

IT'S TIME TO LIVE

Final Week of the 6-Week Series, "It's Time"

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Rev. Richard Maraj: So a model and a lawyer are sitting next to each other on this flight from LA to New York, and the lawyer says, *"Hey; let's play this game. Let's do this! It'll be so much fun!"*

And the model says, *"You know, I'm kind of tired; I'd just like to get a little nap."* And so she politely declines and rolls over towards the window, and starts to try and take a nap.

And then the lawyer insists, *"No; come on! This will be so fun! I'll ask you a question; if you don't know the answer, you give me five bucks; and then you ask me. If I don't know, I'll give you five bucks."*

And she said, *"No; I really am tired. I just want to get some sleep."*

But he is annoyingly persistent, and says, *"How 'bout this? If you don't know the answer to the question, you give me five bucks; but if I don't know it, I'll give you \$500."*

Well, it catches her attention, and she thinks he's going to annoy her until she plays anyway, so she agrees to play. And he goes first.

And he says, *"What's the distance from the earth to the moon?"*

Without saying a word, she reaches in her purse, gets \$5, hands it to the guy.

And then she goes, and she says, *"What goes uphill with three legs, and comes down with four legs."*

Well, the lawyer is perplexed. He can't figure it out! He starts racking his brain, thinking and analyzing. He goes on for an hour. And, after an hour, he wakes her up and hands her \$500. *[Congregation laughs]*

She says, *"Thank you,"* and goes back to sleep.

Well, he is miffed, to say the least. So he wakes her up and says, *"So what's the answer? What's the answer to that question?"*

And without hesitating, she reaches into her purse, hands \$5 to him, and then goes back to sleep. *[Congregation laughs]*

Alright. *[Laughs]* That didn't have anything to do with today's talk *[laughs]*, but it was the best I could come up with this week! So anyway ...

So how many people here have an area in your life where you know that you are not living it as best as you can? Anybody have an area in your life where you're just not living it? How many people have ever allowed fear to either stop you or hold you back from living as fully as you know you could live? How many people?

You know, every single one of us absolutely knows that we could live our lives more fully than we're living it. Every one of us knows that there is more in us and there is more for us still in life. There is more peace. There is more happiness. There are more opportunities. There are more possibilities. There is more love. There is more good available to each and every one of us.

And when Jesus said he came that we may have life, and have it more abundantly, it means that we have unlimited possibilities to us. We have access to an abundance of good. And when it says "abundance," it's abundance not just in terms of quantity; it's abundance in terms of quality. That we have access to a richer, a deeper, a fuller and more and meaningful and fulfilling life.

You know, the Book of Matthew, Chapter 22, Verse 14. It says, *"Many are called, but few are chosen."* And I really believe that many are called, but few choose. There is no question: we have been given the gift of an amazing life. And you know what's even more amazing? Is that we often choose not to live

that amazing life as fully as we can. We know how great life is! We know of all the great possibilities. And yet, we choose to not always live as fully as we can. Sometimes we don't even know how to live as fully.

How many people remember the *Mary Tyler Moore* show? Yeah, we're dating ourselves ... I was extremely young when it was on. *[Laughs with congregation]* So there was a favorite episode I had. And, in it, Mary was in a bit of a funk. So she invited Ted and Georgette and Rhoda over to rearrange some of her furniture to help that get her out of her funk. So they're rearranging; she's not happy with it. They're rearranging; not happy. And then she says, *"You know what? For my life to get better, it's not about rearranging my furniture. I've got to rearrange myself ... rearrange my life."*

And then Ted speaks up and says, *"If you want to change your life, I know exactly what you need to do. I know you! And I know what's wrong with your life. Every day you just [in monotone, hum drum tone]: wake up; you eat some breakfast; and you drive to work. You say 'hello' to a couple of your friends. You do some work. You eat some lunch. You do some more work. You say 'goodbye' to your friends. You drive home. You eat dinner. You sit down; you watch a little TV. You read a magazine, and then you go to sleep. Am I right?"*

And she acknowledged he's right. And he said, *"Well, if you want to change your life completely, this is what you've got to do, and you've got to do it starting tomorrow. I want you tomorrow to [speaking with high, excited energy] WAKE UP! And eat breakfast! And then drive to work! And then greet some of your friends! Then do some work! Have some lunch, and do some more work! [Continuing with a positive, upbeat, excited tone] Then say goodbye to your friends! Drive home! Eat dinner! Sit down; watch some TV! Read a magazine! And then go to sleep! 'Cause it's not what you do; it's how you do it."*

And I'll tell you, even as a kid, that powerful message resonated with me and made a difference. It isn't what we do; it's how we do it. It's not the actions; it is the spirit, the energy, the attitude, and the mindset with which we do the things in our lives.

So my question for you is: how are you living your life? Are you happy with the way you're living your life? Is the spirit and the energy and the mindset and consciousness with which you live one that is having you live your life to the fullest? Or is there something you'd like to change? Something you'd like to do a little differently so you could live your life, and live it more fully? And more abundantly?

I saw the Broadway musical *Hamilton* a couple of weeks ago at Gammage. Man, that rocked! That was one of the best things! There are all things I can talk about it, but there's a line that really caught me. And it said, *"Dying is easy; living is harder."*

In our culture, we've got all kinds of fears: fear of public speaking; fear of snakes; fear of spiders; fear of being alone. Fear of dying is right up there! But I would suggest that we have an even larger fear of living than we do of dying. If you look at all the ways we live sometimes, we hold back from life. I think we are actually more afraid of living. Look at the ways that we hide from life, and hold back. You know, the ways we withdraw. The ways we shut down and play small, and settle. The ways we sometimes give up. The way we don't try. The ways we don't ask. You know, the ways we don't speak up. And sometimes not even knowing what we want and what we desire.

In some ways, I think we're afraid to live: afraid to live as fully as we can. And life isn't easy! It's not meant to be easy. But it would be significantly easier and better if we chose to live more fully.

And if everyone asked themselves the question: am I living as full a life as I can? As full a life as I want? The answer would be *"No."* But every one of us would also say, *"I do want to live more fully."* And today is about us making a choice to live life, and live it more abundantly. To live it more fully.

So we're in Week #6 already of our six-week series called, *"It's Time."* And the reason I came up with this is because there's so many important things that we keep putting off and deferring, even when we know that they are good and important and valuable for our lives.

So we've been addressing the things – the tough stuff – that really has an impact on the quality of our lives, because it's time. Because, if not now, when? Week #1 was "It's Time to Wake Up." Week #2 was "Time to be Honest." Week #3 was "It's Time to Forgive." Week #4: "It's Time to Start." Last week was "It's Time to Love." And today we're going to finish with "It's Time to Live."

Our lives are the sum of all of our choices. And we get to choose how we live. And so to choose how to live, we're going to choose how to live more fully.

So the first thing is: It's time to choose to **LIVE WITH INTENTION**. The great Henry David Thoreau had a lot of great writings, but there are two quotes of his that I love in particular. Because they really show us the two choices we have in how we live our lives.

The first one – the famous quote – is: "*The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.*" And what he's saying here is that, sometimes we choose to live our lives resigned to the fact that life isn't going to get any better than this. Sometimes we live our lives kind of giving up, settling, not trying – you know, not even believing that our lives could be better. Going through the motions. Sometimes not really living, but just kind of existing.

And the second choice really came from his writings at Walden Pond, where he retreated for a couple of years. And here's the quote. He said, "*I went to the woods, because I wished to live deliberately. To front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach. And not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I want to live deeply, and suck out all the marrow of life.*"

And so the two choices – if you really look at what Thoreau is saying ... The two choices for living are to live desperately, or to live deliberately. To live desperately is to live fearfully, anxiously, unconsciously. And to live a belief that there's never enough. To live deliberately is to live intentionally. To live purposefully. And to live consciously.

You know, life is energy, and we get to choose how we channel that energy. We can either dissipate our energy, or direct our energy. When we dissipate our energy, we live desperately. When we direct our energy, we live deliberately.

You know, intentions are an important part of our lives. And it is the opportunity for us to actually design and to take ownership of our lives and our experiences. If you think about, to set an intention activates three powers. Number one: desire. Number two: receptivity. And number three is: manifestation. Desire: what we want. Receptivity: our willingness to actually have it. And manifestation is: the power to create it.

You know, we have that power! In Genesis, it says we've been given "*dominion and authority over all things.*" And the greatest thing we've been given dominion and authority over is our thoughts! Our thoughts have power! Our words have power! Our actions have power! Our attitudes have power!

You know, intention comes from the awareness of how powerful we are, and what an influence we have on the quality of our lives. The great Steve Jobs said, "*The people who are crazy enough to believe that they can change the world are usually the ones who do.*" And what he's saying in that is that the people who know their power, and the people who set intentions, tend to do great things.

So my question is: how effectively and consistently are you using your power of intention? Intentions are like a GPS for our lives; they're kind of the "guiding" thing, so we kind of know where we're going. And it relates to anything. It could have an intention for a relationship. An intention for our work. An intention for a job interview, for a meeting. For whatever it is, we have that power to set and clarify our intentions.

So my question is: what is your intention for how you live your life? What is your intention for the kind of person you want to be, and the way you want to show up in your life? In your relationship? In your work? What is your intention for the difference that you're here to make? What's your intention for this week? What's your intention for today?

You know, in the play, *The Man of La Mancha*, Don Quixote says this line. He says, “Take a deep breath of life, and consider how it should be lived.” We have been given this great gift of life, so it behooves us to pause and think, “How do I want to live it?” And to set our intention for how we want to live, and what we want to create and experience.

You know, intentions – to me – are focused and they’re clear, but they’re also open. Because sometimes, there’s a better version – or a different version – to fulfill our intention, even though it doesn’t look the same way. I know people that are in a relationship that didn’t look like what they thought they wanted, and yet it has fulfilled them and brought them great and wonderful things. I know a guy who was a science teacher, and yet his great success – and he loves science his whole life, and teaching ... His greatest success in owning a hotel and an ice cream store. *[Congregation laughs]*

I mean, sometimes life doesn’t always look the way you think it’s going to look! So having the intention is still good, but it’s also being aware and flexible. If we want to live fully, it’s time to live with intention.

Second thing is: It’s time to **LIVE WITH CARE AND ATTENTION**. If you look up the definition of the word “deliberately,” it means not only intention, and to live on purpose; it means to live with care and attention.

To live life with care is important. To care for yourself. To care for others. To care for work. To care for the environment. To care for animals. To care for all people. To care for our planet. You ever saw somebody do some work, and you could tell they didn’t really care? Anybody ever have that? Or have you ever seen somebody do work, and you could feel how much care they put into it? It absolutely makes a difference!

There’s a famous quote that says, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” And it’s absolutely true!

How important is it to live with care? The great Dale Carnegie – in his book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* – says if you want to have an impact on people ... If you want to experience success ... if you want to be a happier person, the key and vital ingredient is to care. And he gives little steps like: to care is just to show some interest in people. Smile. Remember their name. Be a good listener. And to affirm and appreciate others. Caring makes a difference!

If we want to live our lives fully, caring – and caring for others with care and attention – is a vital and important thing.

You know, this past summer, there were the Olympics. And we all remember all the competitions, all the winning. But one of the things we always remember ... Like, have you ever seen a race where somebody fell, and then one of the other competitors actually helped them up, and actually put in jeopardy their chances of winning? Ever saw demonstrations of care? I’ve got to tell you, those things kind of last in me even longer than some of the winning! We think it’s always about the spirit of competition; I think the spirit of care absolutely touches and inspires us. And we remember those things deeply. We remember watching it, and I guarantee you: the person that fell and got help remembers. And the person who reached out and helped them remembers. There are ripples of benefit when we live our lives with care.

And care and attention for people, but also care and attention for what’s going on in our lives now. When Thoreau said, “To front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could learn what it had to teach. And not, when I came to die, discover I’d not lived” ... What he’s saying is – “To front all the essential facts of life and learn” – is to learn from what’s in front of you right now. That is what is most essential.

Sometimes when things are kind of hard in front of us, we tend to want to gloss over it ... get by it as quickly as possible. You know, avoid it at any cost. But what we’re doing is denying ourselves the gift and the blessing and the good that it meant to teach us. And it prevents us from being fully alive! It prevents us from living life more fully by trying to avoid.

You know, looking at what is before us is important. Because if it's before us – if it's in our lives – it is absolutely meant for us. And we need to live it fully. And we need to face it fully. Life is always trying to teach us. Life is always trying to guide us and show us and lead us to something greater. But we need to fully step and engage in those things, and live them fully.

So let me ask you a question: what is the biggest thing that's up in your life for you? The biggest thing you really don't want to face? The biggest thing you're not comfortable with? Don't want to address? Don't know how to handle? I would suggest that's the most important thing right now. That, to live that – to face that – and to live it well is vital. To live it with care and intention ... give it the attention it deserves.

You know, so I was playing this nine-hole golf course; you know, mainly it's three-par, and some four. And so, amazingly, I got the ball right near the hole on my first. So I'm thinking, "Oh, I got a birdie!" First ever. I missed it ... [Congregation laughs] Then I putted it in, and I got a par. And still, a par for me was like I had won the Olympic gold. [Congregation laughs] And so I was so happy that, the next hole, I just kind of lost it; I was just so giddy! I shot seven on a par four. [Congregation laughs] And then I got so ticked on the hole after that, I shot 10! [Congregation laughs]

And the point I'm trying to make is that we need to have care and attention for what's before us. Whether it was good what happened in the past, or not so good, we can't bring it into this moment. We need to have care and attention to what's going on in our lives. If we want to live our lives fully, we've got to live it with care and attention.

And the final thing: it's time to **LIVE WITH JOY AND GRATITUDE**. Listen to these Scriptures. Jesus said, "These things that I have spoken to you, I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete." Paul said, "Count it all joy, brethren, when you face trials of any kind." He also said, "Rejoice in the Lord! Again, I say rejoice!" And my favorite: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Rejoice means to express joy. We are meant to express joy in this life! And to express joy means that our mindset is in the awareness of how blessed we are; how wonderful the gift of life is; and how loved we are. And it does not wait until "this happens," or until we get "this or that." You know, it is in the awareness that we don't need – or don't have to depend on – outer things happening for us to experience the joy of life and the happiness of living.

When was the last time you felt pure joy? Do you remember? And have you ever felt joy for no reason? You know, I would suggest that joy is important for three things ... probably more than that, but here are my three.

The first one is that life doesn't always go our way. Things don't always work; we have struggles and difficulties and challenges on an ongoing basis. So that, if we just kept waiting for those things to be alright and all our ducks to be in a row to feel joyful, we never will. We have the power and the ability to experience joy in all situations. That there are things to be joyful about; just being alive is something to be joyful about.

Somebody once said, "You should be so joyful that, even if they're running you out of town, get to the front of line and act like you're leading the parade." [Laughs with congregation]

So life isn't easy! Don't keep waiting to feel joy and gratitude! There's a lot always to be there.

And the second one is: life is precious; we have no idea how long it's going to last. Every moment is precious. Our spirits might be eternal, but these bodies have a limited shelf life. [Congregation laughs] And so we've got to enjoy it while we get to enjoy it! And that's a vital and important thing.

You know, I've shared with you that my brother is going through pancreatic cancer; he's got five percent change to live, and really has been struggling. And so, I was on my way with a friend to the Japanese Friendship Garden, and he called me. I answered on the phone and said, "Hey; only got a few minutes.

We're going to this place." Because when he and I talk, it's usually like an hour, hour-and-a-half. So I just wanted to set it first. And his voice was joyful and happy and energetic, as always; even when he's not feeling good, he's just got this joyfulness about him. I just love hearing his voice!

So he said to me, *"Hey! I went to see the doctor, and they said that I don't have cancer!"*

And I was like, *"What?!?"* I was just flipping out: woo-hoo-ing, and just all this kind of stuff. And I was just absolutely shocked about it. And, you know, it's pancreatic cancer; like, so the doctor said – and he knows – that it could come back. But I was just so happy for that moment! I felt such joy in him feeling such joy! And in his usual way, he said, *"This was a team effort! We all did this together!"* And, I mean, through his entire journey, every time he talks to me – even when he's in pain and suffering – he's always, *"So, how are you doing? How's your life going?"* And I've got to tell you: it cannot help but fill me with such joy and gratitude!

And the bottom line is: life is always precious, with or without cancer. That every moment – we don't know how long it's going to be! So why not live it with joy? Why not live it with gratitude? Because there is so much for us to be thankful for.

To me, joy and gratitude are similar, because how can you be grateful without being joyful? And how can you be joyful without being grateful? They're sort of interconnected! But it is a way of how to live our lives. Of a choice of how to live our lives.

The mystic Joseph Campbell said this. He said, *"People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonance with our innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive."*

That's what we're all looking for: is to feel fully alive! To feel fully engaged in life every moment.

We are here to live life, and live it more abundantly. We are here to live life more fully, and to be fully alive. And the way to do that is to connect with our innermost being and to live from that place. It is to live with intention. Live with care and attention. And to live with joy and gratitude.

If you want a better life, it's time! It's time to wake up. It's time to be honest. It's time to forgive. It's time to start. It's time to love. It's time to live.

God bless you all!

[Congregation applauds]

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