

# I AM THE VINE

Week #5 of the Lenten/Easter Series, "I AM"

March 24, 2021

Rev. Richard Rogers

## INTRODUCTION

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Hello; I'm Richard Rogers, and this is Wednesday night at Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center, and I am so glad you're here! I think you're going to enjoy today's talk. We're talking about the "I AM" statements of Jesus. And I really want you to integrate these statements into your life, because they make a difference. They absolutely make a difference in your life!

But before we get any further, let's start with prayer.

## OPENING PRAYER

And I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to all the blessings that this service offers you. To all the good that God has for you this day. And we are open and receptive to be lifted higher. Let Holy Spirit reveal all that we need to know to move our life forward in the greatest possible way. So lift us up. Heal us. Bless us. Transform us in every possible way. We are ready! Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alright; I've got a couple of announcements for you. We're getting close to Easter: Sunday, April 4th. We're doing three services outside; it's going to be outdoors on the Event Lawn. 6 a.m. is the sunrise. Then we're doing a 7:30 and a 9 o'clock. It's going to be fabulous! Please wear masks; we're going to social distancing. And I really just hope that you come and be a part of that. You know, for many of us, we've been so isolated for so long, that this is a way for us to come back together in our spiritual community and really celebrate. So we're going to do that.

And then, also, on April 3rd our Youth & Family is hosting a Drive-Through Easter Celebration. Drive-through Easter bunnies. Drive-through Easter baskets! It's going to be fabulous! Bring the kiddoes; enjoy the whole experience. And that's going to be Saturday afternoon, 3:30 to 5, outside Easter Drive-Through Celebration for the kids.

Also, want to mention: on your calendar is June 9th. June 9th is going to be our first LIVE in-person service on Wednesday night in almost a year and a half. Right? So I want you to be here. I want the Sanctuary to be just filled with all of us who have missed the Wednesday night service. Come and be a part of that June 9th, 7 o'clock. If you don't remember how to get to church, just email us, and we will send you the directions! We want you to come and be a part of that.

Alright! Now we've got a great solo from Sean, and then I'll be right back.

## SOLO

**Guest artist Sean Mullaney sings, "If I Can Dream"**

There must be lights burning brighter somewhere  
Got to be birds flying higher in a sky more blue  
If I can dream of a better land  
Where all my brothers walk hand in hand  
Tell me why, oh why, oh why can't my dreams come true?  
Oh, why?

There must be peace and understanding sometime  
Strong winds of promise that will blow away the doubt and the fear  
If I can dream of a warmer sun  
Where hope keeps shining on everyone  
Tell me why, oh why, oh why won't that sun appear?

We're lost in a cloud with too much rain  
We're trapped in a world that's troubled with pain  
But as long as a man has the strength to dream  
He can redeem his soul and fly

Deep in my heart there's a burning question  
Still I am sure that the answer's, answer's gonna come somehow  
Out there in the dark there's a beckoning candle  
And while I can think,  
While I can talk  
While I can stand,  
While I can walk  
While I can dream,  
Please let my dream come true... oh, right now  
Let it come now  
Oh, yeah

## MESSAGE

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Alright. So, Sean, fabulous! Thank you; thank you; thank you! We just ... we love having you back, and you just knocked it out of the park. Thank you!

Alright; so my question for you tonight is – and I love this one: How prosperous do you get to be before it's too much? Right? And, as a spiritual person, is it okay for you to prosper? You know, and it's like, *"Well ... yeah, it's okay for a spiritual person to prosper, but not like too much. Or you can't be driving too nice of a car, living too big a life."* Right?

And I'm not sure I believe that. Right? Like, I really believe that, if God is infinite, that each and every one of us living a blessed – an infinitely blessed life – is good for all of us. When Jesus said, *"And when I be lifted up, I draw all people unto me,"* I believe that anytime any one of us moves to a higher level of good, it blesses all of us.

So my question for you tonight is: Really, what do you think is the source of living an abundant life? Right? How many of us were taught, right? That the source of living an abundant life is a good job. If you can find a good job – you can keep a good job – then you're going to be prosperous. And then you're going to live the good life, and everything's going to be okay.

Or some of us were taught that education is the key to living an abundant life. And that we have to get as much education as we can. And the more education we have, the better our chances will be of living an abundant life. How many of us were told that, unless you have a rich daddy, it's hopeless? Right? That, unless you have a rich daddy, your opportunities for abundance are just nil. Some of us were taught that we had to be smart or hard-working or know somebody. Like, we have all these stories of what it takes to live an abundant life.

And I want to go to the spiritual foundation. And I believe that Jesus gave us this spiritual foundation in the Gospel of Matthew. And, even though I've been teaching in this series from the Gospel of John – and I'm going to go back to John tonight – I want to start with the Gospel of Matthew. Because, in the

Gospel of Matthew, I believe that Jesus gives us the foundation of what is required to live an abundant life. And he says this:

*“For those that have, more will be given, and they will have abundance.”*

Right? So here it is! That’s the whole story! That is Jesus’ teaching in one sentence! *“For those that have, more is given, and they will have abundance.”* So, if you’re ever concerned, if you’re ever confused – if you ever wonder why, how to live an abundant life – you start with abundance. You get more, and you live an abundant life.

I remember a Steve Martin joke years ago. He said, *“I’m going to teach you how to make a million dollars tax free.”* He said, *“You start with a million dollars, and you just don’t pay the taxes.”* Right? And in some ways [laughs], that’s what this sounds like! Right? Like, if you have abundance, more will be given to you, and you will live in abundance.

Well, [laughs] what about all of us that don’t have ... that don’t start with abundance? [Laughs] What of all of us that kind of started with, like, an empty pocket? What are we supposed to do? Well, he goes on and says:

*“But those who have nothing, even that which they have will be taken away.”*

[Laughs] Oh, fabulous! Right? Fabulous! That’s fabulous! Please! Like, what part of this makes sense from a spiritual point of view? Like, that the little poor people, you know, even that’s going to get sucked out, right?

So Jesus is really clear! If you have it, great! You’re going to get more, and you’re going to be blessed, and you’re going to live in abundance. And if you don’t have it, you’re ... you’re ... you’re out! Right? There’s no hope. It’s just ... It’s awful! Right?

And I want you to see [laughs] that that really is the spiritual teaching in a nutshell! It’s like, *“Well, Richard, that can’t be the spiritual teaching.”* You know, Jesus also said we were supposed to take care of the poor. Right? He said we were supposed to take care of the poor, but he also taught us: to those that have, more will be given. He also taught us to be generous and go the extra mile.

But he never backed down from this idea. He never changed this teaching that says:

*“To those that have, more will be given, and they will live in abundance. Those that have not, even that which they have will be taken away.”*

Now, how do we understand this? Right? Because, if there is abundance within me, right? That one of the first spiritual law of the universe is that the inside creates the outside. Like, whatever’s going on within me creates my outer experience, right? So when there is abundance within me, I draw greater abundance. When there is lack within me – lack of anything: lack of love, lack of joy, lack of beauty, lack of truth, lack of peace – then what I see around me is a lack. Right?

And the way that absolutely has to be – the reality – is because, if what was inside of you was different than what was outside of you, you could never heal or transform. If you carried around great darkness and you saw great light around you, you would never transform the darkness within. You would just keep carrying that darkness with you forever.

But, as we begin to understand that whatever is within me is pictured outside of me, then ... What I see outside of me – if I’m not loving the experience – then I know that I have to heal on the inside. If I’m seeing lack all around me, then I realize, *“Oh! There must be a lack within me!”*

And what’s so interesting is that we have this strong belief in lack! And, yet, many of us believe in an infinite God. How is that possible? If God is infinite – if the Universe is infinite – how could there ever be a lack in you? How could there ever be any condition in your life that was not overflowing in

abundance? It doesn't make spiritual sense! That, in your experience, you've actually created something that violates spiritual law. That, when there is lack in our life, we are absolutely creating a condition that is not in alignment with God. Because God is infinite!

And Jesus said when there was abundance within, there will be abundance out here, and you will live blessed. You will live abundantly.

So what I want you to see today is that we actually need the inner life to be out-pictured in the external – in our three-dimensional world – so that we can actually transform it to higher and higher levels of good. Like, right here, right now, I want you to really see: where is there lack of anything in your life? Is there a lack of love? Is there a lack of peace? Is there a lack of joy? Is there a lack of really healthy, great relationships? And is there a lack of abundance? Or is there not enough to go around?

I want you to really see that, and I want you to see that the infinite goodness of God is greater than that! And that we actually – in that moment – have a contradiction. There's a contradiction! If there is lack in you, even though you live in an infinite universe, how do you understand that? *"Well, God just hates me."* Well, [laughs] that's one way to look at it, right? Or, *"I'm just a poor, sad little thing."* Right?

And, over and over again, what I want you to see: wherever there is lack in you, that is not the fulfillment of God's blessing – God's desires in your life. But we have to change on the inside. Alright; does that make sense? That we live in an infinite universe; what's going on within us creates our outer experience. As we see a life that's not fully out-picturing the abundance of God, then we transform on the inside, so that we can really, truly live in an abundant universe. We can experience the abundance of God.

Now, I'm ready. Having set that table, I'm ready to talk about the "I AM" statement for tonight. The "I AM" statement for tonight is: *"I AM the true vine."* I'm going to be reading from John 15:

*"I am the true vine. And the Father is my vine dresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does not bear fruit he prunes. And it may be full of fruit."*

Okay? Let's just slow this down. "I AM" – as we've been talking about for the last several weeks – is the nature of God: it's God in us. The "I AM" isn't Jesus' name; it's God's name. And when Jesus was identifying with the "I AM," he was in full, total expression of his God nature: of his divine nature.

But that divine nature is within all of us! So he says this, right?

*"I am the true vine. And my Father is the vine dresser."*

Now, what is a vine dresser? It's not a term we use a lot. Right? It's kind of a 2,000-year-old term. But it's the guy who would walk through the vineyards, and he would prune all the vines so that they could have new growth. Right? That all the places that had got too woody or too old or no longer bearing good fruit, the vine dresser would walk through and he would snip them all off, and so that the next year the grapes would come back in a greater, fuller way. Right? And the vine dresser would go through and prune yearly so that everything was healthy and giving good life, right?

So, Spirit is our vine dresser. The Holy Spirit is the activity in us that wants to prune all the "dead wood" in your life, so that everything in your life is bringing forth great fruit. And yet, there's a part of this that – as soon as the Holy Spirit starts lopping anything off from our life – it's like, *"Oh, I needed that! That's my Cub Scout uniform!"* Right? [Laughs] *"I needed that! It hasn't beared fruit ... I, I ... you know that relationship that was just taken away from me; I needed that! I can't be without that relationship!"* Yeah, but you haven't been happy in that relationship for 20 years! *"I know; but it's my relationship!"* Or, *"It's my job!"* Well, your job is terrible! Right? It's terrible!

Let the Holy Spirit be your vine dresser! Let the Holy Spirit go through and prune the things in your life! Now, we can either move into that in a conscious process, or we can do it in a place of resistance. We

can do it unconsciously. When you're willing to give up anything in your life that's not serving you ... When you're willing to give up anything in your life that's not bearing good fruit, that really isn't for your highest and best ... When you're willing to move in that direction, everything in your life gets easier! But when you're hanging on to all five of your old wedding dresses, right? It may not be that you're ready to move forward into a new relationship. And what I want you to see tonight is that the activity of the Holy Spirit is our vine dresser. It is the part of us that wants to prune.

You know, the Nike Corporation has a process that they do. And they call it "prune for growth." And there's an understanding in the Nike Corporation that any aspect of their business that is not meeting the expected expectations for income and growth and revenue – they "prune" it. Right? And they're not emotionally attached to it. Like, if it's not bearing good fruit, it's gone! Right?

And I really think that we need to be going through our life on a regular basis and inviting the Holy Spirit in to really prune for growth! Like, where are the sad, pathetic parts of your life that you haven't had the courage or the faith to prune so that you could move forward in greater and greater ways? Right?

And this is such a big problem in ministry! You know, *[laughs]* having spent most of – really, all – of my adult life in ministry. You know, in ministry what happens is: we do things – we do a new project once – and then we do a second time the next year. And then, by the third year, when people will say, "Well, we've always done that." And then we keep doing those things that we've always done, even though they're not bearing fruit. Even though they're not really serving people. We do the same services, and we do the same projects. Or we do the same thing over and over again, because nobody has the courage to cut it – to prune it – and really begin to do what God's calling us to do today.

You know, five years ago – or 10 years ago or 50 years ago – when the ministry began that project, that project actually made sense. Like *[laughs]* you know ... If we were still raising horse shoes for needy families, I might suggest that most people are not getting to work or to school using horses any more! But *[laughs]* in the mindset of many ministries, we're still doing ministry from a model that's a hundred years old! And we wonder why it's not meeting people's needs! We wonder why so many ministries are going out of business and not surviving! Because we are doing things that no longer make sense. And we don't want to allow the Holy Spirit to prune those things that no longer serve us, and to really open our lives to the activity of the Holy Spirit. To say, "Prune me!" Like, that's a scary statement! Because we're trying to hold on. And when we really take into our prayer life the idea of, "Holy Spirit, prune me! If there's anything in my life that's not serving me, prune me! Take it away! I intentionally and consciously move into a process of letting go so that my life can move forward. Prune me!" Right?

And then he goes on. He says:

*"You are already made clean by the word that I have spoken to you."*

I love that! You have already been made clean by the Word that I have spoken to you. What is that word? It's the "I AM"! And when you begin to use your "I AM" and align it with the life that you want, you are made clean. You are no longer aligning your "I AM" with fear or negativity or ugliness or woundedness or the past. You begin to align your "I AM" with the fullness of God! "I AM made clean by the word that was spoken to me!"

And it goes on and says:

*"Abide in me" – abide in the "I AM" – "and I will abide in you."*

Abide in the "I AM," and the "I AM" abides in you!

*"As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine."*

You can't bear good fruit if you're not abiding in the power of God within you!

*"Neither can you, unless you abide with me."*

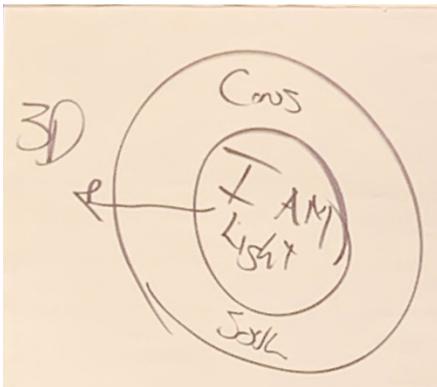
Right? Then he goes on and says:

*"I AM the vine. You are the branches. Who abides in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. For, apart from me, nothing will happen."*

So let's look at this. So when we abide in the "I AM," we're abiding in the nature of God. When we're not abiding in the "I AM," we are abiding in our ego. And our ego loves to take control of our life. Our ego loves to tell us how to get from here to there. Our ego has everything figured out – knows how everything works – and our ego says, *"Just sit in the back seat; let me take charge, and I will make your life better."*

But the reality is that, when we connect with our Source – when we connect with that vine within us; when we connect with our connection point to the infinite goodness of God – everything in our life works. It works better!

So today, I'm going to invite you to let your ego move to the back seat. To let your ego – your personality – move to the back seat. And that you begin to call forth this "I AM" nature. I want to go to my chart here. Right.



*[Draws a circle on the chart and writes "I AM" inside the circle]*  
And I want you to look at yourself in a new way. Right? This is the "I AM." This is the God in you. This is your "I AM" nature. This is the core of who you are.

*[Draws another circle around the first circle and writes "CONS" for consciousness and SOUL inside it]* Then the next level. Right? As I've drawn this before, this is your consciousness. This is your soul. This is your belief system. This is the next outer.

*[Points to the I AM circle and writes "Light" under "I AM."]* And then this is the light. This is God. This is the light. Right?

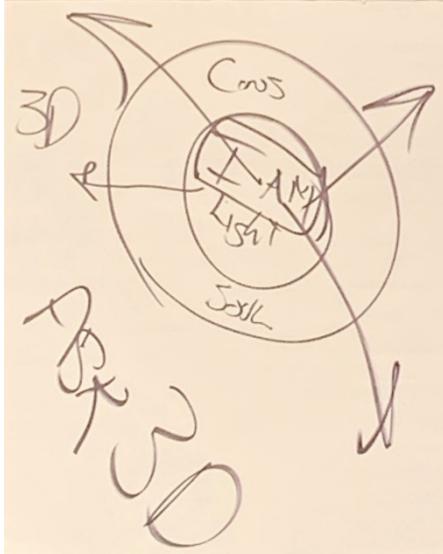
*[Draws an arrow beginning at the light and running all the way through and out of the second circle, then writes "3D"]* So as the light shines through your soul, it creates your three-dimensional experience. Right?

Now, let me go on and share a couple of other Scriptures that I think are important. Because how Jesus ends this ... He says in this quote. He said:

*"If you abide in me and my word abides in you, ask for whatever you will, and it will be done unto you. By this the Father is glorified: that you will bear much fruit that proves to be my disciple."*

Right? So as we come from our "I AM" nature ... As we come from this presence of God within us ... And as we align our consciousness, our soul, with the truth that we are created in the image and likeness of God ... As that light shines forth, *[points to the area outside both the God and Soul circles]*, this is where the area that bears fruit. This is our outer life. This is our three-dimensional world. And this is where we bear much fruit.

Now: *"If you abide in me, and my word abides in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you."* I want you to hear that! *"Ask whatever you will, and it will be done unto you."* Now, one of the



things that happens for us when we're doing our ask, is we're asking for things in the three-dimensional world. [Writes "ASK 3D" in the area outside the circles] Right? We're asking: "Well, I want this trip" or "I want this car" or "I want this basketball." Whatever it is, right? "I want this relationship." "I want this job."

We're asking for three-dimensional things. But, in reality, we've missed the whole point of this whole Scripture! That what we're asking for is the "I AM." [Draws a square around "I AM"]

Like, we keep praying for the external, and we know that the internal creates the external experience! That, when we pray from the "I AM," we really are acknowledging what we –how we – want God to show up in us! So: "I am successful." "I am powerful." "I am wise." "I am whole." "I am well."

When we pray from the "I AM," whatever we ask – whatever we link our "I AM" to – we actually become. [Draws multiple arrows coming out from "I AM"]

It has to be that way!

But, for most of us, our prayer life has been hit or miss, because we've been asking for things, instead of asking for the nature of God within us.

And then Jesus goes on multiple times in the Gospel of John. And let me just read four of them:

John 15:16 – "So the Father will give you whatever ask in my name."

What is Jesus' name? I AM! So whatever you ask in the name of the "I AM," it will be done unto you! Right? So you can say, "I am a basketball," but I don't think that's going to work for you! You can say, "I'm a red Ferrari," but I don't think that's going to work for you! You need to be the person that can create the red Ferrari! You need to be the person that actually can be and hold the red Ferrari or the new house or the new relationship or the new job. That we keep praying for external things, instead of praying in the name of the "I AM."

Let me give you another one:

John 16 - "I tell you; whatever you ask of the Father in my name" – in the name of the "I AM" – "it will be given unto you."

John 16:24 – "Whatever you ask, anything in my name, ask and you will receive it so that your joy may be complete."

And in John 14 – "Whatever you ask in my name, it will be done, that the Father may be glorified in the son."

So here's the deal: If you're still asking for external things, you have missed the spiritual point. God wants you to decide today who you want to be: what your "I AM" is. "I am successful." "I am powerful." "I am wise." "I am capable." "I am prosperous." "I am alive." "I am in love." "I AM!" And when we get to the truth – that you realize that the more time you spend time asking for externals actually takes you away from praying for the person that could actually create the life that you want. Like, who is that? Who do you want to be? How do you want to be showing up to life?

When you're praying from the "I AM," you're praying from your center – from your core – as who you want to be. Who do you want to be? Who is that man -- who is that woman – that is capable of creating the life that you want? Pray for that!!! And your abundance will be full. And you will be blessed.

Today, the more we keep focusing on praying for the externals – the more we keep thinking that our good is “out there” – the more we keep missing the point. There are spiritual people right now, in every aspect of our world, who want a greater life. They are praying for a greater life. They are disappointed that they’re not living a greater life. But they’ve never taken the words of Jesus serious enough to transform their life from the inside out.

Your life is not going to change until you change! Your life is not going to change until you begin to change the way you’re praying! What you’re asking for. You can’t have a better life until you change on the inside. And, as you change on the inside, everything in your life begins to transform.

So what are you going to link your “I AM” to? For whatever you link your “I AM” to, it becomes your reality. Whatever you link your “I AM” to – “*I am wise.*” “*I am capable.*” “*I am beautiful.*” “*I am powerful.*” “*I am love.*” “*I am peace.*” “*I am successful.*” “*I am abundant.*” Whatever you link your “I AM” to, you are becoming.

And whatever time you link your “I AM” to anything that is negative – anything that is dark, anything that is destructive, anything that is needy or broke or less than – you are using your “I AM” nature in a way that creates darkness and pain, not only for you and your family, but for the world.

Today, I’m asking you to change. I’m asking you to live a more abundant life by starting from the inside and working out. Will you take that into prayer?

## **MEDITATION**

And I want you to take a deep breath as we move into this time of meditation. I want you to feel the presence of God within you. And I want you to decide who you want to be tonight. How powerful are you willing to be? How wise? How peaceful? How abundant are you willing to be? And I want you to begin to claim that as your nature. “*I am powerful.*” “*I am powerful.*”

And I want you to feel that power beginning to deepen and broaden within you. “*I am powerful.*” And I want you to feel the power within you actually growing and expanding as you begin to affirm that. That, “*I am powerful.*” That you are more powerful than your life. You are more powerful than your finances. You are more powerful than any relationship or any job or any outer experience. You are one with the very power of God! “*I am powerful!*” “*I am powerful!*”

And allow that to sink all the way in. Allow yourself to dwell in the truth that God in you – the “I AM” in you – is pure power. It’s unlimited power! It’s infinite power! It’s spiritual power! It is the power that created heaven and earth. It is the power that moved mountains. That God in you is all-powerful. “*I am powerful! And I have the power to create my life, and to re-create my life! And I have the power within me to create every hope and dream that I’ve ever had ... but I need to claim more power. I need to move from feeling weak or feeling broken or less than, and I have to come back to myself. I have to come back to the power of the ‘I AM.’ I am powerful! I am powerful!*”

I want you to take a moment now, and just let that sink in. I want you to breathe into that. “*I am powerful! I am powerful!*” All those ideas – all those old beliefs, all those old experiences – we release them all. We free ourselves from the drama of the past. We free ourselves from the old broken-down understanding, and we come back to ourselves spiritually. “*I am powerful!*”

Thank you, God, for giving me all the power that you are. For giving me your Spirit from the inside out, to re-create my life in greater and greater ways. Of coming to the truth that I am one with all that you are. And that, as I claim my right nature – as I claim the spiritual truth of who I am – my life is transformed from the inside out. “*I am powerful!*”

In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, I give thanks this day. And so it is. Amen.

## **CLOSING/COLLECTION**

Alright, my friends! I want to thank you for all the ways that you've supported this ministry over the last year! I want you to hold your gifts in your hand, even if you're giving electronically. Thank you for giving electronically! Even if you're going to give a check and drop it in the mail, we're going to do that right now.

So our affirmation is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I am, all that I give, and all that I receive."* Together: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I am, all that I give, and all that I receive."* And so it is. Amen.

God bless you all! We thank you! I want to close with the Prayer for Protection:

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.

God bless you, friend! Have a great week, and I look forward to being with you next week! And our choir's going to sing us out with the Peace Song!

### ***Unity of Phoenix Choir sings:***

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 step 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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