

Week #2 of the 3-Week Series

FEAR MANAGEMENT – Part 2

April 29, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Welcome! I'm Richard Rogers; welcome to the Wednesday night service! I am so glad you're here! I hope you are well and happy; that you are moving through this time with ease and grace, and that you feel the presence and power of God in your life.

I want to do one announcement tonight: on Friday night, I'm going to be doing a Facebook live for Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center. I'm going to be talking about the difference, and why discipline is important in our spiritual life. Because for many of us – there's really two camps how most of us live. Some of us are kind of the free will, you know: the free spirit, just anything goes. And some of us are really structure and discipline types. And I'm going to make a case for why – as we're going to move through our spiritual life – why we need to practice more and more discipline as we are empowered spiritually... and why that is so important. So it's gonna be... It's really going to be fun! Friday night, 5 o'clock Arizona time. Come and be a part of it! And thank you so much!

So let's go into our time of meditation now.

MEDITATION:

I want you to take a deep breath, and I want you to feel the presence of God that is within you and all around you. There is only one presence and one power. I want you to really feel that! In your life – right here, right now – with whatever's going on, that there is only one presence and one power. When we worry, when we're afraid, when we spend a lot of energy and anxiety and fear, I want us to come back to that idea that there's only one presence and one power: God the Good. God is the only power in my life. I let go of all the mental constructs that I've created – all the images, all the fears that I've created – and I put all my energy on that one understanding, on that one experience of God. There is only one presence and one power at work in my life: God the Good. Breathe that in! Take that into every cell of your body. There is only one presence; there is only one power. There is only one God manifesting through each and every one of us. Each and every one of us is the living expression of all that God is. Breathe into that!

My God is my power. My God is my path. My God is my possibility. Wherever you are – whatever is going on in your life – God is the way! God is your path; God is your process. God is your possibility. I can live a God-centered, God-focused life. I can live a life of greater joy and peace and abundance, because God is my only power. I'm not worried about this and trying to believe in God at the same moment. I put the full focus of my attention on God. God is my presence and my power, and I am guided and directed. I know what to do and how to do it. There is only one presence and one power at work in your life and in the Universe: God the Good. And we know this for ourselves, and we know it for all people. That we are the living expressions of the Divine. We are God's Spirit expressing.

There is only one presence and one power at work in my life and in the Universe: God the Good. And we align with that. We let it heal us and bless us and transform us, that we live a life of radical good, of overwhelming blessings. There is only presence and one power: God the Good. And I forgive all the

times when I've been freaked out; all the times I've been frightened or worried or upset. I forgive all that energy that I wasted. I release that conclusion; I release that belief. I release those fears. There is only one God the Good, and I am made in that image and in that likeness. I am the one who is fully expressing all that God is. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God, for this day, for this moment, for all the good. In your name we pray today, God, and we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

SONG:

Rusty Ferracane: 'Be Still and Know' (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)

Be still and know that He is God
Be still and know that He is holy
Be still, O restless heart of mine
Bow before the Prince of Peace
Let the noise and clamor cease

Be still and know that He is God
Be still and know that He is faithful
Consider all that He has done
Stand in awe and be amazed
And know that He will never change
Be still

Be still and know that He is God
Be still and know that He is God
Be still and know that He is God
Be still
Be speechless

Be still and know that He is God
Be still and know that He is our Father
Come and rest your head upon His breast
Listen to the rhythm of
His unfailing heart of love
Beating for his little ones
Calling each of us to come
Be still
Be still

[Light applause]

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Rogers: Rusty and Craig, that was fabulous! Fabulous, fabulous! Gentlemen, thank you, thank you for being a part of... Thank you for doing such great stuff each and every week for us. We are so blessed by both of you! Have a great week; thank you, guys!

So today I am on Week #2 of a series called "Fear Management." And the whole idea of fear management is that we have a history of living in fear. Most of us do, anyway. We have a history of living in fear. And we have this fear that we have been trying to get our arms around – not always in very successful ways.

So some of us have developed really unhealthy ways of managing our fears. Sometimes we drink too much or we eat too much or we scream at the kids. And if we tell ourselves the truth, the reason that we're doing all that stuff is that we're just afraid, and we don't know how to manage our fears in any other way.

So I wanted to do this series to really give us some tools. And the really focus, over and over again, is moving from fear to faith. Over and over again, when we actually use the power of faith, we don't have to be afraid anymore.

So I want to begin today by really looking at how you're using your imagination. How do you use your imagination on a daily basis? How do you live in your imagination? How do you use it? What do you create with your imagination? Because the way you use your imagination very much defines how much time that you spend either in faith or in fear. And as we practice using our imagination in greater ways, we actually can move from the fears that we've had in the past to a higher level of faith.

So how do we define imagination? According to the Google, imagination is defined as "*a faculty or action of forming new ideas, images or concepts of external objects not present to our senses.*" It also goes on and says, "*The ability of the mind to be creative or even resourceful.*" "*The part of the mind that images things.*" Those are all great definitions!

I'm going to give you mine. My definition of imagination is "*the ability to create images that do not yet exist or to perceive the images of God.*" For most of us, the way that God communicates to us is through images. So I think imagination has these two levels: the two stratospheres of imagination.

The first use of imagination is our ability to imagine what does not yet exist. Our ability to imagine a greater possibility for our life. Our ability to imagine a greater work, greater love, greater joy, greater abundance. That's our ability to imagine. And our imagination has this infinite capacity to hold greater and greater images. But it also has to be linked to faith! Because you can imagine things that you don't really have the faith yet to really create. So when we link imagination with faith, it really opens the door to a higher possibility in every area of your life. Because it's not just enough to imagine it if you don't have the faith to create it.

So as we move into fear management, what I want you to see is: that I want you to be using your imagination – not only to create the life that you want – but to have the horsepower of your faith to actually drive the ability to create it.

But the other aspect of imagination is the ability to really discern the mind of God. For most of us, the way that God communicates to us through images. And images are that – we actually lay hold of the images of God through the power of imagination.

And my case in point is Jules Verne, an 18th century French novelist/poet/playwright. Now, if you go back and read *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the question then becomes: did Jules Verne create those images? Or did he actually lay hold of a future prophetic vision and write about it? And there's no way

that we can really know which one it is. Did he really just imagine it, and then later we created it? Or did he lay hold of a possibility – because some of the things we wrote about didn't come to be... Did he lay hold of a visual possibility that was in the mind of God, and he just wrote it down? We'll never know! But what I really want you to see is that your imagination uses – not only things in your own mind that are finite and limited – but your imagination can really lay hold of the infinite images of God. And that's where things get really exciting!

Like, what is the greatest image God has for you in your life? Not what's the greatest image that you have for you; that might be even a step up. Maybe it's five steps up! Maybe if you tell yourself the truth, the image that you have for your life is much better than you're living right now. But what's really interesting to me is: that's all well and good – and it may be helpful – but I'm curious about what's God's image for your life? What is the greatest image that God has for your life? And would you be willing to hold that image? To really move to that possibility? To really open a space: *“God, what is your greatest image for my life? And what if you downloaded those images into my heart when I have the faith to really hold them?”*

And I think that's why we don't see more prophetic visions: because sometimes when we see a vision for our life, or a possibility for our life, if we don't really have the faith to hold it, we just dismiss it. We just go unconscious. We just pretend we didn't see it. And over and over again, there's these possibilities: these divine opportunities, if you will, that God is laying hold of and dropping into our life. But we really have to have the mindset that allows us to see them and receive them and then put them into actions in our daily life. To actually create a life that's that good.

“Spirit, open my mind to the infinite goodness that you have for me.” Will you say that with me? I want you to say that with me! *“Open my mind to the infinite goodness that you have for me.”* One more time: *“Open my mind to the infinite goodness you have for me.”* And let's just move our imagination to move our life to higher and higher levels of good.

So during this three-week series, we're using the 23rd Psalm. And the reality is: there's only six verses in the 23rd Psalm. And whatever verse that I'm teaching that week, I absolutely believe that those are the best verses. Whether it's the first two or the second two or the third two, I really believe that the two verses that I get to teach this week are really the best! But I really believed that last week, and I'll believe that again next week. But they really are stunning verses! And so let's begin.

We started with the first verse, was: ***“The Lord is shepherd; I shall not want.”*** The second verse was: ***“He maketh me life down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters.”***

Now the third verse... and this verse starts to get interesting... not that those weren't interesting. No bad talk about the first two verses! God did it right from the beginning!!!

Third verse: *“He restoreth my soul.”*

I love this line!!! I love this imagery; I think that during this time in this pandemic, if you're not working – if you're not putting in as many hours in your life or in what you normally do... See, I think this is a time for us to slow down culturally – around the world to slow down. And if we take these four words into our time of prayer, into our time of devotion... If we walk, if we meditate on these words... *“He restoreth my soul.”* I want you just to feel that! *“He restoreth my soul.”*

And what a prayer for our nation! What a prayer for our world! What a prayer for our family and friends. *"He restoreth my soul."* This is a time for our souls to be restored. It's hard to restore your soul at 90 miles an hour! It's hard to restore your soul when you're doing a hundred million things every day, and you don't have time to take a breath. It's hard to restore your soul when you're involved in your addiction, or you're struggling, or you're in panic or fear. But here's this line, verse 3: *"He restoreth my soul."*

What if that was true for you today? What if you were willing to live this day from that simple point of view? *"He restoreth my soul."* No matter where you feel broken; no matter where you feel hurt. No matter where you've just been disappointed by life... *"He restoreth my soul."*

Breathe that in for a minute. *"He restoreth my soul."* There's no wound – there's no pain, there's no situation – that is so awful, so debilitating, that God can't heal it. And as you begin to affirm that reality – that God restores my soul; he restoreth my soul... What I want you to say as you claim those words – as you speak those words, as you meditate on those words – that Divine activity begins to happen at levels that you will not even understand. At a level of your soul that maybe you've never touched before. *"He restoreth my soul."* He restores and heals all the broken places within me. He restores and heals all the places where I felt the most wounded by life.

You know, the reality is that, when a soul comes into this world, for most of us, life is harder than we expected. When a soul comes into this world, we think it's going to be one way, and sometimes it goes radically different than that. *"He restoreth my soul."* No matter what your great pain has been; no matter what your great disappointment has been; no matter where you've been knocked down by life, I promise that these words are true. *"He restoreth my soul."* You can take that one to the bank! *"He restoreth my soul."*

And then he goes on and says: *"He leadeth me on the path of righteousness for his name's sake."*

And this is one of those lines in the 23rd Psalm that sounds confusing. *"He leadeth me on the path of righteousness for his name's sake."* What does that mean? Well, what is righteousness? You know, when we use that word – "righteousness" – oftentimes we think about a sense of... You know, a level of divine blessings.

But really what I want you to see is that the word righteousness is "right useness." That Spirit leads on the path of "right useness." That we use – in this path of "right useness" – the namesake. For his name's sake.

And so what is the namesake? I want to read from Exodus 3. Because in Exodus 3, God's Spirit is speaking directly to Moses on setting the people of Israel free from slavery in Egypt. And I want you to see that, when God is speaking to Moses about the freeing of the Israelites in Egypt, he's really speaking directly to each and every one of us. Because each and every one of us has a place in our life where we have lived in bondage: where we have lived with less than. Where we have lived with disappointment or fear or brokenness or hurt. And so, when God speaks to Moses, he's really speaking to each and every one of us.

Again, Exodus 3, beginning with Verse 10: *"So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'"*

So I want you just to top right there, right? So God wants Moses to lead the people out of bondage. Right? He's got a path of righteousness. His path of righteousness is to lead his people out of bondage: out of Egypt, into the Promised Land. God has a path of righteousness. And what is the first thing that Moses said? *"Not me!"* Right? *"It can't be me!"* Right?

The first thing that we do when God reveals our path of righteousness – when God gives us our spiritual work; when God gives us our mission – is to say, *"All I've got it self-doubt! This cannot be my path; this cannot be my way! This is not for me!"* And so, what we do is: we give God our self-doubt.

And God says to Moses in the midst of his self-doubt: *"I will be with you; and this shall be a sign that I have sent you: that I will have brought you out of Egypt. And you shall worship the Lord on this mountain." But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask, 'But what is his name?' what shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM who I AM..' He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.' And God said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.'"*

So in that moment, God reveals his name: I AM that I AM. That our path of righteousness – that our path through any time of confusion: our path through any time of slavery or doubt; any situation of disappointment – I AM is the way out of any situation. And it's using our I AM power is our path of righteousness. It is the way out of any situation! *"I AM healed! I AM blessed! I AM transformed! I AM prospering! I AM greater than this situation!"* And every time we use our I AM, we are speaking the name of God in the way that absolutely has the power to lead us through wherever we are to the path of righteousness. To the greater goodness of God. *"For God's name's sake."* God's namesake is the I AM!

Your namesake – your name! – you have the name of God! When you say, "I AM," we're acknowledging that we are created in the image and likeness of God. That we are using the name of God to create the next level of our life! *"I AM rich! I AM prosperous! I AM healthy! I AM whole! I AM divinely guided. I AM blessed! I AM transformed! I AM that I AM!"* I AM is my path of righteousness!

Will you say that with me? *"I AM is my path of righteousness."* It is! And the more that we focus on the I AM power, we are walking the power of righteousness. Now, can we misuse that path? Yes! *"I AM sick. I AM broken. I AM weak. I AM fearful. I AM doubting."* Right? That isn't the path of righteousness! That's the path of confusion! That's the path of limitation! That is the path of brokenness! When we use our I AM, it has to be on the path of righteousness, or all we do is create more problems and darkness and fear and worry and doubt in our life.

It's so simple; Jesus said it this way: *"Let your statement be 'Yes, Yes!' or 'No, No!' For anything else comes of evil."* That, when you use your I AM, it is your righteous power to create the next level of your life. When you use your I AM, you are creating the greatest possible life that you can imagine. *"I AM prosperous! I AM blessed! I AM filled with the glory of God! I AM walking in the light! I AM healed; I AM whole; I AM powerful; I AM wise! I AM intelligent; I AM beautiful; I AM a radiant expression of God! I AM using my righteous namesake!"*

And then we go to Verse 4: *"And, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..."*

So, right? We get our I AM all worked up – we get our righteous path; we get it moving in – and then what happens? Is: ***"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."***

So what does that mean? What possibly could that mean, and why would that follow *“in the path of righteousness”*?

Well, one of the things that happens in our life is that I believe that our spirit – through the power of imagination – gets glimpses at what’s next. And especially when we’re coming into an ending in our life. See, our life goes through three phases all the time simultaneously: there’s beginnings; there’s middles; and there’s ends. And everything in our life – you can have a relationship that’s in the middle, or your work may be coming to an end or there may be an area in your life where it’s a new beginning. But over and over again, that’s all we have: we have beginnings; we have middles; and we have ends.

But for most of us, when we get to an end, we freak out. Right? It is our place of being the most concerned: when we get to an end. But what I want you to see is, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”* The shadow of death is when we get images of a part of our life that’s ending; a part of our life is dying. And then we actually begin to freak out, because we’re not sure what to do.

And the next line is: when I see a time in my life ending – when I see *“the shadow of death”*; when I see the shadow of an ending – I will fear no evil. Well, how is that possible? Because what’s on the other side of an ending? It’s a new beginning! And what I want you to see is that new beginnings have the possibility of taking our life to a higher ground. And that every time we are going through an ending – and we just stay locked in the shadow of death; when we stay locked in an ending that we never really allow to end – what we’re really doing is denying ourselves the opportunity of a new beginning. We don’t really let ourselves have the new beginning the way it was designed by God.

And so, when we stay in the image of being fearful about an ending, we actually miss the opportunity to be more blessed. To move to a higher level of God. When I am in the times of walking through the shadow of death – when I’m in the times of walking through a shadow of ending – I will fear no evil.

“For thou art with me.” Thou art with me! God is with me! God did not bring me into the shadow of death to scare me; God didn’t bring me into the shadow of death to say, *“Nanner, nanner, nanner; I’m going to take this away from you.”* He brought you into the shadow of death so that you could be prepared mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually to let go of a limited form so that you could move to a higher ground. I will fear no evil, for God is with me!

One of my favorite lines from the *Course of Miracles* is this: *“If you knew who walks beside you on the path that you have chosen, fear would be impossible.”* Can I read that one more time? *“If you knew who walks beside you on the path that you have chosen, fear would be impossible.”* It would be impossible! It would literally be impossible!

So what I want you to really feel today is this idea that, as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, fear will be impossible; for Thou art with me.

And then the next line is: *“Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.”*

Now, what is the rod and the staff. How many of you, if I say shepherd, see a little shepherd boy? And what’s in his arm? Right? It’s either a rod or you see a staff... The shepherd, by occupational design, was always given a rod or a staff. And the use of the rod or the staff wasn’t just as a walking stick, but it’s how the shepherd would guide the flock through any situation. Away from the poisonous plants or away

from burs, or whatever it was. This was what the shepherd used to guide the flock. He would nudge the flock. He would bang on the rod, and he would move his flock.

And so what I want you to see is that, wherever you are – whatever you're letting go; whatever you're moving through in your life right now – that the rod and the staff of God is there to comfort you. That you actually feel the guidance of God nudging you forward! Just like the shepherd will just tap them on the rear to keep them moving.

Now, has there ever been a time when you were “tapped on the rear” by Spirit and you didn't pay attention? We've all had that, right? That God was trying to nudge to the right or to the left or keep you moving, and you just sat down and said, “*I am not moving!*” You moved into full-on resistance, right? And, because we have free will, we have a right to be fully resistant. But then, what happens? When the nudge doesn't work – when the little tap on the behind doesn't work – what does Spirit do? Man, Spirit brings the force! That shepherd – if he needs to move you – he's going to move you! You are going to be a sheep that is moving, right?

So over and over again, what I want you to see is that the rod and the staff, they comfort me! That those directions that God gives me – the guidance that God gives me – actually comforts me so that I know that I'm walking in the grace of God! I'm not going to walk off a cliff, because God is guiding me and directing me. That when I get that inner guidance – when I get those inner nudges – that I actually allow that to be comforting to my soul. That I live in the grace of God!

So let's take that into prayer:

I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God right here, right now. I want you to take a breath and just feel the words of God today. That I walk on the path of righteousness. For God's name's sake. And when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. That you have been given the power of the I AM. You have been given the very name of God! That your essence – your core – is the I AM, and that you can use that righteousness to create anything in your life! To use your imagination as a positive force of greater and greater good instead of using your imagination to scare you. And that you will be guided and directed in all things; that you will feel those nudges of Spirit to keep you moving. Today we're going to walk through this experience. That there is not a situation in this world that is greater than the power of God in you. That God in you is all powerful. That there is only one presence and one power: God the Good. And so we dedicate this day to really walking the path with God. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

OFFERING:

This is the time of giving of our gifts our offering. I'm going to invite you to hold it in your hand, even if it's not a check... but, please, if it is a check, hold it in your hand. We're going to bless it, and then you can mail it to the church or you can give online with the button right there. And we're just going to bless each gift, even if it's just an intention to give.

So our offering blessing is, “*Divine Love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I am, all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive.*” Together: “*Divine Love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I am, all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive.*” And so it is. Amen.

And I just want to say “Thank you!” You know, there are so many people who are giving to this ministry right now, as we move through this critical time for our world. And I want to thank each and every one of you who generously supports this ministry as we are doing our spiritual work to make a difference in the world.

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

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