

GRATITUDE FOR GOD

Final Week of the 6-Week "Gratitude" Series

Nov. 25, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Hello! I'm Richard Rogers, and this is the Wednesday night service at Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center. And we are so glad you're here. You know, this is a very special night. You know, we started at this location on Greenway and 16th Street, and it was a Thanksgiving morning in 1998. And so every Thanksgiving is a very special time in my heart. I'm reminded of the journey here, and all the activities it took to get to our new campus. And so this is a very special night. So this night we're going to have a LIVE service outside in the Courtyard, but we're also going to be recording this for you at home, or wherever you are throughout the country. So Happy Thanksgiving!!!!

There's a couple announcements I want to call your attention to. The first one is a reminder again of our special service on December 1st. And this is the Remembrance Service; this is the time where we remember people who have just made a difference in our life. So if you want a little bio, picture, you can send that here. And today is the last day to send that in. So do that tonight, so that we have that for December 1st.

And also, we're still recruiting for our chaplains. So if you'd like to serve the ministry in that way, it's a powerful way to serve our ministry.

Alright; let's move into our time of meditation.

MEDITATION:

And today our thought is simply "Thank You." Thank you, God. Thank you, God, for everything. Thank you, God, for this day. Thank you, God, for my life. Thank you, God, for my health. Thank you, God, for the abundance that is all around me. Thank you, God! Thank you, God, when life works out perfectly, and when it doesn't. Thank you, God, for the ups and downs. Thank you, God, for all the different levels of life. And thank you, God, that my life is just getting better and better and better. That every time I overcome anything in my life, my life gets better. Thank you, God! Thank you, God, for the last year and all that was going on this year. All the ups and downs of this year. And thank you, God, that I made it through. That we were successful. That we are open and receptive to all the good.

Through every twist and turn of life, we say thank you, God. That life is this amazing adventure. And no matter what we think life is about, life is about living just the way it is. So today we just say thank you, God. Thank you, God, for being that living presence within me. For guiding me, for directing me, for revealing my next step: showing me the way. For healing the wounds of the past. Thank you, God, for all the good – for all the good in my life. Thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

MESSAGE:

Rev. Richard Rogers: One of the most beloved prayers in Unity is called the "Prayer for Protection." And if you've been to any of our services, we always end pretty much every service with the Prayer for Protection. It really is one of Unity's most famous prayers. And what most people like about it is that it's such a simple prayer. And so as I'm ... So my title today is "Gratitude for God." And I really want us to really focus, because God is it. With all that we've been through this year, you know, God is the way that we get through every situation.

And I wanted to come back to this Prayer for Protection. Because for many of us, it really is the thing that guides us in life. That these four simple ideas in this Prayer for Protection really are the grounding and the foundation of our spiritual life.

So I want to make sure that everybody really knows the story of the Prayer for Protection. It was written by James Dillet Freeman, who for many years ran Silent Unity. He has been called the poet laureate of Unity. And the Prayer for Protection one of his most famous prayers. In fact, it's been literally published and copied millions and millions of times around the world. And James Dillet Freeman wrote an article in the *Unity Magazine* called "Life is Wonderful," where he actually told the story of the Prayer for Protection and how it came to be.

"When World War II is raging in Europe, we received many letters and phone calls from people all over caught in the conflict. But for a long time we didn't have a prayer for protection that was satisfying to the staff at Silent Unity. And we were looking for one.

Silent Unity had always written a special Christmas Prayer Service for Silent Unity workers. And 1940 I was asked to prepare that service. We had never before had a prayer for protection, but in 1940 we needed one, so I wrote one for the Christmas service. And this is what I wrote – four lines:

'The light of Christ directs me; The love of Christ enfolds me; The power of Christ protects me; and The presence of Christ upholds me.'

I had hardly finished the Christmas service before Silent Unity came to me again and asked me to write a prayer for protection pamphlet that they could send to people in the conflict areas. And we called it 'His Protecting Spirit.'

They told me they wanted an affirmative prayer for protection on the back page. Along with it they were going to use the verse of the 23rd Psalm: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me' (from Psalm 23:4).

And one of the young women who was working with me at Silent Unity, and was reading my manuscript as I wrote it, just finished it and came to me and said, 'Jim, if I was a woman in England and they were dropping bombs on my roof, or if I was a soldier and somebody was pointing a loaded gun at me, I wouldn't want to feel like I was walking through the valley of the shadow of death. You can do better than this.'

And I thought to myself, 'You want me to do better than the 23rd Psalm? You must be out of your mind!' But rolling around in the back of my mind was that little verse that I had written at Christmas time: the prayer for Christmas. I had written it just for Silent Unity, but now it came rolling back to me, in front of my mind, and demanded that I pay attention to it. And it enticed me to see what I could make of it.

First, I took out the rhyme. I felt it would be more universal if I removed the rhyme. Then I changed Christ to God. It had been Christ because it was a Christmas prayer, but I felt it would be more open to people around the world if I put God, instead. And it might be more acceptable to people in this little prayer. So it became:

'The light of God surrounds me; The love of God enfolds me; The power of God protects me; and The presence of God watches over me.'

I added a fifth line after the 'Prayer for Protection' first appeared as a four-lined prayer in 1941. I added it by 1943 as it was reprinted and reappeared. And then it became:

'The light of God surrounds me; The love of God enfolds me; The power of God protects me; The presence of God watches over me. Wherever I am, God is.'

That came through all the changes, and I felt like the work was finally done. And the 'Prayer for Protection' has now been sent to literally millions of people around the world.

The "Prayer for Protection" is one of two James Dillet Freeman poems that have been carried to the moon. First in 1969, Buzz Aldrin carried the 'Prayer for Protection' to the moon, and then in 1971, 'I Am There' was left on a microfilm by Apollo astronaut James Irwin.

Can you imagine? I mean, I cannot imagine! Two of my poems actually being on the moon. And being carried up by two different astronauts. And neither one of the astronauts really knew him; both of the astronauts since have come and met him. James Irwin came to Unity Village, and he flew in one of the Air Force jets. And James Dillet Freeman, the story goes, picked him up at the airport. And he said, "Well, let me change before we get to Unity village, and get out of my flight suit." And he was wearing this gold astronaut flight suit, even though he's flying a jet. And [Freeman] said, "Oh, no! Everybody will love it!" And he met everybody in his gold flight suit, and everybody was thrilled to actually meet an astronaut!

And so what I want to do today is: I want to break up those four lines as we give thanks for God. As we move into this last night before Thanksgiving, I want to break up these four lines to really look at what this means: to give thanks. To really – to look at giving thanks for God.

"The Light of God surrounds us."

And the first one, of course, is the Light of God. And you know, this is the creative power of the Universe. In fact, the first aspect of God that we read about in Genesis 1 is God saying, "Let there be light." And so what I want you to see is: The light is the creative aspect of God expressing. So that any time we're calling forth the light – saying, "Let there be light" – calling forth the light in any situation, in any need, in any healing prayer ... When we call forth the light, we're calling forth the creative energy of the Universe.

You know, I've told the story many times about when I was a young man, and my first job out of college. Within a year of being out of college, I was a year's salary in debt. I've told this story many times. What I doesn't often tell is the prayer that I did during that time that really changed my life. And the prayer that I did at that time is, now ... As I said, I was a year's salary in debt. I couldn't make the minimum payments on my life at that time. So what I would do is: I would go in my little apartment at night, before I go to bed. And I would imagine the light of God coming in from the top of my head. And I would imagine it filling up my entire body.

And that time in my life, I felt empty. I felt like I had failed. I felt like there was nothing working in my life. I was at my lowest point. So every night, I would sit and just allow the light of God to come into my body. And I would allow it heal me. And I would allow it to bless every cell, every organ, every aspect of my life. And I would just feel the light of God filling me until I didn't feel so empty. I didn't feel so alone. I didn't feel like such a failure. And I would feel that light just lifting me up.

And then I would imagine just opening my heart. And what I would do is: I would send that light to every person and situation I owed. And I would send it to pay off my car. I'd send it to pay off my credit card debt. I would send it to pay off my rent that was due at the end of every month. And I would just send that light, and seeing it, and I would hear the words, "Paid in full." And I would send that light in every direction, paying off everything in my life. And within less than a year, I was completely out of debt. And every night I would just send that light out in every direction.

And then what I would do – when I could see every bill being paid: every credit card, every car payment. When I could see it paid in full, then I would send out light to my checking account and my savings account. And I would see it going before me to create my next thing. And I need you to know that I have used that simple prayer – that simple meditation process – for my entire life. That when I want to create something in my life – when I want to create something new; when I want to create something bigger – I start by seeing that light coming into my body just filling me up. Then I open my heart, and I send it wherever I choose to send it. Just like God said, *“Let there be light.”* I send that light to any direction, to any desire.

And so what I want you to see is that you have been given the light of God as the creative power of the Universe. And I want you to use that power of God to really do some amazing things! To heal yourself; to heal relationships. To prosper you; to pay off debt. To use it in any way you desire. Because the light is infinite! *“Let there be light!”*

“The Love of God enfolds us.”

The next line is about the Love of God. And I want you to see that that line is second. And I never really understood why that line was second. Because, in Unity, we’re big love people! You know, we think love should be first; love should be last; love should be in the middle. Right? But we’re not always used to love being second. And I really like that idea that love is second. Like, that until you can really feel the light of God in your life, you don’t really feel how much God loves you.

See, many people do their spiritual life as an intellectual pursuit. They will study spiritual principles; they’ll be able to quote this person, or they’ll quote Scripture. Or they’ll be able to talk about this or that. And they’ll know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. And, you know, they have all the talk down. They have all the talk down; they can think this stuff through. But I will tell you: the spiritual life doesn’t really begin until you feel the infinite Love of God. Until you feel that God loves you with an infinite, unconditional love.

You know, one of the major themes after people have had a near-death experience is they have this uncontrollable feeling that they are infinitely loved by the entire Universe. See, our spiritual life doesn’t really begin to take off until we begin to feel how much we are loved. God loves me! And that love is enfolded in every moment: that the entire Universe loves me. God loves me! Like, that is so overwhelmingly wonderful! God loves me! And if the entire Universe loves you – if God loves you – then truly, all things are possible! There’s not a situation or a condition that you cannot overcome. Because God loves you!

I want you to just see if you can feel the entire Universe – all that is; the infiniteness of God – loving you. You! Little old you! With all the mistakes you’ve made, with all your stories, with all your drama, and all this and that ... God loves you! The entire Universe loves you!

“The Power of God Protects Me.”

And then the next one. We go from love to power. And I think it’s so interesting that we have to get love right before we get into power. Because *“The Power of God protects me.”* And what I want you to begin to see is just how we begin to use the power of God. Like, I want you to begin to claim the power of God in any area of your life. Right? Not only is God infinite light, but God is infinite power! And your soul has been given access to the infinite power of God, but you have to claim it!

“I claim the power of God in this situation. I claim the power of God to protect me. I claim the power of God to provide for me. I claim the power of God to open doors. I claim the power of God to create justice and order in any situation.”

If you're in a lawsuit, or if you feel like you're being victimized in a situation, I want you to claim the power of God! And one of the most – for me – the most vivid demonstrations ... There's really two. When Jesus said, *"If you have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there.'"* That is the power of God!

But there's also this other line in Matthew 26, where the soldiers are coming in. Jesus is in the garden, and he says to his apostles, who want to stop and fight the soldiers. He says this to his disciples: *"Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?"*

And I love this idea! I love this! I mean, I want you to feel the power of God that's within you! That would send you 12 legions of angels to heal – to transform – any area of your life. You are not a victim to life; you are not a weak, little thing. You have been given the power of God to open any door in your life. I mean, this is no small thing!

But I also want you to be careful that you're not calling forth the power of God unless you're serious. Because the moment you start calling forth the power of God, the Universe is going to pay attention to that, and you better sit down, because it's going to start moving things in your life. But when you claim the power of God, literally everything is possible! Because you're not doing – you're not moving your life forward out of your personality or out of your sad, little self. You're actually beginning to move your life forward with the literal power of God that is within you. And doors will open! Mountains will move! The tide will separate! Miracles will happen, because you're claiming the power of God in your life. This is no small thing!

When you're ready for this – when you're ready to claim the power of God, and you mean it: you speak it; you decree it – the power of God will come to your aid like nothing you've ever seen before.

"The Presence of God watches over."

And the last one is the Presence of God. I love that! The presence of God! That God is guiding me and directing me. That, wherever I am, I walk in grace! Where I am, God is guiding me and directing me and opening doors for me! Because the presence of God goes with me wherever I am! You are surrounded – enfolded – in the presence of God.

"Wherever I am, God is."

You know, one of my instructors when I was in seminary, Ed Rabel. Ed Rabel was this little man that had a spiritual presence like a giant. He was a spiritual presence like few I'd ever met in my life. He was amazing! He talked about this idea that technology always catches up with prayer consciousness. And I really believe that this infiniteness of this presence of God. And now, on my Smartphone, I can sit and I have access to literally the vast majority of all the information and knowledge that has been available since the beginning of time. And I really believe that that Google – that Smartphone – is an extension of the presence of God. That the presence of God literally is with you always: to guide you; to direct you; to show you the way. To move your life forward in amazing ways that you can't even imagine.

If you need wisdom, if you need guidance, if you need knowledge, if you need to understand, the presence of God will reveal it to you in a way that is perfect for you. For you! Like, if there's something that you don't understand – if you're being called into a situation, and you don't know what to do – the presence of God will reveal the way. Because the presence of God is watching over you. The presence of God – the presence of God – is watching over you. That, wherever I am, God is.

Will you close your eyes for a moment as we close with prayer?

"The Light of God surrounds me; the Love of God enfolds me; the Power of God protects me; and the Presence of God watches over me." Wherever I am, God is. And all is well.

CLOSING

God bless you, friend! Have a wonderful week! I see you just being blessed beyond your wildest dreams!

I want to thank you for your generous support of this ministry during this time. Know that we are committed to supporting you spiritually as we walk through this time together. God bless you, friend!

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