

# CHRISTMAS LOVE

Week #3 of a 4-Week Advent Series

Dec. 16, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Hi! I'm Richard Rogers, and I want to welcome you to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center - to the Wednesday night service. And, you know, I love the Christmas season! And this Christmas, I'm talking about the aspects of Advent: the four spiritual qualities that we celebrate with Advent. And so we're going to go deeper today into LOVE, and talk about love's true gift. And the gift that each and every one of us is called to give during this Christmas season.

But we've got a couple of announcements. First one is: We are so excited -- and make sure that everyone knows -- that we are going to be doing two outdoor Christmas Eve Candlelighting Services. One will be on December 23rd, 7 p.m. out in the courtyard. The other one will be on the 24th. Both of them at 7 p.m. So it's a very special time to gather with your Unity family, to light a candle that represents the Christ within. The incredible music ... the whole experience of Christmas! And this year is going to be even more beautiful, because it's going to be outside. So we hope that you'll join us in that.

Also, we're doing an outdoor Burning Bowl Ceremony on December 31st, 7 p.m., as well. Outdoors. Come and be a part of these special services outdoors, as we complete this 2020 year.

Also, we're offering a special Seasonal Showcase for our fantastic musicians. It's going to be on December 21st, 7 p.m. It's going to be on our YouTube channel. And we have Rusty and Craig and Sally Jo, Cerise, Todd and many, many more! So come ... uh, come. WATCH. It's going to be on our YouTube channel, and it's just going to take your whole Christmas time up to really experience the beauty of Christmas.

Also, we have one more event as we close out this year. And that's on Tuesday, December 22nd. We have a medium -- Jeanette St. Germain -- and she's going to be online, available as a Zoom class that you need to get a ticket for. It's \$15. December 22nd. And she's going to allow you to talk or, through her, to loved ones, to spirit guides. A message just for you at this holiday season. So you can go online and get your tickets for that.

And then the last thing I want you to remember is this Sunday *[laughs]* is one of our favorite Sundays! This is "Ugly Sweater Sunday." So if you come do service LIVE with us, outside on the lawn, this is your opportunity to wear your favorite ugly Christmas sweater. And I know that some of you have some beauties! My favorite is the Sasquatch Christmas sweater, because it is literally the worst Christmas sweater I've ever seen! But I want to see your absolutely worst Christmas -- ugly Christmas sweater. So that will be this Sunday.

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

## MEDITATION:

I want you to close your eyes, open your heart to the power of love. That love is right here. Right here, right now is the infinite love of God available to each and every one of us. So just breathe that in! Breathe in the infinite love that God is.

And during this Christmas season, we all need more love. We all need more love. We need to feel the love of God in greater and greater ways in our life. We need to feel profoundly touched, loved and healed and blessed. So we give thanks today for the infinite love of God. And I want you to feel your entire being -- your mind, your body, your soul, every cell of your body -- just being blessed by love. That love is healing you completely. That love is restoring you to your highest level of good. Love is blessing

your home, your finances. Love is blessing your work, your family, your community, your church, your nation. Love is the power that is healing the planet! And that each and every one of us is a channel for God's infinite love.

So today, we just allow it to shine. During this Christmas season, we allow love to shine! That there is only one presence and power: God's love. Pure love. Divine love. Pure love blesses me now. Pure love restores me now. Pure love makes all things new. And in this time of silence, I want you just to feel the power of love opening your soul to even greater good.

SILENCE

Feel that love surrounding you: surrounding your home, surrounding your family. Surrounding your friends and loved ones. That love is opening doors to your highest level of good. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God. And so it is. Amen.

### MESSAGE:

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Okay, so today we're going to light this candle. [*Lights the Advent candle symbolizing love.*] And the spiritual quality that we are lighting is for love. And this Christmas, we know we light the candle of love over and over again. That this candle of love is burning brighter and brighter. That we light the Christ candle for love. And we just see it burning brighter and brighter in every area of our life.

So as we talk about love today, I want you to think about the gift that love is asking you to give. What is the true gift that love is acting you to give? And I want you to look back at your life, and I want you to think about what's the biggest gift that love has ever asked you to give? Like, if you had to pick one gift: what is your biggest act of love? What is the biggest gift that love has ever asked you to give?

You know, I could think of some of the biggest gifts I've given. You know, maybe it was a gift. Maybe I even went into debt to give the gift. Or, you know, I wanted it to be showy and flashy. And I really wanted to impress the person. I remember some girlfriends that I gave some pretty amazing gifts to. And, you know, my kids and, you know, my wife. And I think about the people that I've given impressive gifts to.

But, you know, the reality is that a lot of those gifts were driven by ego. Like, I wanted to make a statement. I wanted to be impressive. I wanted to give my gifts from a place of just like: aren't I special? And that's not even close to what I want to talk about today.

What I want to talk about is the biggest gift that love has asked you to make. And, for me, a lot of times the biggest gift that love has asked me to give was the gift of forgiveness. Or the gift of letting go of resentment. Or the gift of opening my mind, my heart, my soul to someone in my life -- to making more room.

And today, would you be willing to look at the gift that love is asking for you to give? And to really be open to this season of allowing love's true gift to manifest in your life?

You know, when we celebrate Christmas -- especially from a Unity point of view -- we not only celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, but we celebrate this idea that God is being born through each one of us. In John 3:16 we read: "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have eternal life.*"

And the idea here -- from a Unity point of view -- is that each one of us was given the Christ. Each one of us was given the Spirit of God. Each one of us was given all that God is within us! And at Christmas time,

we celebrate the birth of Christ -- we celebrate the birth of Jesus -- but we also celebrate the awareness of that activity of God in us. In us!

And then Jesus took it to a whole other level when he said, in John 14; he said: *"Truly, truly I tell you: whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and even greater works than these, because I go to my Father."*

Okay? *[Laughs]* So here's where it gets really interesting, right? So not only have we been given the Spirit of God: that each and every one of us is a manifestation, an expression of all that God is. That we have the Spirit of God within us. But then Jesus even moved the bar higher by saying that you're actually going to do even greater works than I'm doing right now! That, because the Spirit of God is in you, you're going to do greater gifts. You're going to give greater good. You're going to do more amazing things.

And I want you to really open your mind, your heart, your soul to what that would look like this Christmas: if you gave the best version of you to the world. If you gave your greatest gift. If you gave the best that was within you, and you did that over and over and over again.

Because I know, for most of us, we can think of a time when we stepped into a situation, and we were more loving, more generous, more kind ... whatever it was! And we just knocked it out of the park. And then we can also probably think of some times in our life where we did actually the opposite of that: we came from a real childish place -- maybe an immature place, maybe a real angry or hateful place.

And so, for many of us, at this level of life there's a huge level of inconsistency. That sometimes we're just so amazing! Sometimes we give our gifts at such a high level! And then sometimes we give our gifts at such a low level *[laughs]*, and you think: Is this really the same person? Am I really capable of both extremes? Am I capable of this height -- this manifestation, this expression of God? Am I capable of this level of generosity and kindness and goodness? And then, in the next moment -- or the next experience -- reacting from such a small, angry, little place?

And this Christmas, I want you to look at: What is the gift -- what is the true gift, what is the real gift -- that God is calling you to give?

And I want to go and I want to tell the story of the Magi. I want to tell the story sometimes called "the kings" or "the wise men" from Matthew 2, 7 to 14.

*"And Herod the king called the Magis secretly, and found out the exact time the star would appear in the sky."*

Now what's interesting about this is: This week, on the 21st, we're also going to have that same what's called "the Christmas star": when Saturn and Jupiter line up on Earth. Last time this happened on this level was in the Middle Ages. So it only happens every couple hundred years. The Middle Ages! So on the 21st, we're going to be able to look up at the night sky, and see what could have been that night's -- that Christmas star. Right? So ...

*"And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and make careful search for the child. And as soon as you find him, report to me so that I may go and worship him.'"*

Well, we know from the whole story that King Herod really wasn't going to worship him. He just wanted to find him; he just wanted to eliminate him. He heard it proclaimed that there was going to be a new king -- a king of the Jews -- and he wanted him out of the picture.

*"After they heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the East went before them to guide them until it stopped over the place where the child was. And when they saw the star they were overjoyed. And on coming into the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and they worshiped him. And they opened their treasure and presented him with a gift of gold, of frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they return to their home country in a different way."*

Now, what's interesting about this story in a couple of different ways is: Every one of the characters -- Joseph, Mary, the shepherds, the kings (the Magis, the wise men) -- every one of the characters of the story at some level has a direct contact with the angels, either through a dream or they come to them.

And what I want you to see is: As we open our minds and our hearts to the activity of God, we have this connection with Spirit which feels as though we have angels whispering in our ear constantly. Guiding us. Directing us. Revealing that which we need to know. Opening possibilities. So they were guided not to go back.

Now what's also interesting about this story is that they present these three gifts. And the gift is gold, frankincense and myrrh. Now, I want to look at what each one of these gifts represents to really see the value of what they were trying to present to the Christ child.

The first one is gold. And I think, from a spiritual -- this one is probably the easiest to understand its meaning. That gold is all the earthly benefits. Gold is all the earthly wealth and financial good, and all the riches of all the world. Right? So we know that gold -- from the beginning of time -- is really representative. This precious metal has always been held in great value. And so gold always represents the benefits of the world.

The next gift was frankincense, which is an incense. And this gift represents the spiritual wealth. You know, incense -- in many forms of Christianity, and incense in many forms of religion all over the world -- incense is lit as an activity of acknowledging the higher spiritual realms. It is often a symbol for prayer. It's the idea of the upper activity of the soul.

So the first gift is physical wealth: worldly wealth, worldly riches. The second gift is spiritual wealth, or spiritual blessings or spiritual good. Right? So the first one is physical; next one is spiritual.

And then the third one I think is the most interesting: it's myrrh. Now, what's interesting about myrrh is that myrrh was predominantly used as an embalming fluid. *[Laughs]* Now... Now... You know, you think about it: Why would you give a child embalming fluid? Right? But I think the idea of the symbolism of this is so important, I don't want us to miss it. Right? The idea of myrrh is the realization that life on this planet is short. Right?

So the first gift they want to make sure that the child has financial blessings: blessed by the world. Second one is they want to make sure that this Christ child is blessed spiritually. And the third one is a reminder that life on this planet is short. That it is not eternal. Spiritually it's eternal; our soul will go on! But physically, life on this planet is a "now you see it, now you don't" proposition. And even that is such a powerful gift! Like, that we have to be living every day. Like, this is not a dress rehearsal. This is not

practice. Every day is the gift we have, and that every day is a precious gift. And we only have so much time in this form, in this life experience, and we have to be living every day, and acknowledging all the blessings that we have. But live this day fully!

We can look at this idea of your true gift at two different levels. We can look at it as a universal experience. We can say: Well, from a universal point of view, everyone has been given God. We've all been given the Christ Spirit. And our gift that we are called to give to the world is to give God to each other. We're called to give the Spirit of God. We're called to give the Christ to each other. And that's very universal; it's very general. It's very ... You know, it's the biggest swatch. It's the biggest view. Right? And it's true! But it's not always helpful.

What's really helpful -- and where I want to drill down to today -- is for you to really see how you in your life ... What gift are you called? What is your true gift to give to the world?

And when we dial down to that level, it really creates a level of simplicity in our life. If you know that every day you're called to give your true gift -- that love is calling you to give your true gift -- and you know what your true gift is... What's so amazing about that is: It just makes everything in your life just a little bit simpler. It just makes it a little bit easier. Because every day you're just going to be about that. Every day, I'm just about this. Right? Every day I'm just about teaching the greatest truth I know. And if, every day, I teach the greatest truth I know -- if that's my true gift -- then every day, at the end of the day, I can take a deep breath and know that I did the work that I'm here to do.

So what's your true gift? What's the gift that you were called to give in your life? The one that is your soul's destiny? Your soul's purpose? It's your thing that you were called to give to the world?

And so I want us to really look -- I've got five points that I want you to look at when you think about giving your true gift.

And the first one is: **Your true gift requires that you be living the best version of you.** You know, you can give any gift, right? But if you really want to play at the highest level -- if you want to give your true gift -- you really need to stand and be the person: the best version of you. Because your gift is going to require you to give the best version of you.

**Two: It requires that we go within.** Right? You can't really know your true gift -- you can't really know what you're called to give to the world -- if you're not willing to turn within and really explore who you are. Because this requires us to become very conscious about ourselves. You might know what everybody else's true gift is. You may have figured out your family's or your spouse's or your kids'. You may figure out what everybody else is called to do. But until you turn and look within, you will never truly know your gift.

Now, three: **If you're about giving your true gift, it will automatically call up a level of insecurity.** Because our human nature -- our ego -- is automatically going to say: *"That's too much."* Right? That if you're committed to giving your true gift, at some level it is going to make you feel a little insecure. It's like: How could I ever be that much? How could I ever give that much? How could I ever do that much? That, if you're truly committed to giving your true gift, I guarantee there's going to be times when you feel insecure in giving that gift. And that's kind of the sign that you're actually on the right page! If you get up today and really wonder if you could really give that gift at the highest level -- at the level that you know God is calling you to express -- it's going to make us feel insecure from time to time.

Four. What I love about four is: **Giving your true gift is time-sensitive.** And what I mean by that is: Sometimes when we feel like we've dialed in our true gift, and that this is the gift that we are called to give to the world, we think that we're going to give the gift forever and not ever be asked to reinvent it or change it. Or to take it higher. And the truth is that, if you're committed to giving your true gift, it is always going to be asked that you keep updating it. That you keep renewing it. That you will not be allowed to do it the way you've done it 20 years ago. Because that was yesterday's food. That was yesterday's gift. That was yesterday's process.

Because, if you're going to stay at your "A Game" -- if you're going to be doing the greatest work God is calling you to do -- you're going to have to be willing to reinvent it over and over again. To keep it fresh, to keep it new, so that we're not living on yesterday's good. We're not living on yesterday's insights. That we're actually being called right now to take our gift -- our true gift -- and say, *"How is Spirit calling me to give that gift now? Not the way Spirit did 10 years ago or 20 years ago or 50 years ago? How is Spirit calling me to give that gift now?"*

Because the Spirit of God wants to be fresh in us. You know, *[laughs]* God is not giving us day-old donuts, right? God is not asking us to give our gifts past our expiration date. If you've given a gift -- and that gift hasn't evolved and it hasn't changed in the last 10 or 15 years -- it is literally time for us to rethink it. It is time for us to go within and say, *"Spirit, how do you want to give that gift through me today? I know how I've done it in the past, but how do you want to give it through me today?"*

And sometimes that's the scariest thing we do! Right? Because we feel like, *"No! I'm really good at giving it this way! Like, I've really done good work giving my gift in this way: in this context, in this form."* And Spirit says, *"Great! That was fabulous! You did a really good job. But that was yesterday! Are you willing to lean into me today? Are you willing to lean into the power of God today? To give your gift in a brand new way? In a way that would cause you to have to lean into Spirit? To actually be vulnerable and take it to the next level?"*

And five: **To give your true gift -- to give the best version of you -- it requires a level of expansion.** Regular expansion. Daily expansion. That you're willing to expand your soul over and over again to give the gifts that God has for you to give in a greater way by opening your soul and expanding into a new process. Into a higher level of good. That your true gift takes us to our most vulnerable place if we're willing to give it.

So one of my friends -- Janet Ray -- she does on Facebook... She does what she calls "wisdom writing." And she downloads this incredible wisdom; she shares it weekly on Facebook. On a "Facebook live." And I want to share her wisdom writing -- or at least a section of it -- from last week. Again, Janet Ray.

*"The bringer of good, the bringer of light, the bringer of love: for to see and know oneself as this has become our new journey and pathway for many."*

And I want to just stop right there on those first two sentences. Because those first two sentences are huge! *"The bringer of goodness, the bringer of light, the bringer of love."* And I want you to see that that's you! That your soul is being called to be the bringer of goodness! To be the bringer of light! To be the bringer of love! That your soul -- your beingness, your essence -- is called to be that channel for infinite good. To be that channel of God. That you are the bringer of goodness! You are the bringer of light! You are the bringer of love! It is you! You are the one that is downloading this next highest level of good to the planet!

*"For to see and to know oneself as this has become anew journey and pathway for many. As many start connecting to their true self -- to their true gifts; to their true purpose -- and watch the love of glow and connection and creativity grow and grow and grow. By not swaying by the distractions of current events."*

See, this is where we get lost, right? So we're called to bring these true gifts into the world. And we look out at the world and think, *"Well, this cannot be the place where I'm called to give this gift!" This place is weird! This place is confusing! This place is chaotic! I can't give my true gifts in this environment! I've got to go find some perfect place where I can give my true gifts."*

And what I want you to see today is: In the midst of all the chaos and confusion and craziness that is going on in the world, your true gift is the anecdote! *[Laughs]* Your true gift is the healing balm that the world needs right now!

*"So do not be swayed by the distraction of current events, for the flowing stream often can be fascinating, yet doesn't allow one to see the calm, the beauty of the depth within the swirl."*

So there's this swirl -- there's this confusion; there's this activity -- and your soul is deeper than that. There is a depth within you that touches and expresses the fullness of God. And she goes on:

*"For all have this depth, this stillness, this calm. And we ask you to seek it more and more every day. To feel the calm in you, then know the calm of others. For, indeed, the mirroring and magnification of this certain calm is so valuable to you and to others during this time."*

See, what I believe to be true is: For the vast majority of the people in the world today, and in the past, our gifts have been given by our ego. And as we think about giving our true gift, it moves it from the gift of the ego to the gift of Spirit. And, for many of us, when we're giving our gifts from our place of ego, it really is about looking good and being under control. Right? If we can control the gift -- and if we look good giving it -- then we're all about it.

But, for many of us, the next level of our gift takes us to a place where we're not sure we're going to look good. Where we might even fail! Where we may not be in control of it. Where we're going to have to be willing to give a level of God -- a level of Spirit, a level of ourselves -- that we've never been willing to be that vulnerable before. When we stop trying to control it, we actually begin to express the Spirit of God within. That, when we stop trying to understand it, we just get after it.

What God is doing in your life you don't have to understand it before you begin to give it. You begin to give it, and you watch it begin to make sense in area of your life after area of your life.

You know, when we look at Mary, when we look at Joseph, when we look at the Magis... When we look at the characters of the Bible, they had to react out of faith. They had to put God first to give the gift that they were called to give to the world.

There's a poem that I wrote in 2007. It's entitled "The Wild Song." And I believe that it really talks about the vulnerability that we feel in giving a gift that seems so much bigger than we are. And I'd like to share it. I'd like to close with this now:

*There's a song in my soul that I have never sung before  
It is my wild song.  
It is my song of freedom.  
A song that will leave me naked before the world.  
A song born of the untamed passionate one.  
A song bottled up from the beginning of time.  
If you ask me to describe this song, I cannot.  
Describe the song of the whale or the trumpet of the elk, or describe the cry of the hawk.  
You cannot; there are no words.  
But there is a sound: my sound.  
My call: the song of my soul.  
It is my wild song.  
I can feel the wild song building in my soul.  
It's moving within me.  
To uncage it would be to devour everything that is contrived in my life.  
To release it would be unleash all that is powerful and true.  
Even if I wanted to, I do not know if I have the strength to control it one more time.  
Fear has forced me to lock it away.  
But not this time; I will not resist.  
I will surrender who I have been.  
I want to hear my wild song.  
I want to know myself as if for the first time.  
To know the self that I am: that I've always been.  
Hear me, world; hear my cry!  
I have come to be announced!  
This is my time; this is my way.  
I am not who you thought I was; I am not who I thought I was.  
Know me as I am. Hear me!  
I sing my wild song.*

Will you join with me in prayer?

And I want you to feel the power of God that is moving through your soul. And, even if you're not sure how God wants to express through you today during this Christmas season, I want you to believe that you have a gift that the world needs for you to give. A power – a gift -- that is greater than you can even understand. And as you're willing to give that gift in new and powerful and wonderful ways, your life is going to be blessed and blessed and blessed. And the world will be blessed by your spirit. God, awaken the gifts in all people. Awaken the gifts in every man, woman and child, that we might heal the planet today. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God, for every gift and every giver. For the power that desires to be expressed through every man, woman and child. We dedicate our gifts -- the Spirit within -- to the activity of God. And so it is. Amen.

## **COLLECTION**

This is the time of giving of our gifts and our tithes. And I invite you to hold them in your hand. And I know that many of you are giving electronically, and we thank you so much for your support! Some of you are sending checks in; thank you for your support! Whatever your gift is -- whether it's electronic, whether it's a check -- I want you to hold it in your hand. And our offering blessing is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."* Together: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give and all that I receive."*

**CLOSING**

Alright; I want you to have a great week this week! I want you to know that you are God's instrument in the world; that you have a gift the world needs. That you need to give and the world wants to receive it. And that, as you have the courage to move your gifts from being ego-based to Spirit-based, it makes all the difference in the world. God bless you, friend; have a great week!

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