

LOVE POWER

May 13, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Welcome! I want to welcome you! Welcome; welcome; welcome! I don't know if you miss me, but I miss you! I miss all of you! I miss the Wednesday night experience, and I can't wait 'til we can start it up again, and I hope that these services each week are supporting you spiritually in living your best life through this experience.

Now, next week we're going to do something different. On May 20 – 20/20 – Wednesday night 8 o'clock, we're going to put the URL right below me. We're going to do a Zoom call, and I want you on it! It is just for people who watch the Wednesday night service: who attend the Wednesday night service. There's going to be a Zoom call next Wednesday – that's May 20, 20/20 – and I'm going to read the link.

The link is: <https://tinyurl.com/yd7ynxh3>

Now, you're going to type that into your browser: 8 o'clock next Wednesday night. And you're going to join us in a Zoom conference call with everyone who attends regularly the Wednesday night service. And I want you to be there, because I want to see your little face.

Okay, you ready for today? Today is all about love! And we're going to move into this meditation, just really open our hearts and experience all the love that God is, and all the love that God has for us.

MEDITATION:

Take a deep breath. Close your eyes. And the words that keep speaking to me – the words that God keeps speaking to my soul – is that I am divinely blessed. That God is blessing me now. And I want you to take those words and let them just speak to your soul: God is blessing me now. I am divinely blessed. And to know that God's infinite goodness – God loves you so much – that the infinite goodness of God wants to pour into your life in ways too numerous to count. And your only job as God's beloved is to open your mind, your heart, your soul and receive. This day, your only job is to receive! Feel the love of God blessing you now. God is blessing me now. With every heartbeat, with every breath, with every sunrise and sunset. For every smile, for every moment, God is blessing me now.

It's an incredible transformation that happens when we realize that every moment is a blessing from God. That we move from the struggle and the upset and the chaos and the confusion, and we move into a world of Grace: God loves me so much, that God is blessing me now. God is blessing me now! And God is blessing me now.

The infinite goodness of God loves you so much – that God thinks you're so adorable! – that God loves you: every cell and fiber of your being! God loved you through every choice, every experience, every moment, every upset, every problem... When you were the most scared, the most upset, the most frightened by life, God was right there just loving you, and whispering in your ear, *"It's going to be okay; it's going to be okay!"* God is blessing me now. And God is blessing me now. And God is blessing me now!

I hope you're just grinning from ear to ear at how good – how great – how much God loves you. God is blessing you/me now. And only in my mind – only in my thoughts, only in my fears and confusion – can I separate myself from that infinite goodness of God. For, in reality, there is no way that I can separate my soul from God. God is blessing me now. God is healing every cell in my body: every organ, every system,

every fiber of my being is being healed right now by God. God is blessing me now. And the blessings of God rain down upon every area of my life. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God!

We pray for everyone in this ministry. We pray for every man, woman and child around the world. We pray that all people are healthy and safe and well and divinely blessed. We pray for our family and our friends: the people that we love the most. That they know that they are loved; that they are surrounded and enfolded in pure good, pure God. And that we see God blessing them, as well.

This day we dedicate to God. We dedicate it to the Spirit of God moving in every direction through our life to bless us. And we allow the infinite Spirit of Grace to fill our lives. God is blessing me now! And so it is. Amen.

SONG:

Charity Lockhart: 'The Greatest Love of All' (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)

I believe the children are our future
Teach them well and let them lead the way
Show them all the beauty they possess inside
Give them a sense of pride to make it easier
Let the children's laughter... let us remind us how we used... we used to be

Everybody's searching for a hero
People need someone to look up to
I never found anyone to fulfill that need
A lonely place to be
And so I learned to depend on me

I decided long ago, never to walk in anyone's shadows
If I fail, if I succeed
At least I live as I believe
No matter what they take from me
They can't take away my dignity

Because the... the greatest love of all
Is happening to me
I found the greatest love of all
Inside of me

The greatest love of all
Is easy to achieve
Learning to love yourself
It is the greatest love of all

And if, by chance, that special place
That you've been dreaming of
It leads you to a lonely place
Just find... find your... find your...
Find your strength in, oh... love!

[Light applause]

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Rogers: *[applauds]* Charity, that was fabulous! Thank you! You knocked that song out of the park! I love that song! Thank you for being here today, and thank you for blessing each and every one of us.

Okay, today... Do you have a favorite word? Anybody got a favorite word? You know, a word that you just like to say, or a word that you love the meaning of? Do you have a favorite word?

One of my favorite words is “exacerbate.” Now, it’s not really a positive word, but it’s such a fun word to say! “Exacerbate.” And what it means is – to exacerbate a situation means – to make it worse.

[Chuckles] And I don’t know why – because I really try to live my whole life from a positive note, and to be about upliftment and sharing good – but “exacerbate” is just fun to say! You know, when you exacerbate a situation, you make it worse. You take it down. You take it – you know... If you’re crashing, exacerbate means you just drive it right into the dirt. But I love that word! I just love saying it; I use it as often as I can! I love that word!

So I would love to know what your favorite words are. And, for me, sometimes words that we miss – or words that we think we know what the correct definition is – and we don’t. I love those, too! Like, how many of you have every used the word: a “moot” point. Right? Now, a moot point: there’s no such thing as a moot point! It’s a moot point. It’s M-O-O-T, like rhymes with boot. Moot point. Now, we sometimes say a “mute” point: like the point doesn’t have words, or it can’t speak. But that’s not really what the expression is! It’s “moot” point, and it means “a debatable question. An issue open to argument.” But it also means also its opposite: it also means “an irrelevant question. A matter of no importance.” For example, whether Shakespeare actually wrote the poems remains a moot point among his critics. Or, it’s also a moot point: what came first? The chicken or the egg?

So sometimes we use words, and we use them either incorrectly, or we think we’re saying them right, and we’re just not. And sometimes we use words that are so big that our definition of them really isn’t large enough to include all the ramifications of a word.

And the word that I really want to focus on today is **LOVE**. Because for all of us – if we all had to define what love means to us – each and every one of us has a definition of love. You know, according to Webster’s, the first definition for love is as a noun: “*An intense feeling of deep affection.*” Like, babies fill their parents with a feeling of love. But it’s also a verb: “*A feeling of deep romantic or sexual attraction toward someone.*” Do you love me? And so, sometimes, when we use the word “love,” we think we’re saying one definition – or we think we’re saying this – and sometimes people hear it, and they hear something completely different.

And so what I want you to be really clear about is: What’s your definition of love? When you say “love,” what are you saying? Are you saying that, “*I really appreciate that you do my laundry?*” Are you saying that, “*I love you, because you never tell me I’m wrong?*” “*I love you because you cook me a meal?*” “*I love you because you pay the bills?*” When you say the word, “*I love you,*” what does that mean to you? Because I really think that sometimes we have to slow this down. Because sometimes when we use the word “love,” we’re saying that you’re really doing or giving me what I want. And what I want to do is actually take it deeper than that.

One of my favorite definitions of love – and one of the definitions that I think is the most interesting – I heard from Dr. Greg Baer, who wrote the book, *Real Love*. He said, “*We love at the level that we’re willing to be inconvenienced.*” And that was one of those definitions that I really had to kind of sit with for a minute. And I really thought about it. And then I kind of read more about it, and there’s another author, Ann Voskamp, who is a best-selling Christian author. And she said a very similar definition; she said, “*You love as well as you’re willing to be inconvenienced.*” And I love both of those definitions!

Because I look at my life, and the people that I love, I am absolutely willing to be inconvenienced. If my kids need something, if my wife needs something... The people I love, I am willing to be inconvenienced.

Now, you know, if it's the last three minutes of a movie, or a football game, or a basketball game, and my wife wants to talk... **[Chuckles]** Honestly, there are some limits to the willingness to be inconvenienced in every situation! But, by and large, I'm absolutely willing to be inconvenienced for love, because I know – over and over again – that I love my kids so much, I love my wife so much, that if I can do anything to make their life a little bit better, my answer is, “Yes!”

And, over and over again, what I want you to see is that giving from that level actually gives us the biggest dividend. Because, over and over again, what we've taught – what we believe – is that, “As I give, so shall I receive.” And if we give to one another in the ways that are easy and don't inconvenience us – if we give in the ways that are just superficial and have really no cost to it at all – what we get back is really very little. The more that we're willing to give from this greater sense of being – what am I really willing to do in your honor.... Sometimes a friend will be calling me, and I have to really decide: Am I going to pick up the phone? Right? Am I going to be inconvenienced in that moment to pick up the phone and talk to a friend? Or maybe it's a congregant. And it's somebody who needs support in that moment. And there's a part of me – because I want it to be a conscious choice. I want to pick up that phone, not because I have to, but because I'm willing to.

And at that moment – when I'm willing to pick up the phone and connect with somebody who needs me, or connect with somebody who just wants to know that I'll hold them in prayer – at that moment, I'm willing to be inconvenienced for their behalf. And I know it's a choice that I get to make... Because I don't have to pick up the phone! I don't have to do that for my kids or for my wife. There's nothing... But I want to! I am willing to be inconvenienced!

And I know that, as I give from that place – as I love from that place – that the blessings that come back to me, over and over again, are extraordinary.

And I really believe that this is Jesus' example of love. This is Jesus' definition of love. Because over and over again, Jesus' definition of it was that we walk the extra mile. You know, that we not just do what's easy to do, but Jesus asked us to go the extra mile. He asked us to be inconvenienced in our service to others. He asked us to be inconvenienced in our love of others. That this extra mile was where we get the real benefits. And then he said things like, if somebody whacks you on the cheek, to turn the other cheek! To go the extra mile. Or if somebody wants your coat, give them your shirt, as well!

And it's this idea – this mindset – that life asks us to give more than is easy to give. Now why?

And I really believe that the reason that we're asked to give at that level is because God loves us at that level. And when we give at that level, we actually discover how much is within our soul. If I just give in ways that are easy, I only live at the very surface of my life. I only live at the very top of my soul. But when I learn to give from a place that's inconvenient – when I really learn to give from the depths of who I am – I really discover how deep my soul is: how great my soul is!

And sometimes I don't want to give at that level. I just want to do a “fly by.” I just want to do something superficial, and I just want to, you know, a little smile: “Well, good luck! God bless you!” Right? And, over and over again, those superficial things that I want to do – that my ego tells me is the best thing to do, the quickest thing to do, the easiest thing to do – aren't the things that give me the biggest dividends in my life.

So where is love asking you to be inconvenienced? Where is life – at this moment, as we're going through this pandemic – where is life asking you to be inconvenienced?

You know, there's such a brouhaha now about, you know, should we wear masks, or shouldn't we wear masks? And does the state have a right to ask us to wear masks? And how much can I do? And it's like, let's just get over ourselves! Right? That, over and over again, what we're being asked to do is to be inconvenienced in our love for each other. That's the bottom line!

And the ultimate example is when Jesus, in John 15:13, when he said, *"No greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."* I mean, that's a pretty severe – that's a pretty dramatic – willingness to be inconvenienced: that you'd give somebody your whole life! You know, you give somebody your whole life! That's a pretty big inconvenience! I mean, I don't know if there's a bigger inconvenience!

And what I want you to see, over and over again, is that, when we give in shallow, little ways, we begin to believe that we're just shallow, little people. But when we're really willing to go to the depths of who we are and give in greater ways, we really discover how great God is in us, and how deep – how wonderful – our soul was created to be. But it's only in the giving in extraordinary ways; it's only in loving in extraordinary ways – in those times that call us to be more than we ever thought we could be – that we really experience the depth of who we are.

So how are you being asked to be inconvenienced today? Just notice that! Kind of check with yourself. Do I love that person enough to go the extra mile? *"No; no, I really don't."* Right? Just be honest! Or tell yourself the truth: *"Oh, my gosh; I really that love that person so much that, yes; I would be willing to go the extra mile. And I'd be willing to go the extra mile again and again and again if they needed me. Because my love for them is so great that I would be willing to do what it takes – whatever it takes – for them to be blessed. For them to feel loved. For them to know that somebody cares that deeply."*

So the first thing I want to talk about love is this definition of being inconvenienced. Because I really think in this world right now – especially today, with all that's going on in the world today – we need a bigger definition than just: What's in it for me? Because if love is easy, we don't really understand love. But love takes us to a place that really demands our best. So that's the first point.

The second point I want to really talk about today is that I believe love is the glue that holds us and connects us all together and to God.

Charles Fillmore, the co-founder of Unity, is recorded as saying in *The Revealing Word*, *"Love is the pure essence of being that binds together the entire human family."* In Colossians 3:14: *"Above all, clothe yourself with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."*

And what I want you to see about love – especially during this time – right? Because for some of us, I know many of us are home alone. I know many of us have been living two months now alone. I know my mom is not able to physically be with her kids. We did a Mother's Day call last week, and we were all on the Zoom call with her... But, literally, we haven't been able to give my mom a hug now for two months! Right? And so I know there's many people right now that – in this time – are alone, and are really experiencing that sense of a loneliness.

And what I want you to hear is: I promise that love binds you – in a spiritually wonderful way – binds you to all the people that you love and to your God. That, no matter how separated we are from each other, love is the thing that connects every soul with every other soul that we love. No matter where you are, no matter what's going on in your life today, what I want you to hear is that, the love you have for your friends and family – the love you have for the people that are important to you – always connects you.

You know, we can get into that feeling of being sad or maybe even a little depressed because we're not with the people we love. But what I want you to see together today is that love is actually greater than that. When we actually practice loving, that love connects us with the people we love in such a powerful

spiritual way, that we actually feel that connection. We actually feel that connection with the people we love! And that – no matter what’s going on in your life today – what I’d like you to do is just take a few moments and send love to the people that are the most important to you. To continue to build that connection of love. It’s a free gift, but the more that you build that connection of love, they actually feel it! You actually feel it! It actually connects us in such a powerful – as a powerful spiritual force – with all the people that we love.

You know, one of the things I think is interesting is: People that have had near-death experiences, and talk about going over to the Other Side after death, the number one experience they have is this feeling of love... Where they feel this unconditional love of God. They feel this connection to God that transcends the events of life. That transcends mistakes they’ve made or transcends the places where they’ve dropped the ball. You know, when they have a recording of their life after the experience, that unconditional love as they’re reviewing their life allows them to see every event in their life without shame. Because that unconditional love is so great. It connects us all with each other, and connects us to God.

God loves you in an unconditional, beautiful way. That no matter what you’ve done – no matter what choices you’ve made – that love connects you eternally to your Creator.

So the first one is: I want you to practice in any way you can to be inconvenienced by love. I want you to really feel that love is the glue that connects us with the entire human family, especially the people we love, and especially to God.

And the third thing I want you to hear about love is this idea that love casts out fear.

You know, for the last three weeks, I’ve done series based on “Fear Management.” And last week I gave you an assignment. I don’t know if you remember, but I gave you an assignment last week. And what I asked you to do last week is: I asked you to write down – to spend a little bit of time – and write down all of your fears. And for most of us, we do not want to be conscious of our fears. Like, there is so much shame that we have about our fears that, not only do we not want to be conscious about our fears, but we definitely don’t want to share our fears with anyone else.

So last week I just invited you – your homework was: Just go home, write down your fears. Take some time – 15, 20 minutes – and write down your fears. And the other question that I asked you to ask was: How likely is that fear to become a reality? How likely are spiders to eat off your face? You know, for most of us, that’s not really ever going to happen, but for some of us, that’s a fear anyway.

So I invited you to really become conscious of your fears, and because I wanted to set up this week. Because this week, we’re going to take the next step with love. And it’s this idea from 1 John 4:18: *“There is no fear in love, but perfect fear...”* Perfect fear! **[Chuckles]** Let me start again, because it doesn’t say perfect fear! **[Laughs]**

Alright here we go! 1 John 4:18: *“There is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he – [meaning God] – loved us first. Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers and or their sisters are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot possibly love God, whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is that those who love God must love their brothers and their sisters also.”*

So here’s what I want you to do. I want you to take your fear list – all the things that you’re afraid of: economics; your health; the virus; whatever you’re afraid it – you’re getting older.... Whatever you’re afraid of. I want you to write down your list of everything you’re afraid of, and I want you to pick one person that – in your mind and your heart – you know that they love you. That you know that they love

you! And what you're going to do with that individual is a very simple little thing. You're going to say to them, *"I would like you to just love me in the presence of my fears. So what I'm going to do is: I'm going to share my fears with you, and you're going to look me in the eye and say, 'I love you right there.' No matter what the fear is, no matter what the drama is, no matter what the thing is that [I'm] afraid of, you're just going to listen to me so I can get my fears out... So I can get them outside of me, and I can just see them. And you're going to love me in the presence of my greatest fears."* Because for most of us, we've never been loved in the presence of our greatest fears.

Now, let me tell you a story. One of the things that I remember from childhood was a night where my closet door was open, and I absolutely would have sworn on a stack of Bibles that there was a monster – some of you have heard this story – that there was a monster in my closet. And I could see its face; I could hear it. There was a monster in my closet; I 100% knew that there was a monster in my closet. Finally, out of just pure panic, I screamed for my parents. And I remember my mom walked in and flipped on the light, and the moment she flipped on the light, somehow that monster instantly disappeared! **[Chuckles]** And in that place where the monster was were just clothes and stuff hanging in my closet. But in my little 7/8-year-old mind, it was literally the scariest... And I don't know how, but it was a monster. And the moment she came in just to check on me and turn on the light, everything was gone.

And what I want you to see, over and over again, in the presence of love, it literally casts out our fear. That whatever fear you are holding on to, the more you don't speak of it – the more you don't share it with people who love you, the more you allow shame to keep it tucked within your soul – is the more that fear runs your life. So today we're going to change that.

See, I think the greatest part of love is that love truly can cast out our fears. But it happens in community. It happens in the presence of somebody else. It doesn't happen all by ourselves. We want love to heal our fears all by ourselves, but what I find over and over again is that we actually have to share our fears with another child of God who doesn't share that fear. You're like, they're not afraid of that monster in our closet. It's our fear! It's our monster; it's our closet. And the moment they can say, *"Richard, I love you right there"* – and they look us right in the eye and say, *"Richard, I know that you're afraid of spiders"* or *"I know that you're afraid of economics"* or *"I know you're afraid of this virus"* or *"I know you're afraid of what could happen to your family"* or *"I know that you're afraid of getting older"* or *"I know that you're afraid of what this person said or what could happen in your job or what could happen in the world... I know that you're afraid of that. And what I want you to know is I love you right there. I love you in that spot. I love you in that spot where you are the most tender; where you feel the most vulnerable; where you feel the most afraid. I love you right there."*

And the moment somebody says that to us, there's a part of our soul where we just take a deep breath. We say, *"Really? You can really love that part of me that is so afraid? Right there? That feels so empty; that feels so scared right there?"* And they say, *"Richard, I do. I love you right there."*

And in that moment, it's as though the light gets turned on within. And that monster – that scary thing that we've been holding inside of us for all these years – at that moment is just gone! And God comes in, and light comes in, and love comes in, and power comes in. And a new reality comes in!

See, the moment my mom turned on the light, there was a new reality that came into my world. I went from a world that was very scary – that had a monster just feet away from me... From the moment she turned on the light, I lived in a new reality. And that's what love does! Perfect love casts out fear! Unconditional love casts out fear! Because we are so afraid of so many things, simply because we haven't shared it in an environment of love, where we get to be loved right there.

So, you ready for your homework? I actually want you to pick one friend, one family member – somebody that you think has a high probability of being able to unconditionally love you – and you’re going to set it up for them. *“I don’t need you to fix this; I don’t need you to tell me this is an irrational fear... I don’t need you to try to solve my problem... I need you to do things: I need you to look me in the eye and say, ‘I love you right there.’ That’s it! That’s all I need you to do! Look me in the eye and say, ‘I love you right there.’”* And I want you just to take a deep breath with every fear that you share. And with the other individual saying to you, *“I love you right there,”* I want you to take a deep breath and just feel the light coming on within.

See, the power of love really is God’s greatest gift to us. Jesus said that the most important thing was that we love the Lord, our God, with all our might, our heart, our soul, and that we love our neighbors as ourselves. Because it is the greatest gift. And, as a world, we have not mastered love yet. We are still at a very basic level of love. Jesus invited us to love in a much bigger way: in a more difficult way, in a more enriched way, in a more enlightened way. And, as we practice love from being inconvenienced; as we practice love as the glue that holds us all together; and as we practice love in the way that casts out fear, we actually change our life!

Right now, I know that many of you are afraid. And, over the last several weeks, I’ve wanted to do talks each week that helped you manage your fear, transform them, and really live a bigger life. Well, if we’re going to talk about fear, we have to get to this point: that love casts it out. That whatever fear you’re dealing with today, love can transform that right here.

So let’s do that homework. And, really, let me know how that works for you. Because I really think it will create a tremendous transformation in your life. Love casts out fear.

Let’s take that into prayer:

I want you to close your eyes, open your mind, your heart, your soul, and feel the presence of God that is right here. That there is only one: one presence, one power, one God loving you right where you are... Blessing you right where you are... Filling you right where you are. And as we love each other at the level God loves us, we transform. We transform ourselves; we transform our friends and family; we transform our world. Love is the greatest gift. And so it is. Amen.

OFFERING

Alright, so I want you to take your gift out. I want you to put it in your hand; we’re going to bless it together. I want to thank you all for your generous support of this ministry. I want to thank you all, whether you’re giving electronically, whether you’re putting a check in the mail... I want to thank you, thank you, thank you, because this ministry is doing such incredible work during this time through the classes, through the worship services, through the Friday night Facebook events that we’re doing... And I want you to know that we’re here, and your support makes a world of difference.

So take your gift in your hand – even if you’re just imagining your tithe or your offering – and we’re just going to say the simplest prayer: *“Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give and all that I receive.”* Together: *“Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give and all that I receive.”* And so it is. Amen.

CLOSING

Alright! I want you to be on the Zoom call next week! The link will be there. I’m also going to share it next week. It will be at 8 o’clock – right after this service – so that will be May 20 at 8 p.m. Join me for a Zoom so I can see your face; we’re going to share prayer requests; we’re going to connect; we’re going

to see each other; I want you to be on the call! God bless you, friend, and I look forward to being with you next week.

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