

FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL PROSPERITY

Week #3 of the 4-Week Series, "The Way of Prosperity"

March 7, 2021

Rev. Richard Maraj

Rev. Richard Maraj: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center. Welcome to our Sunday worship celebration! I'm Rev. Richard Maraj, senior minister here, and we're so glad that you are joining us today.

You know, speaking of today, it is the last day to sign up for the "Spiritual Allies for Dismantling Racism." You can go to the website if you're interested ... and today is the last day for signing up. It's going to be a worthwhile and very meaningful, positive, peaceful way to increase our awareness and to reduce the levels of racism in our community, our country and our world. So thank you for doing that!

As you already know, Unity of Phoenix is a tithing ministry, so we tithe out into the world 10% of what comes in to organizations that are doing really good work: that uplift and inspire individuals in our community in greater ways. If you have a recommendation for an organization – a nonprofit – to give a tithe on our behalf as a ministry, you can go to the website and fill out a form, and give your recommendation to us, and it will go to our Tithing Committee. So we thank you for that support.

And right now, Rev. Lori is going to lead us in a time of prayer and meditation. And to prepare us for that experience, let's listen to the choir as they sing "Surely the Presence."

Unity of Phoenix Choir sings "Surely the Presence"

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place
I can see God's mighty power and God's grace
I can feel the brush of angels' wings
I see glory on each face
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place

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, mindful breath, and release it slowly. Gently relaxing our bodies; relaxing our minds. Letting go of any busy-ness we've had so far today. Just gently letting everything go as we begin to move our awareness within: to that quiet, still place where we are one with the Divine. Into that inner chamber filled with unconditional love. As we feel our heart space expand: as we grow more loving for ourselves, for our families, for our neighbors, for our friends, for all of humanity. Because God's love is all there is, lifting us up out of the old into new ways of doing the right thing. Of new ways of being at one with the Divine.

And then we take in another deep, cleansing breath. And, as we let it go, we move more deeply into that spiritual space within. Into the depths of our souls: that place of inner purity where we have abundant faith to now that, with God, everything good is possible. And that God has this, no matter what it looks like in the outer. No matter what's going on out there, in here – this quiet, still place within – is the truth ... Is the peace that passes understanding.

In this sacred space, every cell in our body is energized and enlivened. We are filled with the light of the living, loving presence of God as each and every cell fairly vibrates with God's love and God's light, bringing us to wholeness in body, in mind and in spirit. And in this deep and sacred space, we know that the kingdom of heaven is ours just for the asking, because our God is a prosperous God, willing to share the abundance and riches of the universe with us. And all we have to do is ask and accept!

And so, now, we take a few moments as we move more deeply into the silence, recognizing God's abundance everywhere.

SILENCE

And so, Sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude for these moments together with you, o God. For the deep and rich and abiding love that you share with us. For the peace that passes understanding. For the knowledge and acceptance that we live in a prosperous universe that is ours for the asking. And for this – and all of our blessings – we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Maraj: Thank you, Rev. Lori; really appreciate that. It was a beautiful meditation.

So today we are continuing in our series on abundance called "The Ways of Prosperity." And today we're talking about money!

How many people would like to have more money? How many people would like to experience more financial abundance in your life? And I'm sure the answer is pretty close to 100% "Yes!" And the reason is because money has the power to buy, to purchase and to acquire things that we need, things that we want, things that we desire. Money has the power to help us take care of ourselves and our families with food and shelter. It helps to support us in achieving our goals and our dreams. Money gives us opportunities. It gives us choices. It gives us freedom. It gives us opportunities, comfort and luxuries. Money is a hugely valuable commodity in our day-to-day to life in our country and in our world.

The University of Michigan did a study, and they asked these three questions: What do people worry about the most? And the top answer was: money. Second question was: What makes people the happiest? And the number one answer: money. Third question is: What makes people the unhappiest? The number one answer was: money.

Money is important. And it plays such a significant role in our culture that we absolutely believe that having more money will make us happier. We say things like, *"If I just win the lottery, I'll be all set."* *"If I have enough money – if I win the lottery – it'll be the golden ticket and answer to all of my problems."*

We want money so much that we will work as hard and do almost anything to get money. We'll work in jobs we don't like. And sometimes, in desperation, people will lie to get money. Or steal or cheat. Or marry for money. Or even kill for money.

Money has become the symbol for success and security and happiness and achievement. But it also is seen as bad. Money is seen as "evil." You know, the rich – and "filthy" rich, as we like to say sometimes – are seen as greedy and materialistic, seem like they are stuck up, and they really don't care about anything else but money and possessions. And we've been so conditioned negatively with money that sometimes we feel guilty for wanting money. Or feel bad about having a lot of money.

So, in many ways, we have a very complicated relationship with money. It's kind of a love/hate relationship. And we get mixed messages about money; we want it and, yet, in some ways we resist it. We love it and, in some ways, we don't like it at all.

You know, here are my two favorite quotes about money. The first one is by the "great philosopher," Arnold Schwarzenegger. And here's what he says: *"Money doesn't make you happy. I now have \$50 million, but I was just as happy when I had \$48 million."* And the second one is by Rita Davenport. She says this: *"They say that love is more important than money. But have you ever tried to pay your bills with a hug?"* [Laughs] I love that one!

So where do the mixed messages and beliefs about money come from? They come in the way that we've been raised in our culture, and a lot of misinterpretations about stories and verses in the Bible. And I'll give you two for an example. The story of the rich man, and when the quote is said: *"It is easier*

for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” And the second one is that, “Money is the root of all evil.” Well, actually it says, “The love of money is the root of all evil.”

And the truth is: money is not bad! Money actually gets a bad rap! Money is innocent; it's what we project, and the beliefs and behaviors we have with regard to money. In fact, both of these Scriptures – what they are actually saying is that – it's a warning of don't put money or possessions above your faith and belief in God. Don't be so attached – don't be so possessed; you know, don't be so yearning and worshipping of money – that you put it before God. That you put money before love. That you put money before relationships. That you put money before being kind and compassionate. You put money before the welfare and well-being of other people. It's saying don't over-value money so much! It is a good and important part of life, but don't put it before God and love and all the other important things, because it will actually end up diminishing our level of joy and happiness.

So we are in the third of our four-week series, and the foundational main Scripture that we've been using is from the third letter of John, first chapter. And here's what it says: *“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”* And so it's really sharing that true prosperity – true abundance – really comes from prospering our souls. It's a spiritual thing. It's about spiritual prosperity is the foundation and the number one thing in terms of living a more prosperous life.

And the second thing is: we're using the story from the Book of Luke to give an example of how prosperity works. And it's about the fishermen who were fishing all night and couldn't catch any fish. And Jesus said, *“Cast your net on the right side of the boat, in the deep waters.”* And so they did as Jesus said, and they had enough money ... I mean, enough fish ... to have, to share and to sell.

And so, while they were given the fish freely and abundantly, they had to do the work for it. And the fact is: just like the fishermen, God has given us and provides us with resources, but we have to do the work. We have to put in the effort. We have to use our skills and abilities to actually put those tools and principles to work to attract the level of abundance and prosperity that we want.

And to show the fullness of prosperity – and what a real prosperous life is – we have and will be looking at eight different areas of lives of prosperity. We looked at spiritual and relationship prosperity. Last week we looked at emotional and physical prosperity. Today: financial and professional prosperity. And next week we'll end with mental and social prosperity. Because a prosperous life is a well-rounded, full life in all of its various dimensions.

And so, today, let's look at financial prosperity. To me, the key to financial prosperity is to have an attitude. It's to look at our attitude and our consciousness towards money.

Here's what it says in Unity's *“Guide to Prosperous Living”*: *“Our attitude towards money determines whether money will be a curse or a blessing. If you curse your money, or live in constant fear that others will take your money, a curse will return to us. If we bless our money, and make it a blessing for others, blessings will come to us.”*

So I want to ask you: when you think about your money, what are the thoughts and feelings that come to you? Do you think there's just not enough, and do you think that there's a lack? And do you just wish and yearn you had way more than what's in your bank account? Or do you think of your money and smile? And feel thankful? And feel blessed, and bless your money? I mean, do you have a love/hate relationship with money? Do you feel any guilt or feel bad about praying or asking for money? I mean, do you think of spending money as “losing” money: *“There it goes!”*

Because all these ideas and the mindset and the consciousness we have about money absolutely makes a difference. We go from a range of making money “God-like” – that it will fix and be the answer and make us happy – to that it's evil, that it's bad, that it's ungodly, and there's just never enough. And it's an example of how unfair life really is.

So if the root of all evil is the love of money, and Eric Butterworth says, then, having the right attitude and mindset about money will be the root of all kinds of prosperity. And so, our money – when you really think about it – money is energy. And money’s really an extension of us. It’s an extension of our consciousness. And when we think of money, we need to think about it positively. We need to think of it joyously, spiritually, abundantly and thankfully.

You know, sometimes we don’t realize some of the thoughts we hold and have been conditioned about money. It’s very negative; it’s very limiting. And, in some ways, we resist money by some of the negative thoughts we project on it.

Charles Fillmore, the co-founder of Unity, said this: *“Watch your thoughts when you are handling your money, because your money is attached through your mind to the one Source of all substance and all money. When you think of your money – which is visible – as something directly attached to an invisible Source that is giving or withholding, according to your thought, then you understand the key to all riches and the key to all lack. Never allow any kind or amount of money to pass through your hands without blessing it.”*

So what this is saying is: **one of the keys to financial prosperity is to raise our consciousness and awareness and our belief and our mindset about money.** Because the truth is: money’s good! Money is a blessing! Money is an expression of God’s abundance. And God has a plan for us to prosper, and part of that prosperity includes money. You know, we are here to live an abundant life, and that includes financial prosperity and abundance.

So we’re going to do a couple of affirmations, and I just want you to repeat after me:

“Money is good.”

“Money is a blessing.”

“Money is an expression of God’s abundance.”

“I like money!”

“I enjoy money!”

“God wants me to have money!”

“I am worthy of financial abundance.”

“Money is good!”

Now smile, because money’s good! We should feel good when we think about our money! We should feel good when we think about money in general. Because it is an expression of God’s abundance that is a blessing, and that we are absolutely worthy of it.

You know, Jesus lived a very prosperous life. He demonstrated it with an attitude of always knowing – in every situation – that his need would be met at the moment of the need. That he knew – he had the faith – that God had much more in store than even what was visible in front of us in that moment. You know, most people don’t realize, but Jesus wore a seamless robe, which was a very high quality type of robe. All of Jesus’ needs were met in a very positive and prosperous way.

And one of the great stories, of course, is the story of the loaves and fishes. This is a situation that there’s not enough, and the first thing he does, instead of complain: he looks up to a higher place. Because he knows that God is the Source. That the Source of prosperity is spiritual. Then he took what he had – the bread, the loaves – and he gave thanks. Which meant: he recognized the good that was there. He didn’t look and see lack; he looked and acknowledged the good that was there. He didn’t curse it in any way, but he blessed it. And then they shared it. So he enjoyed, he used, he put into action the good that he had. And then, finally, they had enough bread. There was an increase because of this attitude and mindset that he had.

You know, think of yourself. When you’re in a situation of lack ... I mean, sometimes we just think, *“Aw, geez, I just don’t have enough!”* And when we just get angry and curse our money and curse our jobs and curse our situation. Look how positively Jesus demonstrated that kind of consciousness. In the face

of lack, he went to a higher place. He gave thanks for what was there. He used it, and it increased in amazing ways. And that's a beautiful example for our own lives of how to have more financial prosperity. It is about our consciousness and our attitude.

The second thing about financial prosperity is having a financial intention and a financial vision. So I ask you: What is your financial vision? What are your values and priorities when it comes to the finances that you have in your life? How much do you want to earn this year? How much do you want to give? In what ways do you want to help? Are you willing to ask God for guidance on what you were meant to do with your money? What you are meant to create with it? And what ways and places that you are maybe meant to support? I mean, think about it! What is your financial mission? What is God calling you to do to make a difference in the world through your own finances? And how about this one: What would you be proud of doing with your finances – and in the area of finances – in the next five years?

I mean, this sounds maybe a little different than what you're accustomed to, but it's important! Because, when we begin to set goals and visions for finances, we really open channels and opportunities and ways for abundance to flow into our lives!

You know, years ago I did a workshop with Dr. John DeMartini. And one of the exercises that he made us do was to say, *"If I gave you a million – \$10 million – right now, what would you do with it?"* And I'll tell you, at first it was a little overwhelming. But it was really trying to get at what's important! You know, what values do I have, and what would I use the money for? What would I give? Who would I help? You know, what things would I purchase for myself? And most people, as I was – and I'll admit it! -- in that workshop were totally unprepared. We always say we want more money, we want to attract more money ... But we aren't always aware and have a vision of how we want to use and enjoy and channel that money.

It says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* When you don't create avenues and channels of how you want to utilize money and finances in your life, it won't flow as easy. Where there is no vision the people perish, and where there is a vision, people prosper. Because we open the channels of possibility of goodness and abundance in our lives.

So, from where you are right now in your life, what can you see for yourself financially? What is your financial vision? What is your intention for your money and what you'd like to enjoy? What you'd like to have? What you'd like to create? What you'd like to give? Because having that vision and intention absolutely makes a difference in our financial prosperity.

And the final one for our finances is: you've got to circulate the money! Because money is energy; it needs to flow. Give and you will be given. So tithing of your money to places where you were uplifted – where you are inspired, that make you feel alive – will help you tap into your own potential and possibilities. Channel some of your money there; don't just keep hoarding it. Because life is about flow! Life is about action. Life is about things moving and circulating.

I love the story of the Parable of the Talents. You know, the master goes away and gives one servant five, one three, and the other one [was given] one talent. And the first two used it, increased it. In fact, they doubled five to ten and three to six, and the master: *"Well done, my good and faithful servants. You've done well with what I've given you; now you can share even more in your master's joy."* And the one who hid it out of fear of losing it, he had it taken away and was thrown in jail. And what the principle is, is that: money is a part of our spiritual life. How we use it, how we manage it, how we spend it, how we give it are all important aspects of the Law of Abundance and the Law of Circulation and the Law of Attraction. And the better we utilize – the better we give and share and put it into motion of investing and enjoying in all the areas of our lives – it will actually increase our ability to attract even more.

So financial prosperity: it is about our consciousness. It is about our intention and vision. And it is about circulation; keep that money moving! And those are the principles for our money and our finances!

And the next one we're going to look at is professional prosperity. So what does professional prosperity mean and look like to you? If you're on the top of your game in your area and your profession – your level of expertise – what would that look like? What successes would you have? What achievements? What does professional prosperity mean to you?

So, in your vision for your life, it's important to have professional goals and professional desires. And a key practice for when we have our professional vision, goals and intentions is to then begin to think about embodying the qualities that a person who is successful at that level would embody and have. What qualities would they express? How would they talk? How would they look? How would they show up in life?

I was watching a couple of minutes of the *Coming to America 2* movie yesterday. I only saw ... And the part that I came in on was he had this long-lost son from Queens. And he brought him back to Zamunda (in Africa). And he was trying to show his son how to be a prince. *"A prince walks like this. And talks like this. And acts like this."* And he was really getting him to raise his consciousness to the level of being a prince. To raise his consciousness and to take on the mantle of being in that role.

So for your career of what you'd like to achieve professionally, what is the mantle you need to take on? What are the ways you need to step up in how you show up and how you act in your profession? Because that really means ... And that is where the success comes from.

So I want you to think about how you're showing up right now in your professional life. And what are some things you can add or change that would have you show up in a more powerfully professional and prosperous way? What would you say would be the five top qualities for you to better embody to be a successful and prosperous professional? Would it be to be a strong leader? Would it be to be a better communicator? Would it be to be a team builder? Would it be to listen better? Would it be to be known for having a high standard? Would it be better for being very encouraging? What would be the qualities in your professional life that you would want to embody to experience greater professional prosperity?

And the next one for professional prosperity is that the most successful people – one of the things that is a hallmark of successful people – is that they help other people succeed. Zig Ziglar used to put it this way. He said, *"You can get everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want."* And the truth is that, sometimes we think that life is looking out for number one. You know, *"I've got to get mine first!"* That it's all about competition.

But the truth is: successful lives are actually about cooperation. The more we help others, the more we help ourselves. The more we help others, the more good there is for all of us to enjoy and share. Brian Tracy says, *"Successful people are always looking for opportunities to help others."* You know, Oprah Winfrey is one of the most successful individuals in the world. And one of the things she's known for is making other millionaires! And always helping other people: with her finances, with her talents, with her abilities. From Dr. Oz and Dr. Phil – all the others! I'm sure you know them all! But that's one of the hallmarks! She is a success because she helps other people succeed.

And what it's about is taking interest in people. Learning about what their talents and desires and goals are, and fostering and supporting – in any way you can – for them to bring out their best. To empower them and to let them use their talents and abilities. You know, we came here to be our best, and one of the best ways to bring out our best is to help others be their best. Whether it's in mentoring or coaching or working together as colleagues, the more we are able to help others, the more successful we – and we all – will be.

And I really think that there is a joy beyond words of when you just help someone succeed, and see them blossom in great ways. That there is no money that can take the place of how prosperous and wonderful a feeling it is to help other individuals.

And then the last thing about having professional prosperity is applying the ideas that inspire us. You know, Unity believes that one of the keys to prosperity are ideas. Because, when you think about it, anything we're successful in first started with an idea. Everything begins with an idea! Inventions of any kind: the iPhone began with an idea. Fashions and music and TV shows and books: all of these things start with ideas – ideas that inspire us. And just like the fishermen were inspired by Jesus' idea to cast the net on the right side of the boat, we also need to then apply it. Because it's one thing to have a wonderful idea, but you've got to bring it to life.

I'll give you an example of our very own Craig Bohmler. He – on a rainy day when they were hiking – stopped into a bookstore, and saw Zane Grey's book, *Riders of the Purple Sage* – [snaps fingers] and he got an idea to create a western opera. And five years later – as he put it all into practice – it became a huge success that blessed so many people. See, having an idea is one thing, but are you applying the idea and inspiration that you have?

I've got a friend: his name is Jai. He was a physics and chemistry teacher. Very successful. And then he was doing so well that they were going to let him go, because at that age and stage, they could have gotten "two for the price of one." So he had to think about his career! And taking – his family – taking care of them. And then he heard about a hotel that was up for sale. A friend said, "Hey! You should go check that out." He said, "I haven't been thinking about a hotel!" But he did it, and he got this idea that he could do it! And he could have his family live there for a while – while they ran the business – and it would take care of their rent. And so he ended up doing that: he put his idea into practice.

Then, after a little while, in a mall not far away there was a popcorn business. They sold multiple flavors of popcorn. And he had an idea. And it was up for sale. And he bought the popcorn business. And then a little while after, four stores away from the popcorn business was an ice cream store. And it was up for sale, so he bought that! And then, eventually, he bought a Subway. And then he would wake up in the morning, and he'd go to his Subway store, and then he would go to the popcorn place, then he'd go to the ice cream shop. And he did this, and he was hugely successful! And you would think a chemistry and physics teacher wouldn't be great at all of these businesses ... but he was! Why? Because he had an idea. He didn't know everything, but he was so inspired, he decided to put it into action. And his life was absolutely blessed and transformed.

You know, I was watching Facebook the other day, and I saw a woman. And she was exercising, and it said she was 88 years old. I mean, looked phenomenal! She said she got an idea in her 50s to be healthy and live longer. I'll tell you, the lady looks like she's in her 50s; it's unreal!

And the point is: we have all kinds of all ideas that we think about. Ideas that will make our lives better. But it's only the ones that actually do it! You know, John F. Kennedy had a beautiful line. He said, "Things just don't happen; they are made to happen!"

So my question for you is: What do you want to make happen? What is it that your soul is calling you to bring to life? To demonstrate? To make real and helpful and positive for someone, including yourself? It's one thing to know things ... And, you know, in Unity and in our spirituality, we say it is more important to have the BE-ing than the DO-ing. And, yeah, the BE-ing is important! But you've got to be DO-ing some doing at some point! It's no coincidence the first Book after the four Gospels is the Book of Acts! Not the Book of Being; the Book of Doing! The Apostle Paul said, "You are blessed in your doing." He put it into practice! So action is needed and necessary.

Richard Branson, who has over 300 businesses, said one of the key principles of his success; he said, "Go forward even when you think you're not ready." And he wasn't doing that to just be reckless; he was saying that to say don't let fear stop you from doing what you feel called to do. And what you want to do, and what you are inspired to do. Yes; it's scary! But when it feels right, you really need to put some action into it.

Prosperity! It comes in all different and wonderful forms! And it isn't just money ... but I would say finances are an important and a good and a wonderful aspect of living a more prosperous life. And so here are the three ways ... Between financial and professional prosperity, the three principles are almost the same. Number one: embody the consciousness and attitude of having money and being a great professional. Number two: hold a vision and intention for yourself financially and for yourself professionally. And third is about application. It's about the circulation of your money – get it moving! – and it is about taking action on your ideas.

See, I believe we live in a world of plenty! With a possibility to proliferate a plethora of potential prosperity! Because prosperity is a positive part of the purpose and plan that God has for us! Not just to ponder, but to perform with patience, persistence and perseverance to make sure we practice the principles of prosperity!

So, this week, let's practice the financial and the professional ways of prosperity.

God bless you all!

SOLO

Guest artist Rusty Ferracane sings "Pennies from Heaven"

A long time ago
A million years BC
The best things in life
Were absolutely free

But no one appreciated
A sky that was always blue
And no one congratulated
A moon that was always new

So it was planned that they would vanish now and then
And you must pay before you get them back again
That's what storms were made for
And you shouldn't be afraid for

Every time it rains, it rains
Pennies from heaven
Don't you know each cloud contains
Pennies from heaven

You'll find your fortune falling
All over town
Be sure that your umbrella
Is upside down

Trade them for a package of sunshine and flowers
If you want the things you love
You must have showers

So if you hear it thunder
Don't run under a tree
There'll be pennies from heaven for you and me

Every time it rains it's gonna rain
Pennies from heaven

Don't you know each cloud contains
Lots of pennies from heaven

You'll find your fortune falling
All over town
Be sure that your umbrella
Is upside down

Then you can trade them for
A package of sunshine and flowers
If you want the things you love
You must have showers

So if you hear it thunder
Don't run under a tree
There'll be pennies from heaven ...
Pennies from heaven ...
There'll be pennies from heaven for you and me!

OFFERING

Rev. Lori Fleming: It is 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."* And we say thank you, Mother/Father God, for these gifts, for 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: We're so grateful to all of you who have continued to send in your checks and contribute online to keep this ministry going. We're so grateful for each and every one of you! Thanks for being with us. And now will you join me in our "Prayer for Protection"?

The light of God surrounds us;
The love of God enfolds us;
The power of God protects us;
The presence of God watches over us;
Wherever we are, God is, and all is well!

And now join me in listening as the choir sings the "Peace Song" to close us out. Have a blessed day!

Choir sings "Peace Song":

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me!
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be!

With God as Creator
Family all are we!
Let us walk with each other
In perfect harmony!

Let peace begin with me;
Let this be the moment now!
With every breath I take

Let this be my joyous vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
In peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me!

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