

IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP

Week #1 of a 6-Week Series, "It's Time"

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Rev. Richard Maraj

Rev. Richard Maraj: Hey, so how many people here like sleeping? Anybody like to sleep? [*Congregation laughs*] I love sleep! I think it's one of the most, greatest gifts and pleasures in life is to have a good sleep. And not just because it's really healthy for us – the rejuvenating and renewing and restoring aspect – but I'm just talking: There is a sweetness and a deliciousness of sleep! A cuddly, cozy feeling of being nurtured. I mean there is something amazing about sleep.

You know, when it comes to sleep and waking up, I think there are two different kind of people: People who wake up easy and just spring out of bed in the morning, and the ones who find it a little bit harder, who wake up a bit slower. How many people wake up easily and just kind of get right out of bed? And how many have a harder time and get out slowly? My people!!! [*Congregation laughs*] Okay!

So one day a week I spring out of bed and get up right on the alarm, and that is Sunday morning; 5 a.m. my alarm rings, and I'm off and getting ready for Sunday. But the rest of the six days, I'm a little bit slower. I like sleeping in longer. And I often hit the snooze button. Anybody ever hit the snooze button? Any snooze users here? Hitting the snooze when you wake up is like waking up and doing the first action is trying to avoid waking up! [*Congregation laughs*] That's what hitting the snooze is about: It's avoiding waking up. In fact, it's procrastinating waking up, and putting it off for nine whole minutes. I don't know what it is about that magical number of nine minutes, but for some reason I think it works! I love the snooze button!

The only thing I find that's a favorite thing of mine sleeping is that, when I wake up in the middle of the night thinking it's much later than it is, to find out it's 1 o'clock and I still have four hours of sleep or five hour of sleep left! It's like I have won the sleep lottery! [*Congregation laughs*] Bonus! It almost feels like free, extra sleep that I got!

So whatever side of the fence you're on in terms of sleeping and waking, we will all agree that sleeping is an important and good thing. EXCEPT ... [*Laughs with congregation*] ... When we sleep through our lives.

I think we've all heard of that expression: Asleep at the switch. And it's to recognize the fact that sometimes we are asleep in our relationships. Sometimes we are asleep in the choices that we make. Sometimes we're asleep in our careers. We are asleep to our own desires and goals and needs.

Anthony de Mello says this: "*Most people, even though they don't know it, are asleep. We are born asleep. We live asleep. We get married asleep. We breed children asleep.*" [*Congregation laughs*] "*We die asleep without ever even waking up.*"

We live mechanical lives. We have mechanical thoughts – often someone else's thoughts. We have mechanical emotions and mechanical reactions.

You know, being asleep at the switch means not paying attention to the things that are important. It means not being careful about the duties and responsibilities that we have ... not just in our jobs, but in our relationships, and to ourselves and our lives. Being asleep at the switch is: the areas of our lives where we "check out" – where we numb out – and we just go through the motions. It is those areas where we do not fully utilize our gifts and talents and abilities. And what happens is that we end up limiting and depriving ourselves of the fullness and the experience of life and happiness.

So I ask you: Is there an area in your life where you are asleep at the switch? Or sleeping through something that's very important? Is there an area in your life where you know that it's time to wake up?

The spiritual teacher Mooji said: *"The greatest healing is to wake up from what we are NOT."* The area where most are asleep, he says, really is in the areas of not being awake to our own magnificence. To the beauty and the goodness and the greatness in ourselves. We are such much more than we believe ourselves to be and, yet, we find it easier to believe that we are "lesser." We find it easier to put ourselves down, to beat ourselves up, to criticize and to judge ourselves harshly. Measure ourselves against impossible standards, and not feel worthy, rather than to choose to wake up to our own greatness and magnificence.

Anybody here ever procrastinate? *[Congregation laughs]* Anybody ever procrastinate? I'll bet every single one of us has a phrase to say, *"It's time that I (blank)"*, and you could fill it in. *"It's time that I started – or restarted – doing this. Or it's time that I stopped doing that."* Every one of us has something that it's time that we do.

And so today we're going to begin a six-week series entitled, "It's Time." And what we're going to do is: We're going to be addressing the things in our lives – the areas in our lives – that shape and affect the quality of our lives, and how do address the now. Because it's time! Today's lesson is entitled, "It's Time to Wake Up."

You know, waking up in the physical sense can we kind of hard, but waking up in the spiritual sense is even harder. Waking up to be more conscious – and live more consciously. **WAKING UP TO BE MORE SELF-AWARE OF WHO WE ARE** takes a lot of work.

Rhonda Byrne, who wrote *The Secret* and then *The Greatest Secret*, says, *"It's time for us to wake up to the truth of who we are."* And she said that, *"Who we are is awareness."* We're not a person being aware; we are awareness itself. I want to use different words for awareness, because sometimes things will click in a little better. So instead of saying *"We are awareness,"* you could say, *"We are consciousness."* *"We are pure Spirit."* *"We are Presence."* *"We are the life force."* *"We are the Intelligence of the Universe."* *"We are the God consciousness."* *"We are the light of the world!"*

All of these different things represent that Source/Spirit energy that we are that is the true nature of who we are. We are more than our physical bodies. We are more than our minds. That the greatest part of ourselves is something that cannot be seen. It is that invisible, animating force within ourselves, and it is our greatest power.

And so it's our Higher Self, and it's our higher perspective that is beyond the thinking. That is beyond thought, beyond the mind. You know, it is like a mountaintop perspective on our lives instead of living-in-the-valley awareness. It's really being up at that higher level that represents the truth of who we are. And we need to move our minds there. It is the same awareness, as Rev. Lori said, that is in Jesus and Krishna, Yogananda and Buddha. It is there in every single one of us, but many of us are just not awakened to it!

And the fact is: It takes time to sit in that awareness, and we must do it on a regular basis. Notice that Jesus prayed five to six times a day? Now, you would think, like, *"Gee, that's Jesus; why'd he have to do it so often? Couldn't he just do one, and just put it in cruise control? Let that bad boy ride for a month or two?"* *[Congregation laughs]* *"He was Jesus!"*

And do you think there was a reason why he did that? Is to show us that we must do it consistently. Prayer's not a one-shot deal, and then we're all good! It is a consistent way to deepen our consciousness of the truth that we are awareness. That we are presence. That we are the God consciousness. It is there, but are we awakened to it? And if we want to be, we need to practice it on a regular basis.

Here's a three-step process of awakening to the awareness of the consciousness and the truth of who we really are: our Higher Self. And it is to **ask, notice and deepen.**

And to **ask** ourselves first: Am I aware? And to answer it: I am awareness. I am pure Spirit. I am the Intelligence of the Universe. I am the consciousness of God. I am the light of the world.

I am awareness. Half-voice; let's say it together. *[With congregation:] "I am awareness."* Take a deep breath, and let that in. I am pure Spirit. Together. *{With congregation:} "I am pure Spirit."* Take a breath. I am the Intelligence of the Universe. Together. *{With congregation:} "I am the Intelligence of the Universe."* Deep breath. I am the consciousness of God. Together. *[With congregation:] "I am the consciousness of God."* Deep breath. I am the light of the world. Together. *[With congregation:] "I am the light of the world."* Deep breath.

And so we need to ask and to remind ourselves of that truth. Then we need to **notice**. And as if elevating from a valley to the top of a mountain, we need to let our consciousness go to a higher place beyond the details of our lives and who we think we are. We need to take our mindset and our consciousness to that higher place. Because what happens when we do? Things get lighter; they get clearer. They get more peaceful and more expansive in our awareness of our connection to ourselves and to our spirit.

And the final one is just to **deepen** our awareness by sitting in and immersing ourselves over time into that truth of who we really are. And doing that just for five minutes three or four times a day is a powerful and important practice for us. You know the most important time to do it? Is when we just wake up. Our mind is most receptive. And to do that little practice of connecting and awakening is a powerful and important thing. To go to that secret place. It is the invisible aspect of who we are that is the most powerful and the greatest resource that we have. And we need to rise above just being caught up in thought, and to spend more time in that higher place.

You know, when we practice this – this presence and this consciousness – that becomes more of the foreground instead of the background of our lives. We identify less with the mind and the appearances in our lives, and more with the truth and the essence of who we really are. And what happens over time when we do that more and more consistently? That consciousness and that Higher Self begins to manifest itself through our thoughts and our actions and our lives. We actually are able to bring it forth in greater ways.

You know, the more we focus on awareness and presence and the truth of who we are, it shifts us. And here are Mooji's words of the impact it has. He says what begins to happen: *"When we lose the eyes of the ego, we see with the eyes of God."* Consistently connecting with the awareness of who we are – and the consciousness of who we are – will awaken us to a greater level of living. The most important thing.

The second way that it's important to wake up is to **BE PRESENT**. To be present is the exact opposite of avoidance and procrastination. It is being there: feeling, acting and being, and listening to exactly what's going on in our lives in that moment. Being present is about letting everything else that is not of that moment fade away, and be fully there.

It is the greatest way to handle any challenges, difficulties and frustrations. It is the greatest way to be engaged in our lives. And it's the greatest way to feel more happiness and more fulfillment than anything else: Is to be present to whatever is going on in our lives, even when it's not comfortable. Being present is your greatest resource.

How many people have ever been somewhere, but you really weren't there? *[Congregation laughs]* Anybody been talking with someone when you really weren't there? Or have you ever been at your work or doing some activity, and you weren't there? Because your mind was all over the place!

And here's the deal: When we're somewhere, and our mind is somewhere else, guess what? We are not as effective in learning or healing or connecting or transforming or making the best of that situation. In fact, we tend to cheat and limit ourselves of life, and miss opportunities, because we are not fully present.

Joseph Campbell, the mystic, said, *"Most people think that they're looking for the meaning of life, when what we're all really looking for is an experience of being fully alive."* Can you remember the last time

you felt fully alive? I will guarantee you that is because you were fully present! To be fully alive, you've got to be fully present to what's going on.

Woody Allen once said that 90% of success was just showing up. And the same thing with life! The most successful we are is when we show up: when we are present. You know why? Because there's peace in the present. There is power in the present. There is joy and love and potential solutions in the present. Being present is one of the greatest ways to wake up and be more alive.

And it's being present in the simple ways: To feel the warmth of the sun on our face. To actually taste the food that we're eating. To look in the eyes of someone we love and just behold their beauty. It is to look at a sunset and just allow ourselves to smile and enjoy it. You know, we can be present when we have a cup of coffee. Or when we do the laundry. Or write a letter. Or play with a child. And sometimes, being present – having a good cry, without feeling bad – but just being present to that emotion, allowing us to move through is a powerful thing.

Things happen when we're present. There's learning. There is connection. There's synergy. There's inspiration and revelation. Things begin to fall into place. But we must be present to ourselves. Present to life. Present to what is going on.

I read an article this week; it was called "Being Present in Golf: The Key to Amazing Improvement." Being present in golf! [Congregation laughs] Because if you want to hit a golf ball, and hit a good shot, you can't think about what just happened or what's going to happen; you've got to be right there with that ball in that moment! And that is one of the keys! Golfers more are using their breath to get back to the moment; to get back to the here and now, and to not be distracted.

Remember the movie – that Michael J. Fox movie – *Back to the Future*? What would be more successful would be *Back to the Present*. [Congregation laughs] Because that's what we really need: to be back to the present. And so what I want you to do is to practice being present this week, and when you get lost, use your breath. Everybody just take a breath now. Focus on the air in your nostrils. Again; another one. And one more time. When you just get to your breath, that is as "in the moment" and as present as you can be.

It's okay your mind is going to drift; it happens to everyone! It's how many times you come back. One of my favorite quotes by Buddha was, "It doesn't matter how many times you forget; it's how many times you remember." [Congregation laughs] Everybody, your mind's going to wander! That's part of the deal! But it's how often you're going to bring it back: bring it back, bring it back, bring it back to the present.

So do you think if it works in golf – being present – it might work in your relationship? It might work in your work? It might work in handling challenges and difficulties or solving problems or finding greater peace or happiness? The correct answer would be, "YES!!!" To be awake, to be present.

And the final one to wake up is to **BE INTENTIONAL**. Everything that is created in the Universe starts with intention. Intention! It is the creative power and ability that we all have; every one of us has the power of intention, which is the power to attract, the power to create, the power to manifest.

And intention is a directed impulse of consciousness with the desire to create something that isn't here. And, just like a seed, we need to plant it in the fertile consciousness to allow it to come forth. There is power in intention. Amazing things happen ... but are we using the power of intention?

So let's ... Isn't today the beginning of the NFL season? The Sunday games? So let's talk about Tom Brady then. [Congregation laughs] Everybody know: Tom Brady has been playing in the NFL for 22 years? He's 44 years old! Forty-four! He could be the father of a couple of the rookie quarterbacks! [Congregation laughs] He is so old! Most quarterbacks are losing it at 35, 36, 37: Peyton Manning, Drew Brees, to name a few. This bad boy's 44 and getting better!

The season started Thursday against Dallas. He threw for 379 yards. Four touchdowns. Led a last-minute drive to win ... classic Tom Brady, like when he was 24 or 25! How is that man getting better? He's 44!

[Congregation laughs] How? And they're actually predicting that he might have his best season ever! You know how? INTENTION.

Tom Brady's intention has always been: I'm going to play until I'm 45 or 50. His intention is that his arm's strength and accuracy and timing will not diminish, but will, in fact, get better. His intention to win more Super Bowls; he's won seven more than anybody else. It is his intention to be a great teammate. It is his intention to be a great leader.

There is power in intention! But the deal is: Most of us don't use this great power. In fact, most of us don't use many of our spiritual abilities and talents and attributes. This morning when you woke up, what was your intention for the kind of day you were going to have? What was your intention for the kind of week? I would bet many of us just woke up and got out of bed, and rolled on to the next thing.

And so the question is: What is your intention for your life? What is your intention for who you want to be? What is your intention for the qualities that you want to embody? What is your intention for what you want to manifest and achieve in your life?

In the Book of Job it says, *"Decide upon a thing, and it will be established for you."* So are you willing to decide upon some things? Some intentions from now? It doesn't matter what's happened up 'til now; today's a new day! You can set new intentions for what you want to create, who you want to be, and the things that you want to achieve in your life.

Setting intentions is powerful because it opens channels for the creative flow to move. It sets things in motion. It calls and activates the possibilities and unlimited goodness that is available to each and every one of us. We must participate, and we must co-create ... but it's waiting on us to choose, to decide, and to set our intention.

Three intentions I want you to set as a part of your homework. Number one: Set an intention of what you'd like to create or achieve. Set an intention of who you want to become. And set an intention of what you want to feel or experience. There is power and intention. The truth is: If you want to wake up your life, you've got to wake up your intentions! And so my question is: What are your intentions?

Mark Twain said about procrastination: *"Why put off until tomorrow what you can put off 'til the day after tomorrow?"* *[Laughs along with congregation]* I love that! There are two things we should no longer procrastinate on. Number one is: Stop being asleep at the switch in some area of our lives. And the second is: To stop putting off creating living, and enjoying our best life and being our best self.

And the way to do that is to be the awareness. Be the awareness. Practice it consistently: to go to that higher consciousness of truth of who we are. Do it consistently and regularly, like Jesus taught, to build up that consciousness to live from that place more and more. Secondly, be present to the present moment: whatever's going on. And if you find yourself going to the past or future, use your breath to just bring yourself back. And continually just be present. And finally, be intentional. Use the power of your intention – set it! – of who you want to become, what you want to create and what you want to experience.

Somebody once said, *"If not now, when?"* If you want a better life, you can have it, because it's time. It's time to wake up.

God bless you all!

[Congregation applauds]