

MYTHBUSTERS-PART 2

Final Week of a 2-Week Series

July 28, 2021

Rev. Lori Fleming

MEDITATION

Rev. Lori Fleming: I invite you to close your outer eyes, to take in a deep cleansing breath and make yourself comfortable. To begin a time of prayer and meditation as we move our awareness into that sacred place where we connect with the God of our being. Take in a deep, mindful breath, and release it slowly, recognizing we are one with Spirit. That we are in the presence of the all-knowing Mind of God.

In this still, quiet place, we are filled with divine inspiration. Our imagination is open and ready to receive spiritual guidance. We can see our path ahead; it is clear. It is smooth. And along the way, we stop and reconnect with Spirit.

As we rest in this now moment, we feel God's love radiate in our hearts. Our minds are illumined with pure spiritual guidance. This guidance is true. It's perfect. It's complete. And with open minds and open hearts, we listen as we rest in this still, quiet moment. God is our sanctuary. God is our refuge. And we take just a few moments to move more deeply into the silence, as we feel the presence and power of Spirit within.

SILENCE

Sweet Spirit, we come in gratitude as spiritual inspiration works in our souls. As we receive an interior transformation of consciousness, making all that we do spiritual work ... radiating love; radiating peace as God's love shines out in our words and our actions and in our deeds. Thank you, God, for this and all of our blessings. We are so grateful! Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God. And it is so. Amen.

MESSAGE

Rev. Lori Fleming: So there's this barber. And he's in this barbershop, and he's got a gentleman in his chair. He's cutting his hair. And out of the corner of his eye, the barber sees little Johnny coming down the street. He says to the guy in the chair, *"Watch what happens here. That's little Johnny. He lives on my street. He's the dumbest kid on the block."* And the man in the chair thought, *"Hmmm. That's not very nice."*

So Johnny comes in the door and he goes, *"Hey! Good morning, Mr. Barber Man! How are you doing today, Mr. Barber Man!"* The barber says, *"I'm doing just fine, Johnny; how are you doing?"* *"I'm doing great!"* he says. *"I'm having a great day."* And the barber says, *"Hey, Johnny; I tell you what. I've got a dollar bill in this hand. And I've got two quarters in this hand. Which would you prefer?"* Johnny stands there for a minute, looks back and forth, and he goes, *"I'll take the quarters, sir. Thank you very much! You have a great day!"* And he leaves. The barber says to the man in his chair, *"See? Didn't I tell you the kid was pretty dumb?"*

So the barber finishes cutting the man's hair, and the man pays him and gives him a tip, and goes out the door. And he walks down the street, and he sees little Johnny sitting on a bench there, eating a one-scoop ice cream cone. And he goes up to him and he says, *"Wow, Johnny; that looks like a pretty delicious ice cream cone!"* And he goes, *"Yes, sir; it is very good!"* And he feels sorry for Johnny, and he says, *"You know, I just want to tell you that a dollar is worth more than two quarters. A dollar's worth four quarters."* And Johnny goes, *"Yeah; I know that."* He says, *"And one scoop is better than no scoop. And the first time I take the dollar, the game's over."* [Congregation laughs] Who's the dumb one?

Well, this evening my talk is entitled, "Mythbusters-Part 2." We're going to look at some famous Unity sayings that we say all the time that maybe don't mean exactly what they think they mean.

The first one is one that I have said many, many, many, many, many, many times. Richard Maraj has said it the last two Sundays in a row. **EVERYTHING HAPPENS BY DIVINE APPOINTMENT.**

Now, does that mean that God plans everything? I don't think so. It's like when two people meet on a bus, and they both have the same book. And they notice they have the same book, and they go, "*Oh, wow! I'm reading that book; do you like it?*" "*Oh, yeah!*" And then, pretty soon, a year goes by and they get married. Is that what divine order is like? Divine appointment; I'm sorry. That event seems miraculous! It couldn't happen by chance! The outcome is so perfect that they have to be in sync with some type of celestial orchestration. Humans couldn't possibly have organized it in such a perfect way!

But think about it! What is an appointment? We make an appointment; we agree with another person to meet at a time and a place. And maybe we have an agenda. And if both parties are in integrity, we show up at the right time, and we have our meeting. Right?

But saying that everything is by divine appointment is like believing that God has this big appointment book, and your name is on it on a certain date and time. And what happens if you don't show up for your divine appointment? Are you damned to hell? When you don't show up for your doctor's appointment, the doctor sends you a bill for \$50, right? How much does God charge if you don't show up for your appointment? Scarier still, what if you have a divine appointment, and God doesn't show up? *[Congregation murmurs]*

Well, we live in this Cause and Effect universe. And the cause is in direct correlation to the effect. When we say that everything happens by divine appointment, that sounds like having resignation: that we're accepting the whims and the caprice of some divine being. It sounds like we're thinking that what will happen will only happen if God wills it to happen when God is good and ready.

Well, I've got a news flash for you: time is a human construct. God has no timing, so there can't be planning for planning for divine appointment. There's no presence somewhere "out there" imposing timing on humanity. There's no deity or power outside that's causing things to happen to us willfully, which is really good news. "Everything happens by divine appointment" is like saying, "*If it doesn't happen tomorrow, God must not have ordained it. Maybe the signs weren't right; I don't know. Maybe there wasn't an omen. Maybe it's not under the right zodiac sign.*" It's like saying everything is pre-determined in an appointed kind of way. And it negates our power of self-determined choice. And we do have the power of choice!

We have the free will to get to do whatever we choose. And all of us have experienced times when it seemed like a divine appointment, right? Where everything lined up just right? Like, maybe you go to the park every Saturday afternoon. And this particular weekend, your friend asked you to keep her dog. So you figure, "*Well, I'll just take the dog to the park with me.*" And you go to the park, and there in the park is another person with the same kind of dog that you have. And, of course, you're going to meet each other and talk with each other about it. And pretty soon, you've got a friend for life. That's serendipity! That's being in the right place at the right time! It's not ordained by God's divine appointment.

But we're always connected with the Mind of God. What do we call this? One-Mindedness. There's only one Mind, and we participate with that Mind. If God is omnipresent, that means that God is everywhere present ... that there is nowhere God is not: in us, everywhere, as big as the cosmos. If God is omniscient, there's nothing that God does not know. God is the "knowingness" in which we all take part. We can know anything we need to know if we'll sit down and be quiet and listen. God will provide us with all the details. If God is omnipotent, that means God is all-powerful; there's nothing that we can't

accomplish together with God. Nothing! If you can think about it and believe it and do it, you can accomplish anything you want!

From this One-Mindedness, we tap into that omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent beingness of the All that is God: the totality of everything in the cosmos. Being One-Minded allows us to be fully and totally connected with the Mind of God in every moment. We aren't just an appointment in the Daytimer of God; that word dates me, doesn't it? [*Congregation laughs*] I had a Daytimer many years ago. Hmmm. We're not just an appointment; we're the whole calendar! We're all of it!

Together, we create the experiences that are divinely timed by us, for us. That uplift us, that enlighten us, that energize us, that illuminate us, and that bring us back to wholeness. So instead of saying, "Everything happens by divine appointment," where we might feel not in control, let's say, "We are always in the flow of God in every moment." Say, "I am one with the Mind of God, and this creates divine timing." **I am one with the Mind of God, and this creates divine timing.**

Well, the next one is: **NOTHING HAPPENS BY ACCIDENT.** This is kind of aligned with the divine appointment: implying that everything is happening like it's "supposed" to: determined by God's plan for us. And, frankly, that feels like I don't have any choice. If nothing happens by accident, then everything must be happening on purpose, for a reason. So what's the purpose? What's the reason? Do we have to accept "what is," no matter how abusive or painful or uncomfortable it is? No! We don't!

I don't think the God that I love would want that for me, and I certainly don't want that for you. If nothing happens by accident, there's no way to change the things we don't like. I want to live a life on purpose; I want to be on purpose! God doesn't have a pre-specified, pre-determined plan for me, or for you, either ... except maybe to fulfill our human potential. Maybe to learn to forgive ourselves, and learn to forgive each other. Or maybe to practice unconditional love for ourselves and each other. Wow! That's a big one!

That's not a 1-2-3, step-by-step plan. God is not micro-managing us. [*Rev. Fleming laughs*] The only plan is for us to fulfill our Christhood. To do those things that Jesus did and taught. To heal each other. To feed each other. To love each other. To care about each other. To say "Nothing happens by accident" is basically having a fatalistic attitude: it doesn't allow for our creativity and our intelligence to come through. It doesn't give us the opportunity to grow and change, and I think that's why we're here.

We don't create by accident; we create our world consciously by our actions, by our decisions and by our choices. Because we're co-creators with God! And hopefully we're deliberate creators ... not creators by default. If we create by default, "de-fault is us." We're deliberate creators: creating the life that we've been dreaming of living. Our point of power is to become intentional creators, not accidental creators.

Are we living our lives like a marble in a pinball machine? Going bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, all over? Just careening everywhere? We live in the world of Cause and Effect. Walking down the street, you step on a rock; you trip, you fall down and break your ankle. It's because of gravity! It's Cause and Effect! You spend all your money on tchotchkes, you don't have any money left; you can't eat!

Our job is to transform every situation into a meaningful growth experience, always connected with the Mind of God. So instead of saying, "Nothing happens by accident," which makes us feel that we have no choice -- that we have to accept whatever happens to us; that we don't have the power to change anything -- what if we said this? "Everything happens by my intention." **Everything happens by my intention.** And that makes me feel more powerful and more in control. We can begin to take charge of our lives; we can begin to create a life worth living our way.

The next one is: **WHAT WE RESIST, PERSISTS.** Now, this is one of the first things I learned in Unity. See, the assumption is that, whatever we give our energy to, tenaciously continues in our life. Whatever we

resist begins to take power over us: to control us. So we don't want to resist anything in our life, because whatever we resist is going to become more powerful.

While this is true, I think it's a little too literal, because it doesn't take into effect those things that happen in the outer world that we have no control over. Now, obviously, you don't have control over other people. I certainly only have control of myself.

But, however, when we live in relationship with other people, we're subject to this thing called collective consciousness. That the ideas that are put out on TV commercials and in all -- you hear them everywhere, right? They go into our subconscious and they're there without our really realizing it. Some are secular; some are religious.

When I was a little girl -- maybe your mom told you this, too: "*Lori, if you go outside and get wet and cold, you're going to get a cold.*" Right? That's an old wives' tale, right? But if you're living with someone, and that person has a financial downturn and they have to take bankruptcy, you're going to be living with some of the fallout of that because you're in relationship with that person.

Saying "what resists persists" is really disempowering! I think it keeps us from being pro-active. If someone's in an abusive relationship, it's a good idea to leave. Don't stay! When we resist something, we're giving it our energy and our attention, and the more that we resist it, the more energy it takes for us to resist us. And it becomes a big part of our consciousness.

How many of you have ever had a job that was a little bit ... You had to do a little job, and it was kind of distasteful, and you weren't really excited about doing it? And you did that dirty word: you procrastinated? I can hardly say it, it's such a dirty word! You know, we try to ignore that distasteful job, even if it's a really simple task. You know, we think, "*Oh, I don't want to do it! Don't make it do it!*" or whatever. The longer we put it off, the harder it gets to do. And the more negative energy persists. The longer it takes us to simply do it -- I know in my own life -- the longer I procrastinate to do that little job, the harder it is. And I spend more time procrastinating than it actually takes to do the job. What's up with that?

So if you're resisting something, maybe we should treat it like when we're in meditation and a thought goes across our mind -- which we don't want to have a thought when we're in meditation. We just gently let it go. Just release it. Otherwise, if we keep having those thoughts of resistance, it's going to hurt our meditation time, and it's going to hurt our lives ... because we can't let that resistance stay, because it just keeps piling up and piling up.

Most of the time when we have an experience when we're apprehensive about doing something, we think, "*What resists persists.*" It holds us back! Instead, let's say this: "*I let go of resistance, and create my life with intention.*" **I let go of resistance and create my life with intention.** Letting go of what no longer serves us gives us a clean slate, and allows us to use that energy and power to do the things we really want to do.

The next one is: **WE'RE LIKE A DROP OF WATER IN THE OCEAN.** That's a really beautiful metaphor used to illustrate the relationship: God to us and us to God. It's an analogy that God is the ocean, and we're part of God: the ocean of God. It suggests that a drop of water contains all the elements of the ocean, but it's not the whole ocean. Kind of like we're like a tiny little piece of "God stuff."

However, there's a little problem with this analogy, and that's that we can remove a drop of water from the ocean. We can't remove ourselves from God! Now we can deny there's a God. We can pretend there's not a God. We cannot reach out to God. But we can never remove ourselves from the activity of God. There's no such thing as a little piece of God. God is the Allness of the cosmos! It's all God! Everything: the sun, the moon, the stars, the tiniest piece of matter. You and me, all of life; it's all God!

Now, I agree with the metaphor that we're essentially the same nature as God ... and that's a spiritual nature. We don't look like God; God doesn't look like us. But we contain all of the qualities of God. The Islam people -- the Muslims -- have something they call the 99 names of God. And they're actually more than 99. But here are some of them, and see if you don't think that these are aspects of God that you want to be, too. All-compassionate. Most gracious. Most merciful. Holy. Sacred. The giver of peace. The creator. Absolute forgiver. Sustainer. Nourisher. Feeder. The wise. The truth. Reality. The only one. Those are some of the 99 aspects -- or elements -- of God.

I love those! Because those are spiritual qualities. You have all of those spiritual qualities in you! They point to the fact that those are all God qualities. And many, many more! More than we can know or understand. We have the ability to express all those qualities.

Instead of saying, "*We are like a drop of water in the ocean,*" which makes us feel small, maybe powerless, maybe not important -- or even separate from God -- what if we were to say, "**We are Spirit: the same essential nature as God.**" The point of power is we are the same essence as God, and I believe it's time for us to begin living from that essence, and be more God-like. You can do this!

The last one is: **BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU PRAY FOR.** This sounds like something that a mother might say to their children: "*Be careful when you go out there; don't cross the street without the crossing guard.*" It sounds like a threat. It's the idea that, when we pray for something, we probably better be really specific about what we might, or we might not get exactly what we want. Or we might get too much of what we want. Or we might get something we don't want. Or we might get something that isn't good for us.

For example, if you're praying for a new car -- and you get your new car -- but it's the wrong color or it's the wrong model. Or, God forbid, it's a lemon. Or say you're praying for a loving relationship with a man, and you get someone who you don't love, but loves you so much they become a stalker.

I was talking to a friend a while back, and she was telling me that she'd been out for a walk. It was winter time and she lives in a climate where it's all snowy. And, while she was walking, she found this poor dog that was lying on the sidewalk. And it was half frozen and it was dirty. She picked it up and she took it to the SPCA, and they took it in. All week she kept thinking about that poor little dog. So, finally, she went back and she adopted that dog. She got her loving relationship with a male! Be specific with your prayers! [Rev. Lori and congregation laugh]

What is prayer for? To experience our oneness with God! When we pray, prayer doesn't change God; prayer changes us at depth. And the more we pray, the closer we get to God. We pray to grow our spiritual connection with the Divine. Prayer isn't something we just do in an emergency when we're on an airplane that starts to dive. Prayer is coming from our awareness of our oneness with God.

And, in Unity, we pray affirmatively: praying for the good that might not already be apparent. If we're praying for someone's health, we pray for them being perfect and whole. We don't pray for the disease. We pray knowing that we are essentially divine substance out of which everything is made. We pray affirmatively -- not to a God "out there" in a white robe and a white beard sitting on a golden throne -- but from the awareness of oneness. The point of prayer is not the "goodies" we get, but to connect our heart and mind to the God of our being, so we realize goodness. More love. More fulfillment. More peace. More joy and more prosperity. A greater realization of our oneness with God!

So instead of saying, "*Be careful what you pray for*" -- which sounds like a warning -- we might want to say, "**We pray from the awareness of oneness.**" Because our point of power is: we are all divine.

So what do I want you to remember tonight?

Instead of saying that "*Everything happens by divine appointment,* we can say, "*I am one with the Mind of God, and this creates divine timing.*" Because we're always in the flow with God in every moment.

Instead of saying, "*Nothing happens by accident*" -- which makes us feel like we have no choice -- we might say, "*Everything happens by my intention.*" Because we can begin to take charge of our lives and create a life that's worth living our way.

Instead of saying, "*What we resist, persists*" -- which makes us feel disempowered and not proactive -- we can say, "*I let go of resistance and create my life with intention.*" We let go of what no longer serves so that we have a clean slate, and we can do the things we want and live the life we live.

Instead of saying, "*We are like a drop of water in the ocean*" -- and maybe feeling separate from God, we can say, "*We are Spirit: the same essential nature as God.*" Because we are the same essence as God, and it's time for us to live from that essence, and be more God-like.

And, finally, "*Be careful what you prayer for*" -- which sounds like a threat -- and, instead, say, "*We pray from the awareness of oneness.*" Because truly, we are one with the Divine.

Let us pray:

We take just a moment and let these words settle into our consciousness as they lift us up out of the ordinary into a higher consciousness and a deeper awareness of our relationship with the Divine. Truly, we are of the essence of God. We are One-Minded with God. And our intention is to live from that place of peace and joy and love and power: to truly be the Godlings we were meant to be. Thank you, sweet Spirit! Thank you, thank you, thank you! And it is so. Amen.

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