

# THRIVING IN PLACE

April 1, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Hello! I'm Richard Rogers, and I am so glad that you're with us today! You know, this is a very important time that each and every one of us gets supported so that we can live our best life. And that's what Unity is all about: is supporting you in living your best life over and over again, in greater and greater ways.

And I want to thank everyone who has been supporting this ministry through this time. You know that there's relatively no one in this room today: we've got a sound guy, Zack; thank you. We've got Sue here. We've got Craig and Sally Jo's going to be up here in a moment, just doing an incredible solo. But this is all for you. Every day, we are holding you in prayer: that your life... that you're safe, that you're protected, that you're feeling blessed, that you're feeling the presence of God in greater and greater ways.

So let's move into our time of meditation.

## MEDITATION:

I want you to close your eyes and feel the presence of God that is within you and all around you. I want you to really feel the presence of God. You know, sometimes in times of need or in times of crisis, our anxiety – our fears – get to be so big that we feel disconnected from ourselves, we feel disconnected from God. And, over and over again, as we come back to our center – our sacred center – we are filled, we are healed, we are blessed, we are transformed. During this special time, the more that we can release our anxiety and our fears and feel the presence of God, the more that we're actually stimulating the healing power of our body. Right now, we can't afford to be afraid. We need to focus our mind, our heart, our soul on God, and know that we are surrounded and enfolded in pure Spirit, pure love, pure light, pure God. God's healing power is moving through every cell and fiber of your being.

Take another deep breath. And feel the power of God right where you are: filling you, filling your home, surrounding your family, providing everything that you want and need. Thank you, God, for this time where we get to walk our faith. And every time that we move into fear and anxiety, we come back to our faith. We come back to our truth: that we are one with God. We are living the expression of all that God is. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God!

Take another deep breath. And I want you to look into your future. And I want you to see yourself blessed, prospered, well loved, whole in every way, for as far as you can see into your future. Let your mind and heart live into your greatest future. That we are well blessed. That we are profoundly satisfied. That our life is just getting better and better and better. That I see a future for you that is greater than you could ever imagine. That is the glory of God expressing. That is the overwhelming abundance of God filling your life. And every time you see into your future, I want you to see yourself wildly blessed, whole, prospered, loved, surrounded in love and light and beauty in every way. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks for every blessing: every good thing. And so it is. Amen.

## **SONG:**

***Sally Jo Bannow: 'Life Uncommon (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)***

Don't worry mother, it'll be alright  
And don't worry, sister, say your prayers and sleep tight  
It'll be fine, lover of mine  
It'll be just fine

Lend your voices only to sounds of freedom  
No longer lend your strength to that which you wish to be free from  
Fill your lives with love and bravery  
And you shall lead a life uncommon

I've heard your anguish  
I've heard your hearts cry out  
We are tired, we are weary, but we aren't worn out  
Set down your chains, until only faith remains  
Set down your chains

And lend your voices only to sounds of freedom  
No longer lent your strength to that  
Which you wish to be free from  
Fill your lives with love and bravery  
And we shall lead a life uncommon

There are plenty of people who pray for peace  
But if praying were enough it would have come to be  
Let your words enslave no one and the heavens will hush themselves  
To hear our voices ring out clear  
With sounds of freedom  
Sounds of freedom

Come on you unbelievers, move out of the way  
There is a new army coming and we are armed with faith  
To live, we must give  
To live

And lend our voices only to sounds of freedom  
No longer lend our strength to that which we wish to be free from  
Fill your lives with love and bravery  
And we shall lead...  
Lend our voices only to sounds of freedom  
No longer lend our strength to that which we wish to be free from  
Fill you lives with love and bravery  
And we shall lead a life uncommon

***[Light clapping]***

## MESSAGE

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Sally Jo, Craig, thank you so much! Thank you for being here today! Thank you for blessing this experience; we are so blessed by you.

So, happy April Fool's Day! **[Laughs]** If you're watching this, and it's not April Fool's Day, just delete it! But happy April Fool's Day! You know, in my family, when I was growing up, this was a very special day for my father. He would always find a practical joke for the family, and so April Fool's Day, I always think of him. And so, bless you, Dad.

So that's where I want to begin today. I want to begin with: Is your life a blessing? Is it a blessing? Is some of it a blessing? Or is all of it a blessing. Is some of it just kind of tolerable, and some parts are good? Or is everything a blessing?

You know, I did a recent series of classes on the book, *The 'I' of the Storm*. And one of the underlying premises of this book is that everyone and everything is here to bless us. And that's a radical shift for most of us. For most of us, we have this idea that some of life is here to bless us, and some of life we're just trying to get over or through to the other side, so we can get back to the good stuff.

But, really, what if everything in your life – everything in your life – was here to bless you? Can you imagine what it would be like if every moment of every day, you received it as a blessing? If it was absolutely here for your greatest good? If it was here to bless you right now, right where you are?

And I can hear in our mind saying, *"No, Richard; if I was in Hawaii right now, then everything would be a blessing. I could literally be blessed if I was in Hawaii right now. Or if I was in a relationship right now. If I was in a relationship right now, then everything would be good. I'd be loved; I'd be in a relationship. Everything would be good."* You know, or I could hear you say, *"If I could get to my favorite Mexican restaurant right now."* **[Laughs]** *"Everything would be good! Or if I could just leave the house, everything would be good. Or if my spouse or my children would act the way they're supposed to, then everything would be a blessing."*

But, right now, what if you decide – because it's really a mindset. What if you decide right now that, during this time – whether you're locked in, wherever you're watching this today – if everything in your life is here to bless you? And when you think about your past – or when you hope for your future – what I want you to see is that, when you think about your past, you can think about a blessing. You can actually hope for a blessing in your future. But the only time that you can actually experience a blessing is right now. This is the moment; this is the only moment! In the NOW moment is the only time when you actually get to experience the blessings of your life. You can think about the old blessings; you can hope for new blessings. But it's only in the NOW that you actually get to experience the blessing. And this NOW moment is the only place where your blessings can really be experienced... Where your soul can enjoy them.

And, over and over again, what I see is that we're being asked – I think, as a whole nation right now – to shelter in place. And for some of us, that is awful. Right? We would rather be anywhere than have to stay where we are. Because for some of us, the act of slowing down is difficult. Right? There's a part of us – a human part of us – that, when we slow down, what tends to begin to happen is all of our

woundedness comes up screaming. That, because we're not busy – because we're not entertaining ourselves... because we're not running a million miles an hour – what we begin to acknowledge is the wounded parts of ourselves that we have to begin to listen to. And what I want you to see today is: I want you to heal those parts of you that absolutely need to be healed today, so we can let go of the pain of the past and really move into an experience of "right now" where you get to be radically blessed.

Because the reality is that your spirit always is asking you to slow down. I believe that's a universal theme: that your spirit is tapping at the door of your soul saying, "*Slow down. Slow down. Experience this moment. Feel the fullness of God; slow down!*" And your ego is universally saying, "*Speed up! Do more! Go faster! Be more productive! You're not doing enough.*"

And so, over and over again, what I want you to see: that every time we have the opportunity to slow down, we have the opportunity to heal... And to heal at deeper and deeper levels the aspects of us that we have yet to heal. And to transform so that we can really move into this idea that God is eternity. Like, that's a long time! **[Laughs]** Like, that is a very long time!

And what if, today, you really slowed down into the moment so that you could experience every moment as a blessing? To feel all that God is? Because my biggest concern is you're going to miss this moment. My biggest concern is you're going to miss the blessings of this moment. And what we know to be true is, if we miss the blessings of a moment, we have to circle back around to it over and over and over again.

You know, I worked with a lot of coaching clients in 2008 and afterwards, as the market crashed. And one of the reoccurring themes that I had for people in my coaching program was: I want you to get the good out of this moment. I don't want you to miss the good in this moment. Because what we know to be true is – if we miss a moment – it has to replay itself. And it will replay itself over and over and over again, until we get the blessing. Until we get the good.

And, until we slow down and really hear the good that is available to us in this moment – for our soul – then we miss the blessing that life is! Because right now there are so many blessings in slowing down. You get time at home with your family. You get to spend quality time; I'm seeing more dads in the parks with their kids. I'm seeing more families even just hiking. So that we get to spend more time with our family. You have time to read a book. Really, the good news and the bad news is: we actually have time to exercise! We actually have time to walk around the block! We can try a new recipe. We can deepen our spiritual life.

And we can realize that we're all in this together. There's not red states and blue states right now. There's one United States, and we are all in this together, to move through this experience in the greatest possible way. And I want you to get every ounce of good that's available to you.

Back in 2014, Ariana Huffington wrote a book on *Thrive*. And I did a series on it a few years ago. And the idea that she wrote about in this book – in *Thrive* – is that there's four elements that she determined were the keys to thriving in any situation. And most of us think that we're going to thrive when we go out into the world and make our name for ourselves, or do the good that we're here to do, or go create the life we want. But what I want you to see is: I want you to be able to thrive "in place."

Last week we talked about surviving, and just surviving the experience. And survival is kind of the basic step: it's the foundational piece. But the next step above that is – when we really thrive – when we thrive exactly where we are.

And that's what I want to talk about today: I want to talk about supporting you in thriving right where you are. Thriving in place. Thriving in your home. Thriving in your life. Thriving in being the person that God created you to be. And [Ariana Huffington] found four key elements that were accountable for thriving.

The first one was **A SENSE OF WELL-BEING**. During this time of sheltering in place, I want you to know that your well-being is intact. Well-being is defined as “a state of being comfortable, healthy, happy.” It's not just getting through the events; but it's getting through the events in a state of being comfortable, healthy and happy.

For most of us, we have a very high need to get things done. If you look at most people in our country, being productive is a very high cultural value. And so one of the things that is happening right now is – when we're being asked to stay at home – our sense of being productive is absolutely being impacted. Because we're not getting all the stuff done that we usually do in a day! I mean, last week we were out cleaning out our garage. And it's like, because we had the time. **[Laughs]** We wanted to finish cleaning out our garage.

And so what I want you to see is that desire to be productive is absolutely good. But oftentimes, it drives us to a place that is unhealthy. That is not for our best. So if we're not going to be productive – if we're actually going to put our own sense of well-being first – then it's like in the airplane, where you're asked to put on your own mask before you help put on the oxygen mask of anyone else. Because, over and over again, what I want you to see is that this time is divinely inspired. That what seems so wrong about this time can actually take us to a higher level of good! You're being asked to turn within: to go into your home; to shut the door; to connect with the people that you love; to go deeper into your own spiritual life. Over and over again, the best thing about this time is that you get to go deeper into your own life.

So what would it look like for you to be at the highest level of well-being? What she found is that there were three things that really determined – and really magnified – our sense of well-being.

The first one was **meditation**. And she showed study after study after study that showed when we meditate at least five minutes a day, that everything in our body changes: our body chemistry changes, our mind changes, our sense of peace and connectedness change. Five minutes a day!

Then she also showed study after study that showed, if you're **sleeping eight to nine hours a day** – and, ideally, as many as 10 hours a day – that you actually function at your highest level. And for most of us, historically, we're struggling to even get eight hours of sleep. And she said those top athletes that get between nine and 10 hours of sleep actually function at their highest.

And the other one that she talked about was **movement**. Sweat therapy.

During this time, what I want you to see is that meditation, sleep and exercise are the things that are going to help you move through the stress of this situation in the best possible way. I want you to be sleeping at least nine hours a day. I want you to be meditating regularly, every day. And I want you to be

walking or moving your body 15 to 30 minutes every day to let your body process all the stress that we're in. So the first thing I want you to see is that your well-being is important.

Now, the second point that she made was **WISDOM**. And wisdom is really learning to connect with the Source of wisdom that is within you. Each and every person has the still, small voice within. And, especially during this time of need – during this time of chaos and confusion – what I want you to see is how important it is for you to really connect with your own inner wisdom... So that you're living a life where you feel guided. That Spirit is directing you. That you're being guided on your employment; you're being guided on your health. You're being guided for your family. That you're living a life where you're walking in faith – walking in Grace. And you're living a life where you're accessing your own inner wisdom – the wisdom of God within you – so that you actually move through this time from your most powerful place.

She quotes T.S. Eliot:

*“The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word...”*

*Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”*

Over and over again, what I want you to see is that, as we slow down, we actually access more of our inner wisdom. The 17th century French mathematician and philosopher Pascal said it this way: *“All humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”*

See, that's what we're asked to right now! And as much as some of us extroverts hate feeling locked in a room – trapped in our own house – what I want you to see is that you're being asked to be still and go deeper. Over and over again, the fevered pace of life – that we've been moving faster and faster and faster. But right now, you've been told to go home; be still; connect with the people around you; connect with God; and go deeper. We actually can listen to the wisdom of our soul: listen to the power of God within us.

And the third aspect of this process is when we really develop an understanding of **WONDER**. Walt Whitman said it this way: *“After all, the great lesson is that no special sights – not Alps, Niagara, Yosemite or anything else – is more grand or more beautiful than the ordinary sunrise and sunset, earth and sky, the common trees and grass.”*

See, what happens when we slow down is that we begin to notice how amazing life is over and over again. We actually can do the dishes and have a sense of ecstasy just feeling the soap bubbles in our hands. And over and over again, we have the opportunity to find God in our own backyards; in our own quiet moments; in the beauty of the life that is all around us. In our busy-ness – at 90 or 100 miles an hour – it's hard to see the wonder that is all around us. But as we slow down, we actually become calm and still, and we begin to see the activity of God all around us.

You know, when Jill and I lived in Naples, Florida – shout out to everybody who’s watching from Naples, Florida – when we lived in Naples, Florida, one of the things that we were not aware of... And I grew up in southern California! I grew up close to the beach in southern California. But in Naples, Florida, sunsets are a religion; they are a religious experience! I mean, literally, people stop their day; they get their chair or their towel; and they go and they enjoy sunsets. And they may be there for a half an hour, 20 minutes, an hour. But it’s a moment where it’s amazing how many people come to the beach; they watch the sunset – they watch how gorgeous the sunset is; and then they go back to their life! And, over and over again, sunsets were the biggest deal! Sunsets really were a spiritual experience!

And what we know is that Arizona has gorgeous sunsets. We have gorgeous sunsets! And, yet, how many times do we actually take time out of our day to go just watch the sunset? You know, watch the clouds as they roll by? Or watch as the stars come out in the evening? And to see the wonder and the beauty that is all around us?

You know, now that we’re slowing down, most of our neighborhoods are quieter than they’ve ever been before. And we can actually begin to hear the families next to us doing what they’re doing: cooking dinner. And we can actually experience just the wonder that is truly all around us. And that wonder really takes us to God. It takes us to the truth of our soul.

And the fourth point that she made in this book on *Thriving* was the idea of **GIVING**. And she makes the point that not all giving is equal. She makes the point that some giving actually depletes us. And some giving actually fills us up.

So what is the giving that depletes us? And I want you to think of a time, recently in your own life, where you gave to a person or a situation or a moment, and it actually depleted you. And I want you to think of another time where you gave to a person or a situation, and it actually filled you up.

Yesterday one of my friends called me and said that she was low on toilet paper, and she had heard that I had an extra package. And so she came over yesterday and I gave her a big 12-pack of toilet paper, and she felt like it was gold! Like that I was giving... *[Laughs]* She was down to her last two rolls, and I gave her this 12-pack of toilet paper, and literally she posted on Facebook this diamond toilet paper to thank me for the gift of this toilet paper. And it’s toilet paper! And it’s like, how incredible! I felt great! Because she was down to her last two rolls; she was getting worried! People were telling her where she could find it; she couldn’t find it. And I just felt so great in that effort of giving.

So what is the giving that depletes us? I want you to see that, when we give with resentment, we rarely feel better. When we stay in our story, our drama – when we’re giving from a place of being a victim, that we feel like we have to – that level of giving depletes us. When we give from a place of unconscious – when we’re unaware of our own needs, or unaware of the situation – when we’re giving from a place of being unconscious, it rarely fills us up. It often depletes us. And also when we give when we’re not bringing our own value to the situation. When we don’t feel like we have the ability to say, “No.” We feel like a victim in that situation. So, over and over again, when we dismiss our own value – and we don’t really take ourselves into account – that giving doesn’t really lift us up.

But the giving where we feel connected – when we feel connected to that person, to that situation – and giving where we feel like we’re being called by God to do something more... Those are the givings

that actually give the greatest blessing in our life. Because they allow us to feel a sense of connectedness, a sense of expansion. Those givings actually give us a 10, 100, 1,000-fold.

So, okay; are you ready for your homework? I hope you are ready for your homework. So I want you to look at this time – and sheltering in place – as a spiritual project. And I want you to see that you're being asked to go slower in the outer to go deeper into the inner. I want you to have a deeper sense of connection with God, whether it's through meditation; whether it's through walking; whether it's through the places you're giving; whether it's through wonder; whether it's because you're listening to the voice of God within you. I want you to have a deeper experience right here.

Because reality is – my hope and my prayer is – that we never have to go through this again. I would love it if this situation that we're in right now was a "one and done." And I believe that, for us to have this as a "one and done" – and that we don't have to repeat this cycle over and over and over again – we have to get every ounce of good that this situation offers us. We have to get the blessing that's available, not just to one of us, but to all of us.

So how is life asking you right now to be more blessed? How is life asking you to slow down and go deeper into your life – deeper into your soul, deeper into your relationships – to heal the things that need to be healed? To feel the presence of God right where you are? Because I don't want you to miss this! I don't want you to miss the opportunity! Because how many times does the whole nation take a month off? Right? How many times do we actually get to experience quiet without a thousand other things that we tell ourselves we should be doing?

Today, turn within. Take time for your prayer life. Take time to go for a quiet walk. Take time to take a nap or read a book or be inspired. Your soul deserves the attention! And as you give it to yourself, everything in your life will be better.

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 so much God; there is so much good available to each and every one of us. This is our moment to thrive. This is the situation that we were built for! We can release all our fears and concerns; we can release all of our anxiety. And we can live our greatest possible life right here, right now, just the way it is. I am built for this moment! Each and every one of us was built for this moment. And we allow the fullness of this moment to take us deeper to God, deeper into ourselves, deeper into possibilities. And so it is. Amen.

So let's move into our time of meditation.

## **OFFERING:**

I'd like you to join with me now – as we regularly do on a Wednesday night service – as we do our offering. So I invite you to take your offering in your hand – even if you don't have a check, or if you're going to do electronic – I want you to just imagine your offering in your hand. And our offering blessing is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* So we're going to say it one more time: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I am, all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* Today we give thanks for the infinite blessings of God that are filling our life right now. And so it is. Amen.

So I want to say thank you. I want to say thank you to all of you who are supporting our ministry online, who are sending checks in to this ministry: you are making this ministry able to do the work that we are committed to doing. Your support is so vital to us right now, so thank you!!! Know that we are here to support you; that our Chaplains and our Prayer Team are holding you in prayer; that we are absolutely wanting to support you spiritually as you walk through this incredible time.

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

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