. And I remember one of my favorite ones was: she believed that, if you forgot something, you had to go back in the house and sit down and count to 10 before you could go back out and do whatever it was you were doing.

And I remember a time when my grandparents... My grandfather had forgotten something; they were in the car and had started to drive away. They came back, and he was upset; he was angry that they had forgotten it. So he kind of stormed into the house. And my grandfather was only about 5'6". So my

grandfather was about 5'6", my dad was about 5'10", and I got to be 6'4". So every generation we moved up about six inches!!!

So my grandfather: he was a little spitball, right? So he comes marching in the house. He's angry; he forgot it. He grabs it and goes back out in the car. Gets in the car. And even though none of us heard this conversation, all of us know exactly how this conversation went! My grandmother said to him, "*Did you sit down and count to 10?*" And he growled: "*Rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr.*" And she said, "*We're not leaving until you go back in the house, sit down and count to 10.*" So, two minutes later, he's back in the house, and he's growling the whole time. "*Rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr.*" Sits down. And you could kind of hear him cursing underneath his breath as he's counting to 100. But 100% because my grandmother really was in charge of the whole family – even though you really didn't understand that from the outside – she really was in charge of the whole family. So he's there growling, counting to 10.

But what happens is: the whole idea of this is you count to 10; you take a breath, and you just relax. You kind of regroup. That, over and over again, what I want you to see is that – even if you don't get all the way to 10 – whatever's going on in your life right now, I just want you to take four deep breaths. Three deep breaths. If you can take 10 deep breaths! You know, absolutely reset your system. That, for so many of us, when we're scared – when we begin to believe that the world, that the sky is falling, that the world is crashing in around us – I just want you to take 10 breaths. I just want you to sit down, see if you can feel your feet and your body and your legs, and just take 10 breaths. Just count to 10. Just breathe! And see if everything in your body doesn't get easier. Take a breath!

Because what happens, over and over again, when we take a breath, is we just begin to accept life as it is. That, for so many of us, we have this thought that life should be different. *It shouldn't be this way; I shouldn't be confined in my own home.*" Or, *"I should be able to go out and do this or that.*" And it's like: just take a breath! And just accept what is. Just allow this moment to be what it is.

So take a breath. The first one: take a breath.

Two: I want you to **IDENTIFY WHAT YOU'RE FEELING**. And what's happening when your hair is on fire, is that you really can't identify anything. You're really living from an unconscious place. But as we begin to move more and more to a place of deep peace, we can actually begin to slow down and identify what we're feeling.

And what I'd like you to look at is: to identify even the feeling underneath the feeling. So maybe you say, "*Well, I'm feeling angry.*" Or, "*I'm feeling upset*" or "*I'm feeling disappointed.*" Or, "*I'm just mad as heck!*" Right? And hear that: I want you to be able to identify that initial feeling that you're having. That initial experience that you're having. But then I want you to ask yourself, "*Is there a feeling underneath that that is even deeper or even more true?*" Because, for many of us, there is a feeling that is deeper than that. And maybe it's a feeling of vulnerability.

One of the things that I've been really practicing in my own life right now is just acknowledging the times in my life where I'm feeling vulnerable. "*I'm feeling vulnerable; I'm feeling vulnerable!*" And then, over and over again, as we move into that state of vulnerability, or just acknowledge it... Or, "*I'm feeling out of control*" or "*I'm feeling uncertain.*" "*I'm feeling frightened economically about our financial future.*"

Whatever it is, what I want you to see is that, for most of us, we have layers of layers of feelings. And I want you to see if – as you move to a greater level of peace – if you can identify the feeling underneath the feeling. Because, as we get to our core feelings – as we get to the deeper level of feelings – what we realize is that we can actually get to a higher level of peace.

So identify your feelings, and identify the feeling underneath the feeling.

Now let's go to three. Three is I want you to **WRITE IT DOWN OR SHARE IT WITH A FRIEND**. Now, why is this important? Because if we get into a closed loop with our fears – if we're in a closed loop with our anxiety.... Our anxiety actually creates more anxiety. Our fears actually create more fears. And what happens, over and over again, is when we get into our scared place – when we get into our “hair on fire” place – we actually begin to feed off our own negative feelings, our own negative emotions. And what begins to break that chain of feelings is if we write it down.

So if you have to write down all the things you're feeling, it actually stops you in that moment from just this continual loop of negative emotions. And the best thing that you can actually do is just share it out loud. Any feeling that you're willing to share out loud, it actually removes the feeling, and you get it outside of you so that you can actually look at it. It's like, *“Oh! I'm afraid about economics. I'm afraid that I'm not going to be able to pay my mortgage.”* Or, *“I'm afraid that we're not going to be okay. Or I'm afraid that I'm not going to get the toilet paper that I need right now, because gosh knows, I only have like 40,000 rolls of toilet paper in my garage right now, and I may run out by the year 3030!”* Right?

And so, when we can actually get our fears outside of ourselves, and we can look at them, then we can begin to relate to our concerns in a very different way. But when we hold them inside of ourselves, then they just become a loop, and they just run and they run and they run.

And it's amazing when we share our fear with another human being, and they can just look us in the eye and say, *“Richard, I love you right there. I just love you right there! I hear you're afraid of that.”* Or, *“I hear you're concerned about that. And I just love you right there.”* And that's really something that we can actually train people how we want to be supported. We can actually teach people how to support us in the greatest way.

So when we're sharing our concerns – when we're sharing our feelings – we don't need them to fix us; we just need them to look us in the eye and say, *“Richard, I love you right there. I hear you're afraid right now”* or *“I hear you're concerned about this, and I love you right there. I hear you're not sure how this is going to work out, and I love you right there.”*

So the idea of writing them down or sharing them with a friend actually gets those feelings out of us, and we can actually move them into a new experience.

Which takes us to four. Four is that I get to **CHOOSE A NEW EXPERIENCE**. So if I'm running around with my hair on fire, what I want you to see is you begin to identify what your feeling is if you've gone through the steps. Then you say, *“So, if I wasn't having my 'hair on fire' experience, what new experience would I rather have? How would I rather be in this experience?”* And then we can just decide how you'd rather do it. *“Well, what if I moved into trust? Or what if I was open to the possibilities of this? Or what if I moved into acceptance? Or what if I chose to believe? Or what if I wanted to be more connected or more loved?”* And, over and over again, what I want you to see is that, when your hair is on fire, you are

not at conscious choice point. There's no choice happening there. You are just unconsciously reacting to the fears that have driven you probably your whole life.

But the moment you begin to go through these experiences that I'm teaching, you can actually choose to have a very different experience. *"So, what if I actually chose peace?"*



I want to show a picture. This picture is on the wall in my office. And it's a picture of a little girl petting a giant rhinoceros. And the caption on the picture in my office says, *"Trust is not being afraid, even when you're vulnerable."* Trust is not being afraid, even when you're vulnerable!

And I want you to see that! Because, for right now, there are things that are going on in our life right now that feel like they're the rhinoceros in our life. They feel so big, so scary, so overwhelming. And that, sometimes in those situations, we feel so small. And what I want you to see is that, the moment that you can actually decide and make peace with your own vulnerability, that's the moment that everything in life gets easier. Because there are things that are out of your control. There are times in our life when we're vulnerable! Where we don't have control over the situation. Where maybe we're being laid off, or maybe our office is closing. Or maybe the situation at work or with our health or our family. There's times in our life where we are completely vulnerable; where we feel like that little girl standing in front of a very large rhinoceros. And what I want you to see is: It's okay to be vulnerable. It's okay! Because what we can't see in that picture – and what we don't always feel in our life – is that God's got us.

And that takes us to the fifth step in this process: **FEEL A DEEP CONNECTION WITH GOD.** See, I actually believe that this time that we're in right now is really... That we can use this for our spiritual good. That we can use it to go deeper than we ever have before. That we can use this time where we're supposed to be kind of alone – instead of just watching hours and hours of Netflix; nothing wrong with Netflix, but instead of just doing all the things that we're trying to do to distract ourselves from the situation – we can actually use it as a spiritual process. We can actually go deeper. We can actually deepen our prayer life, deepen our connection, deepen our time of meditation, so that we actually feel the presence of God right here, right now.

So, what if – during this time – you actually doubled or tripled the amount of time that you spent in meditation? What if you really began each day by really feeling more and more connected? Because what I know to be true is that, the more I feel connected to God, the more I automatically move into deep peace. The more I feel separate from God, the more I feel like my hair's on fire.

So it really provides us an opportunity to say, *"So, with all that's going on in the world, how much time in prayer and meditation do you need right now?"* I think in times of change and times of uncertainty, we actually need to "up" our time of prayer and meditation. **And that's your homework for this week! This week I want you to double the amount of time you spend in prayer and meditation.**

You know, a couple of nights ago, I woke up and I was in a lather. I was upset; I had a bad dream. I kind of freaked myself out. I was definitely my "hair on fire." And it was about 2:30 in the morning. I got out of bed, went into the other room. And I just gave myself about 45 minutes of just meditation: of deep feeling the connection of God. Because I had gone into my ego; I'd gone into the story; I'd gone into the drama. I'd gone into the "worst case" scenario. And I went through this process until I could feel the

infinite presence of God right where I am. Right within me. That the presence and power of God is right here! And the moment I could do that, I was back to peace.

So what I want you to see is that – whatever is going on in the world right now – this is our opportunity to really just get grounded and still in the presence of God. To feel God right where you are. And to learn that there is – as Jesus said, *“In the world there’s tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I’ve overcome the world.”* Be of good cheer, for there’s a power of God in each one of us that is greater than anything in the world. And that’s my practice; that’s what I’d like for to be all of our practice! Is that we feel the presence of God; we know God. We know God intimately well, and that we’re spending time in prayer and meditation every day, really deepening and broadening our connection with God.

So let’s take a prayer, and let’s move into this as we close today.

Prayer:

I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here. That right where you are, God is. Right where you are is the full presence of God! That within your being – within your soul, within your spirit – is the infinite Spirit of God. Take another deep breath. You are not alone. God is right there! And as you breathe into that, you know that you’re safe; you know that you’re secure in the infinite presence of God. We just notice – when we think our “hair’s on fire” – we can just smile at that part of us that gets so frightened, that gets so scared, that gets so wiggled out by life... And we come back to the deeper truth: that I’m created in the image and likeness of God. That I’m whole and complete, lacking in nothing. And so it is. Amen.

God bless you all! Thank you for being a part of this Wednesday night service! Thank you for your continued support of Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center, because your support – especially right now – makes all the difference in the world.

God bless you, friend, and I look forward to being with you next week!

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