

## **LIVING IN THE FLOW**

**Week #1 of the 2-Week Thanksgiving Series, "Living in Abundance"**

**Nov. 15, 2020**

**Rev. Richard Maraj**

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center's Sunday virtual worship celebration. Continued reminder: 9 and 11 LIVE services out on the lawn; they're absolutely beautiful when you're ready to join us; I hope you will! But we'll continue posting both our Sunday videos and our Wednesday videos continuously.

I just remind you of a couple of great upcoming things. Our traditional Thanksgiving Eve service will be Wednesday, November the 25th. It'll be held outdoors. We aren't going to do the traditional pie sharing, but we will – the church will – provide wrapped pieces of pie for you to take home to enjoy afterwards. But we are going to celebrate thankfulness. And – even through this pandemic – there are a lot of things to be grateful for. We're going to celebrate that – all of that! – as a spiritual community that evening. I'm really looking forward to seeing you there!

We will be having virtual Remembrance Service. And you can go on the website and send a photo of your loved one and a little description to honor them. And we will be posting that on Tuesday, Dec. 1.

So right now, let's all take a breath. And now Rev. Lori is going to lead us in a time of prayer and meditation.

### **MEDITATION**

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** I invite you to join me in a time of prayer and meditation as we close our outer eyes and take in a deep, cleansing breath and release it slowly. Begin to empty our minds of any thoughts that may be running across it. And take in another cleansing breath; gently release it as we begin to move our awareness within, to that quiet still place where we are one with the Divine.

In this place, our hearts are calm. Our minds are still. We relax into the calmness. Into the peace that passes understanding. As we let go of anything that's been bothering us. Gently release it, returning to the calmness within. Taking in another deep breath and releasing it slowly. Recognizing that the gentle thought – "Peace; be still" – returns us into the very depths of our souls. That each cleansing breath takes us deeper into the stillness, where we experience our oneness with the Divine.

In this quiet, still place, it's a fertile ground of "being." Lifting us up out of the old as we let go of everything that no longer serves us. The more time we spend in the silence, the more we're lifted up. The more conscious we become of who we truly are as divine beings. That, in this quiet, still place, our spirits vibrate with the activity of the one great Spirit that we call God. That each and every cell is vitalized – filled with health and wholeness – because that is our birthright.

In this quiet, still space, our hearts are opened. We feel God's unconditional love for us, and we love ourselves more fully, so that we can love others more fully. In this season of gratitude, we recognize all of the blessings that we have in our lives. We count each and every one of them, knowing that it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. And that whatever we ask for, we can receive: heaped up, pressed down and overflowing. Because our God is a prosperous God.

And so, in this quiet, still presence within – as we feel God in us and as us and through us – we recognize our oneness with all of humanity across the world, and across the cosmos. And that each and every one of us is a unique and unrepeatable expression of the Divine. We see God's light shining in every face. And we recognize our oneness.

And so we take just a few minutes to move more fully into the silence as we recognize our oneness with God.

SILENCE

And so we come in gratitude, sweet Spirit, as we recognize every single blessing that we enjoy. Thank you for your goodness, God. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for creating us. Thank you for these amazing lives that we get to live. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

### MESSAGE

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Alright! Thank you, Rev. Lori, for that fabulous and wonderful meditation.

So this school teacher asks one of her students, who was the pastor's daughter: *"Mary, if you had \$5 and you asked your father for \$3, how much money would you have?"* And Mary said, *"\$5."* And the teacher said, *"Mary, you don't know your arithmetic!"* And Mary said, *"Teacher, you don't know my father!"* [Laughs]

So this morning we're talking about abundance. And would you like to live a more abundant life? Would you like to experience more inner peace and a deeper spiritual connection? Would you like to have more love or greater financial prosperity in your life? I think all of us would agree that we would like to! And, you know, the Bible has several verses that reassures us that all that is not only possible, but it is available. And it really is God's good pleasure to provide our lives with greater abundance.

In 2 Corinthians, it says, *"God is able to bless you abundantly so that you have all things at all times, and have all that you need."* The 23rd Psalm says, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."* And the Book of Jeremiah tell us clearly that, *"God has a plan to prosperous."* And, finally, Jesus said he came *"that we may have life, and have it more abundantly."*

There are even more promises of abundance in the Bible But here's the interesting thing: While it's available to us, we don't always experience that level of abundance. We don't always experience and enjoy it. And sometimes we don't even believe that it's possible or likely to live in that way. Not only do we not experience the abundance we want, we sometimes experience the opposite in the form of living in more scarcity, lack and limitation.

You know, they did an interesting experiment with fish in a large, large glass aquarium. And they were swimming all around. And then, they put a glass partition cutting off two-thirds of the aquarium, and putting all the fish in the small area. And for about a month or so, they were swimming around. Then they removed the glass partition. And, yet – even though the entire tank to swim around – all the fish just stayed in that small area. They had been so conditioned to believe that that's all there was, even though they had access to so much more.

And sometimes, that's how it is in life with us! We have an abundance of good and love and joy available to us and, yet, we swim in a much smaller section, and live a much more limited life than we're capable of. And, while we don't live in an aquarium, we have some of those same self-imposed partitions and limitations in the form of our mindset. I call it the "consciousness of not-enough-ness."

Tell me if you've ever said or thought these things: *"I don't have enough time."* Or, *"I don't have enough money."* *"I just don't have enough love in my life."* *"I don't have enough friends."* *"I'm not having enough fun."* *"Maybe I don't have enough faith."* *"Maybe I'm not having enough success."* *"I don't feel happy enough."* *"I don't have enough talent."* *"I don't have enough education."* *"I don't even have enough connections."* *"I don't have enough answers."* *"I don't have enough discipline."* *"I don't have enough patience."* We could go on and on! But I bet every one of us repeats that we don't have enough of something on a regular basis.

Not only “not enough,” but sometimes we feel that we’re not good enough. That our job isn’t good enough. Our salary isn’t good enough. Our car isn’t good enough. Our house isn’t good enough. Our relationship is not good enough. And all this “not-good-enough-ness” actually creates frustration in ourselves that actually blocks the flow of abundance ... just like that partition limits us, we limit ourselves with our mindset of “not enough.”

So today we start a two-week series about “Living in Abundance.” And today it is about how to get in the flow.

**And the first thing we want to talk about is how to develop a mindset of abundance.** I heard Dr. Dennis Kimbro speak in Los Angeles years ago. He’s the author of a book called *What Makes the Great Great*. And when he was researching it, he interviewed Wally “Famous Amos” of his famous chocolate chip cookies. And it was on the 14th floor of a penthouse in downtown Atlanta. And so, Dr. Kimbro came, and they were chatting.

And he said, “So what makes the great great? What is it about you that has made you so successful?” And [Amos] said, “I’ll show you!” And so he goes and he opens the drapes, and they’re looking out on the downtown Atlanta. And he said, “What do you see?” And he said, “Well; I see downtown Atlanta.” He said, “No; what else?” “I see buildings.” “What else?” “I see businesses.” “What else?” “I see people.” And he’s asking all this and, finally, [Dr. Kimbro] said, “Well, what do you see?” [Amos] said, “Well, what I see when I look out,” he said, “I see possibilities!”

So the question is: When you look out of the window of your life, what do you see? Are you seeing lack? Are you seeing limitation? Are you seeing negativity? Or are you seeing possibilities? Are you seeing opportunities? And are you seeing blessings? You see, because it’s really what’s going on in our consciousness – the “eye” through which we see – that really affects what we experience and what we attract.

You know, a mindset of abundance is really based in the awareness of the existence and presence of the abundance of the Universe, and the trust that it is available and accessible to each and every one of us.

You see, Jesus knew he was connected to the Source. His oneness was so there: he knew the kingdom of God was within him! That whenever he had a need, he knew it would be met at the moment of the need. He knew that he could attract and call forth the good, because he was so connected to that flow of goodness and abundance.

And so are we! But there are two things that get our minds of it. And that is: We get so focused on negativity and what we don’t have and lack that we condition our minds to believe that lack is the norm. That “never enough” is the norm and how life works. And that abundance is rare.

And then the second this is that – because we think it’s not enough, and we get conditioned – we worry a lot. Have you ever worried about something in your life? I’ve got a friend who worries so much that, when she had nothing to worry about, it made her worry! I mean, we worry like crazy! And the thing about worry is it blocks our abundance, because ... The word “worry” actually means – “wrygan” – it means “to choke off.” That we worry with anxiety and tension and stress, that we can’t just recognize it, but we block the flow of that abundance. And that’s not the truth.

So one of the ways to get our minds into abundance – and realizing there’s more available than we realize – is a wonderful poem called “The Extravagance of God.” I use it in my prosperity class. And here’s what it says:

*“More sky than you can see;  
More seas than you can sail;*

*More sun than you can bear to watch;  
More stars than you can scale.*

*More breath than you can breathe;  
More yield than you can sow;  
More grace than you can comprehend;  
More love than you can know.”*

And I love that! Because it reminds us: There's not only just more air or more sun or more light or more stars ... There's more love than we could ever imagine. There are always more ideas and possibilities. We are thinking lack, but the fact is: We can never run out of love! We can never run out of possibilities and ideas! For happiness, for success, for joy, for spiritual connection.

You know, somebody once said, *“Everything that can be invented, has been invented.”* And I know we think like that sometimes: *“There's just not enough, and it's going to run out!”* And it'll never run out! In fact, the person who said that was the commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office in 1899. Human beings have been thinking lack and “not enough,” but it's just not the truth! There's more available to us than we realize!

We'll never run out of love, because we'll never run out of God! We'll never run out of peace and joy and possibilities, because God is everywhere present! It's immersing our minds in the fullness and the allness of God through consistent prayer and meditation that calms the worry and it relaxes and opens our minds to the unlimited possibilities. But we need to do it daily! We need to do consistent meditation of immersing our mind in the fullness and allness of God.

So would you be willing to spend more time immersing your mind so you develop a mindset of abundance?

**And the second thing is to become a conscious giver.** Here's what Deepak Chopra says: *“The Universe operates through the dynamic law of exchange. Giving and receiving are different aspects of the flow of the energy of the Universe. It is our willingness to give, and our willingness to practice giving consistently, that keeps the abundance of the Universe circulating in our lives.”*

You know, life is governed by laws: The law of attraction, just like the law of gravity, the law of aerodynamics. There are physical laws and spiritual laws. The law of cause and effect. And one of those laws is the law of circulation; it is a law of things moving. And giving activates the moving of that law. The movement of that energy – the movement of the flow – giving and receiving are dynamic aspects of the law of circulation.

And when there isn't giving, it stops the flow, and we become stagnant. We become stuck. You know, that's where the frustration happens, is when energy is stuck somewhere in our lives. And giving is the way that we move that energy.

We're usually kind of afraid of giving, because we think it means we're losing what we have. It's depleting us and taking our good away. But it actually is empowering. It's enriching. It's increasing and expanding the good in our lives. It is a law: Give and you shall receive! And it means giving is the activating force that gets the energy and the movement and the circulation of good moving in our lives.

And it's a lot easier to give. We think giving is something onerous and huge and too challenging. But it's simple! Sometimes giving a smile! Sometimes opening a door for someone. Sometimes giving someone a helping hand. Giving them a compliment. You know, things like giving blood or giving or your time and volunteering at a hospital or for seniors. There are all kinds of ways that we can give. Sending someone a card; buying them a coffee. Expressing your appreciation. Giving is just sending out energy of light and

love and goodness and positive comments and ideas to people. It really, really is simple, but it makes a huge difference.

There was this woman who was really kind of struggling with her health and her work. And she went to her counselor, and her counselor said, *"I want you to give something to someone every day. Give! Practice giving for 29 days."* So she started doing this. And she wasn't seeing much change. But after the 14th day of giving – and she could be giving flowers or a compliment or a card – that she started noticing she was feeling a little better! And then, after about the 20th day, she started attracting new clients! By the 29th, she was so inspired with how giving changed her life, she wrote a book called *29 Gifts*. It transformed her life: the power of giving!

There's a fabulous book called *The Giving Way to Happiness*. Studies show that, when we are a giver in all the various ways, that our happiness goes up. And the reason I think it is: Is because giving is a part of our spiritual nature. It's not to withhold. And giving is an act of love. It is an act of kindness. It's an act of care. It's an act of compassion. When it says, *"It's the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom,"* it means God is a giver: the nature of God, as a giver, is giving. And, since we're created in the image and likeness of God, our nature is giving. So we feel more connected – more alive, more happy – when we connect with that nature and aspect of ourselves.

And giving works with everything! You know, Jim Henson, who created The Muppets: When he first started, he wasn't selling anything. Nobody was buying his Muppets! And then he heard a sermon from Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, who wrote *The Power of Positive Thinking*, and it was called "Give First." And that sermon made a difference! Because then he started giving away kids' plays and sending The Muppets, and putting on shows at festivals, and all kinds of things he did. And, after a year of doing that, he got the opportunity of a lifetime when he was asked to have his Muppets join a new show that was entitled *Sesame Street*. And we know how monstrously big and successful that was! And the reason he got that opportunity is because he practiced being a conscious giver. He activated the flow of good in his life.

So how will you be a more conscious giver in your life? How will you be a more conscious giver in your relationship? A more conscious giver at your work? A conscious giver with your friends? A conscious giver in your attitude? A conscious giver in your finances? Because giving activates the flow and the circulation of abundance in our lives.

**And the final one is to be a joyful receiver.** You know, I bet most of us have a harder time receiving than we do in giving. Giving is the activator, and we've even heard it said, *"It is better to give than to receive."* And it is, in the sense to not think of ourselves and help someone and it's the activating force. But we can't diminish receiving! Because that's another aspect of it that keeps the flow circulating!

You know, sometimes we think that receiving means that you're greedy or you're selfish or you're using people. Sometimes we think that, when we are a receiver, it means that we're weak or soft or can't take care of ourselves. We're vulnerable. And that's really not true! Sometimes our work ethic and our pride and our need for independence prevent us from accepting and being a good receiver.

We always say we want to receive a great life; we want to win the lottery. We want all these great, amazing things to happen! And to receive them. And yet, we have a hard time receiving some of the simple things. You know, if we help someone, and they thank us, sometimes we won't be able to receive the compliment. We say, *"Oh, it was just nothing."* Or someone offers us help; it's like, *"No; no thanks! I'm good; I don't need it."* Or they'll say, *"Hey, your hair looks great!"* And we say, *"Nah ... it's ... I just threw this together!"* You know, or someone buys us a gift, and the first thing we say is, *"Oh, you really shouldn't have!"*

I mean, if we really pay attention, there's small, consistent patterns of ways we reject, of ways we deny, and the way that we block the flow of good in our lives. Sometimes even in the love that's going on now

in our lives, we have a hard time receiving and letting it in. All the little bits of good – of compliments and all the gifts and all the offers of help and advice – sometimes we just push it away, thinking we’re being strong. But we’re actually doing greater harm to ourselves than we realize. We not only deny that person the good feeling of giving; we stop the energetic flow, and we deny ourselves being blessed.

Mary Kupferle says these words: *“It is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Nothing so delights God as the willingness of his children to receive. Nothing pleases God, and the Giver, greater than to find an open and receptive channel through which to pour his blessings for manifestation.”*

So receiving really is about being a more open channel to allow God’s goodness to flow through us. Not just to bless us, but also to bless other people in our lives. To bring light and love and goodness and prosperity and success into the world. It enriches all of us!

In many ways, I would say receiving is not only an important aspect of the law of circulation – and bringing more good into the world – I think it’s our responsibility to receive! You know, to feel worthy! To realize we deserve this. And by us receiving it, we’re actually bringing more good into the world.

That’s why Jesus said, *“Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you’ve received it.”* Believe that you’re worth it! That you’re worthy of it! That you’re willing to accept and have it in your life. To allow your life to be changed and transformed by receiving this good, because it will elevate ourselves, and it will elevate the people around us.

So in what ways can you become a more joyful receiver? In what ways can you be more “pleased to receive”? Because it really will make a huge, huge difference.

Every one of us – like those fish – are swimming in a huge aquarium. It’s available to us, but we don’t need to limit ourselves to be in that small area. And we have the power to activate it! That abundance is available! And the way to do it is to develop and have a consistent mindset of abundance by immersing our mind in the mind of God. And letting the worry go away, and letting our minds being open to the unlimited possibilities when we look out in our life. The second one is to be a conscious giver. Know that giving activates the flow! It’s the key to the law of circulation and increase. So be a giver in the simple ways in any area of your life – your relationship, your work – and great things will happen. And, finally, be a joyful receiver. Receiving is a good thing; it’s a blessed thing. It’s a “God thing.” It’s your responsibility! And it is a wonderful way to open your life to blessings, and to allow other people to feel good being givers by you being a joyful receiver.

Abundance is available to all of us! And when we practice these three things, that really opens our lives to start truly living “in the flow.”

God bless you all!

## OFFERING

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** It’s that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. Our offering blessing is: *“Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive.”* You know, giving is a spiritual practice that brings us closer to the Divine. So I invite you to hold your offering in your hand as we bless offering: as we say, thank you, God, for these gifts and these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love, they are received in love, and that they move through this ministry with the energy of divine love out into the world as good. And that each giver is blessed – heaped up, pressed down and overflowing – for that is the Law. And so it is. Thank you, God! Amen.

## CLOSING

**Rev. Lori Fleming:** Well, we're so grateful you could be with us online: in cyberspace! We're really glad that you were here with us, and we hope that you have a fabulous week.

And now will you affirm the Prayer for Protection with me?

The light of God surrounds us;

The love of God enfolds us;

The power of God protects us;

And the presence of God watches over us.

Wherever we are, God is. And all is well!

Have a blessed week!

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