

THE POWER OF THE WORD

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Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Have you ever taken a shortcut that didn't work? [*Congregant: "Uh huh."*]
[Laughs]

A couple of months ago I was driving back from Prescott, and there was a fire or something ... There was a traffic jam. And, you know, have you ever used Waze? You know, the app on your phone? So I'm using Waze, and Waze sent me off on this dirt road, like. And after about four miles, I'm like ... my faith hit a limit. [*Congregation laughs*] And so I circled back, and I got in line with all the other cars, and I just waited.

Because sometimes in life, we can be too smart for our own good. Right? We can try to outsmart life in such a way that it's not really helpful. Like, sometimes we just need to trust that the process that is in front of us is the process. And just because your mind can think of a different way, it doesn't mean that that's really what you're supposed to be doing. That sometimes you just have to trust that, if you're in traffic, you're supposed to be there.

And I don't know about you, but I think most of the time I spend is that faster is better. Is that anybody else kind of live from that model? That if I can get that faster, I want to? But sometimes it doesn't work!

See, I want to talk today about moving you into the new year -- moving all of us into the new year. And really talk about setting our goals and our intentions for the new year -- what we want to create -- so that we can really be the most powerful version, the most creative version of ourselves. Right?

And sometimes our goals, when we tell ourselves the truth, don't really line up to the purpose that's before us. Like, it sounds like fun, but we notice that our goal really is kind of taking us off course. It's not taking us where we really want to go.

And so tonight -- where I want to begin tonight -- is really looking at you redefining your purpose. Because ideally our goals should line up with where we're going: what our purpose is in life. And if our purpose is, you know, the focus -- the foundation -- of our life, then all of our goals need to line up and support our purpose.

And so I want to begin by looking at what you see as your purpose to life. Because sometimes we make it harder than it needs to be. I think our purpose is very simple. You know, our purpose is really to express God: to be the embodiment of God. To be God's light and love and joy and peace and power in the world. And when we're clear about our purpose, then our goals actually make sense. Right?

And, for me, there's really two levels of goals. The first level of goals is the "having" goals. And those are the goals like relationship or work or health or stuff. You know: new house, new car, new relationship. Those are all the outer things, right? And it's not that we shouldn't have goals that are those outer things. But we need to kind of manage our goals so that we know which of our goals are about outer things, and which of our goals are about being: the inner, the quality of who you are. How you're showing up; who you're being in the world.

Because those two things tend to get sometimes reversed. We tend to think that, if I get this goal -- if I have this thing or I get this job or this relationship; if I get my "stuff" right -- then I'm going to be okay on the inside.

And what we really know to be true is that the inside creates the outside. When we get the inside right, it's kind of amazing sometimes how the outside kind of takes care of itself. The outer things all kind of fall into place.

And so tonight what I want us to begin to look at is: your inside and your outside goals. First, your inner goal for who do you want to be: the person you want to be, and really defining yourself as you move into this new year. You know, how do you want to show up? How do you want to live? How do you want to move through this life experience? Who do you want to be?

And the other level, then, is: and then what, on the outer -- the "stuff" ... What do you want to create in the "stuff"? Because what I love about Unity is that we want to support you in living your best life. Right? That your job -- all of our jobs -- is to embody the goodness of God. So we kind of have to balance, then, the inner goals for the person we want to be and the outer goals for the life that we want to live. And both of those should be in integrity with our life purpose. I mean, both of those have to line up and align with who we are.

So if I keep showing up as a cranky goose ... That's a spiritual term. **[Congregation laughs]** Right? If I keep showing up as a cranky goose, but my purpose is to bring peace into the world, I may have a level of inner conflict there. Right? That it may not be working quite as well as I think it is. Right?

And so over and over again, we really have to go back to the fundamental thing. Like, what's your purpose? Why are you here? What are the qualities of God that you feel like you're called to embody to really be the living expression of God? And then, how do you want to do that? How do you want to show up?

And then, once you're clear about your purpose and how you want to show up, then what would be the most fun way to live your life? Right? So as long as you're "on purpose," then it's just like: *"We live in an infinite Universe; let's go big! Let's make it fun!"*

But first things first! That, once you really get your purpose -- that your purpose is to experience love or joy or peace or power, or just to embody all the goodness of God. And then: how do you want to do that? What would that look like for you? And then: how do you want to live it in the world? Because those three things, over and over again.

So Jesus said this in Matthew 6:33. He said this: *"But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be yours, as well."* So there's kind of this kicker here. Right? That, if you put the outer things first, you've kind of missed the point. But if you put the inner things first -- if you seek the kingdom first, if you seek God's righteousness ... As you seek God's goodness from within, then everything else flows out of it.

And what I love about Unity is that we're not telling you not to have a great life. We're actually supporting you in having a great life! We want you to feel loved and blessed and prosperous and healthy and happy. We want your life to be so good! We do! We want your life to be fabulous!

But we also want us to seek God first. We want to get this in the right order so that your life flows and makes sense. And you feel like you're living in a sense of grace and peace. And there's an ease to our life. Sometimes when we get things out of context, it just gets weird. Again, another spiritual term.

So tonight where we're going to go is: I'm going to offer you, tonight, to stick in your hand in the offering basket. You know, for some of us, this has always been a dream, right? Stick your hand in the offering basket, and there's going to be a little glass word. And it's going to be your word for the year. And this word is about supporting you in your "being-ness," not your "having-ness." Because each one of these words, in one way or another, has a spiritual base to it. It's a spiritual quality. It's a spiritual thing. And we're actually going to practice putting that word, and becoming the embodiment of it.

In John 1:14: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth, having beheld the glory of the only son of the Father."*

So the idea is that we are called to embody all the good that God is. We're called to embody all the spiritual principles. And sometimes, if you're like me, there are certain spiritual qualities that I have a preference for. Right? Like abundance or joy. There are certain spiritual qualities that I have a preference for. And some of the other spiritual qualities, not so much! Like, I've got my first-string spiritual qualities, and then I've got my JV. **[Congregation laughs]** Right? And sometimes I don't always want to play my JV. Right? I just want to go with those qualities that work for me, that make sense, that I enjoy, that I understand. I want to go for them!

But sometimes, when we pick a word that maybe wouldn't be our first word, it's really the word that we need the most in our life. **[Laughs]** And doing this service year after year, I've had people that have actually wanted to throw their word back at me. **[Congregation laughs]** Right? Like, "That's not my word!" They want to put the word back in; they want to stick their hand in and pick again. Because they know their word! Right? They don't want their JV; they want their varsity! And they know their word; they want their word! They don't want anybody else's word!

But the reality is, in my experience, that if you really take it into prayer, that word was really your word! And it may show up in a way that is completely different than you expected. It may be revealed to you a level of good that you could not have imagined.

See, the whole thing about the Word of God is interesting. Because, if the word is made flesh, then you and I are the embodiment of every word that we speak. We are the embodiment of those things that we're putting out into the world.

And in Mark 4, there's this teaching: the Parable of the Growing Seed. And in Verse 26 it says, "*The kingdom of God is as if someone scatters seeds on the ground.*"

Now, I want you to look at your life -- that you are your own little Johnny Appleseed. 'Kay? And through the course of each and every day, you're scattering seeds in the field of infinite possibilities, as Deepak Chopra says. Right? And that we are always in the process of scattering seeds. Right? "*The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seeds on the ground.*" So that what we say -- what comes out of our mouth every day -- are the seeds that are planted all around us.

Now, what's difficult about this is that we're so used to the words that we speak, we don't ... we don't sometimes even hear ourselves. We don't always hear when we're being in our victim place. We don't always hear when we hear vulnerable. We don't always hear when we're being cranky. Because we're so used to our words that we just assume that's the words that everybody's using. Right?

So, "*The kingdom of God is like someone who is scattering seeds on the ground ...*" Kay? So what I want you to really begin to look at and pay attention to is: what are the words that are coming out of your mouth? **[Laughs]** Are you ever flabbergasted by the words that are coming out of your mouth?

Verse 27: "*... and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seeds would sprout and grow; he does not know how.*" 'Kay?

So this is the part where this really gets amazing, right? So we're living our life. All these words are coming out of our mouth. They're all being spread all around us. And then they sprout and grow, and we don't understand how that happens!

Like, we don't always understand how our negativity **[laughs]** sprouts and grows all around us when it doesn't feel negative to us! We just think we're letting our light shine, right? **[Congregation laughs]** But when we really look at it from another point of view, we see that ...

You know, Scripture says that every word that comes out of your mouth ... And it's this idea that our seeds are being scattered all around us. And then they start growing! Right?

And, as we change the words that we're speaking -- as we begin to entertain new words -- we actually change the field that we live in. We change the way our life is! That we actually change the reality that we know ourselves to be in.

So the next line: *"The earth then produces of itself."* **[Laughs]** This is the good news and the bad news. Because you have free will, whatever comes out of your mouth will reproduce. Like, that's 100% true! That whatever you're sending out into the Universe -- whatever you're launching into the field of infinite possibilities -- will come back to you. It has to come back to you! Because the field is productive! And it 100% has to be that way!

Because you have free will, the Universe is constantly producing what you're speaking into existence. And the reason that has to be is so you can see what you're sending into the Universe. Because, if it wasn't -- or if it was just kind of haphazard: if sometimes it worked, and sometimes it wouldn't -- you could say that everything in your life was just a fluke. But if the reality is that every word that you speak has the power to create in your life, we actually need to see that so that we can change. So, *"The earth produces of itself."*

The next line: *"First the stalk; then the head; and then the full grain."* So the way that I understand this line is that, as you begin to change the words that you speak, you begin to notice in subtle ways that your life is moving in new directions. You begin to see the fruit -- you begin to see the evidence -- that your life is moving in a new direction. Because the Universe then begins to give you feedback. It's a self-correcting mechanism. It begins to give you feedback either that you're on the right track -- that this is the way I want to go; I want to move into greater love or joy or peace or abundance, and the world begins to give that back to you -- or it clearly shows you that what you're putting out in the Universe isn't working. Because you begin to see symbols and signs and things that say, *"This is not working for me."* Right? *"This is not working for me!"*

And sometimes, even when you see it's not working for you, we can be a little bull-headed. Does anybody here **[laughs]** want to acknowledge that? We can be a little bull-headed. And even when we see it's not really working, we're convinced we're right. Right? And so we keep on keeping on, even when it's not working, until we actually go through a transformation, and actually begin to put new seeds out. And then we see, *"first the stalk, then the head; then the full grain."* Right?

Over and over again, what I want you to see tonight ... Then the last line, 29, is this: *"But then the grain is ripe, and at once goes the sickle, because the harvest is come."* See, that's what I want for you this year. I want you to plant the highest quality seeds. I want you to plant what you absolutely want from your life. I want you to put so many good seeds out into your life that the blessings are enormous.

So it all begins by you being clear about what's the most important thing to you. "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and then everything is added unto you." That, as you're willing to be a greater and greater expression of God, you become more and more blessed. You actually allow your light to shine. You actually experience the infinite goodness of God.

How many of you could see some areas in your life that you'd be open to some improvement? **[Congregation laughs]** Right? Right? How many of you would like not to have to live the last couple years over again? **[Congregation murmurs]** Right?

So this is where we need to start: at the beginning. And if we start at the beginning: what's your purpose? What's your real purpose? Are you here to bring more love or joy or peace or power? How are you being called to embody God in your life and in your world? And when that's clear -- when you really know how you're being called to be the living expression of God, to see the kingdom first -- then what's the greatest level of joy that you can imagine living that?

Because once you put the first thing first, then your life can be as great as you can imagine. Even greater! But the key is always, first and foremost, that we start with the foundational piece. That we're here for God. That we're here to be the shining stars for all the good that God is. To allow the Spirit of God to move through us in greater and greater and greater ways.

So take a deep breath. What I invite you to do tonight is: we're going to go into a time of prayer and meditation. And I want you just to feel the Spirit of God moving in and through you. And that, tonight, we're going to ask for the word that would support your soul the most to be the greatest version of God. To be the greatest power and truth.

So we just open our minds, our hearts, our souls. And, if you want to play, then we're going to invite you after the service to come forward, to pick your stone, and to really just be with that word. To open a space to really allow that word room to grow within you.

And maybe your first idea of that word may not be what God's trying to say to you. It might have -- as you move through this year -- it might take on a completely different meaning to you. But we're going to be open and receptive to the word that God wants to plant in your soul tonight. Whatever that word is: peace, love, joy, power. Whatever that word is. And we allow that word space. We feed it. We allow it to grow within us, so that -- as we move through this year -- we embody that word in greater and greater and greater ways. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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