

IN THE FLOW

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With Rev. Jimmie Scott

So my topic this morning is "In the Flow." So a little story; a few stories, actually. First one is: first time I read this book titled *In the Flow* by Eric Butterworth, it kind of touched something in me that had not been touched before. And as I was reading it, one particular story that he told was about this spider and a salesman who was just getting fired by his employer. And he's sitting at his desk, and his employer comes up to him and tells him, "*We appreciate your 30-some years' time; it's time for us to move on and to get somebody else in your place. So you're going to have to clean out your desk and get out by quitting time.*"

So the guy's sitting there and he's thinking, "*What in the blankety-blank just happened here?*" [Congregation laughs] And he's sitting there, and he starts ruminating on, "*What am I going to do?*" All of the stuff that kind of runs through your head when something important to you has just been taken away.

And all of a sudden he notices a spider coming across his desk. Out of unconscious behavior, he just swiped it off the desk. And immediately the spider spit out his gossamer thread, and just popped back up on the desk and scurried over behind the desk. And the man sat there, and he started thinking, "*If this spider knows how to survive, I can survive.*" So in every good story, he moves on, and he finds better employment, and he continues his life.

So "in the flow": What does that mean to you when you hear those words? Here's something that Eric Butterworth wrote in that book. He said, "*Life is a flowing experience. And the only certainty is change.*" He states further, "*A person can accept the reality of that change or any other condition of circumstance, but they don't have to accept the permanence of it.*"

In other words, just because something just happened to you that is challenging -- it's unfolding according to the way you didn't want it to or expected it to -- don't panic. Don't get upset or depressed or angry or regretful of any number of human emotions or behaviors. Just stay in that flow.

Now I'm reading this book at a pivotal point in my unfoldment. I'd struggled a lot in my first 38 years on the planet. And as I'm reading it, I'm thinking, "*What does this guy know about being in the flow? I mean, he doesn't have a visual handicap; he's never been denied a job or a loan because of his race or his gender. He's never had to shovel horse manure to make a few bucks.*" So I just laid the book to the side, thought about it for a few more minutes. Then picked it up and I read a little more. He said something to the effect that a person could accept the reality of a situation, but not its permanence. Okay. So this time I'm seething. [Congregation laughs] But I'm seething more at myself. Because I knew at a soul level what he was saying was true.

And I relate this experience this morning because I believe both the simplicity and the depth in this post-modernistic world that we live in is still reminding us of these ancient truths.

Let me share something else with you from my favorite mentor, Carl Jung. This comes from *Modern Man: In Search of a Soul*. Modern man; modern woman in search of a soul. He says and I quote, "*We wish to make our lives simple. We wish to make them certain and smooth. And for that reason, problems are taboo to us. We choose to have certainties and no doubts. We choose to have results and no experiments without seeing that certainties can arise only through doubts and results. Can arise only through experiment.*"

Now here's the killer. He says, "*The artful denial of a problem will not produce conviction. On the contrary, a wider and higher consciousness is called for to give us the certainty and the clarity we need to feel and believe we are in the flow of life.*" Over the past 42 years or so, I've been on this particular

phase of my spiritual journey, where this truth has continued to repeat itself in myriad ways in my life experiences.

In the Gospel of John, the eighth chapter, there was a point where Jesus reiterates this truth in a different way when a group of people were questioning the validity of his spirit's journey, and he said to them, *"He that sent me is with me, because I always do the things that please him."* And put another way: I always follow my inner guidance. And then he says to them, *"If you believe in me, and you follow my word of truth, that same truth shall set you free."*

Follow my word of truth -- stay in the divine flow. It's not an easy thing to do, because life presents us with so many distractions. And distractions have a tendency to kind of grind away at our self-confidence and our motivation. Believe it or not, self-confidence and motivations are gifts from God, and when we can combine those gifts from above with the willingness to take some reasonable risks, the sky becomes the limit for us.

And the Scriptures back that summary up in the Biblical age: *"As above, so below."* As in heaven, so on earth. It's a great metaphor. Because when life is good in our heads -- in our minds -- all of our actions and all of our activities follow in that direction. And we don't get stuck in our lives, and we have confidence in ourselves.

I want to tell you a story about a certain farmer in Kentucky. This farmer was standing outside his barn tending to his horse named Buddy. And then a stranger came running up, yelling that he desperately needed the farmer's help, because the stranger had lost control of his vehicle and ran into a ditch. And so he asked the farmer if the farmer would be willing for his horse to somehow pull the car out of the ditch for him. And he assured the farmer that it was a small car, so his horse shouldn't be hurt or anything by it.

The farmer finally agreed with it, and so he agreed to bring his horse along and, if there was no possibility of his horse getting injured, he'd possibly help the guy get his car out of the ditch. He harnessed the horse, and the three of them went to the scene.

The farmer assessed the situation, took a rope that he thought was strong enough, and he hitched it to his horse, Buddy. And then he said to his horse, *"Pull, Casey! Pull!"* The horse didn't move. And then the farmer said, *"Pull, Bailey! Pull!"* The horse still didn't move. The farmer then yelled, *"Pull, Mamby! Pull!"* And again, the horse didn't move. And the farmer said, *"Pull, Buddy! Pull!"* And the horse slowly began pulling the vehicle out of the ditch.

So after Buddy finally pulled the car out of the ditch and on to the road, the stranger was overwhelmed with gratitude, of course. And he asked the farmer, *"Why have you called your horse by so many different names?"* And the farmer said, *"Well, Buddy is blind. And I had to make him think that he had help pulling the car out of the ditch."* [Congregation laughs and applauds] He said, *"Otherwise, he would not have pulled at all!"*

I know; that one's pretty bad, but ... the point about thinking there's no help available to us is a salient issue. We humans; we think it's us against the world. And we think our prayers float aimlessly up in the clouds somewhere. But the Universe is an orderly place, and it's a tough lesson for us to learn: how to flow with that universal, divine Spirit that indwells us all.

Another statement from the master teacher, Eric Butterworth. I quote. He said, *"The great truth taught by the mystics of all ages is this: Life is lived from within out. And this means that the whole Universe is concentrated at the point right where you are. More than this, you are the Universe expressing as you; you are its living enterprise. It forever stands behind you with its full resources. However, the fullness of this universal support comes through you and not just to you."* Put simply: It comes in the flow.

This is profound stuff. But at the same time, it's pretty simple. Live and let live. Believe, but not to the point of being gullible. Trust, but always verify. And above all, understand that life is a long-haul experience. It's a long-haul experience!

So I began this journey in 1980. I moved to Detroit, Michigan, to begin my study for ministry. And then spent three years there, boots on the ground, doing real-life ministry in some of the toughest areas of the city. And from there I went to Unity Village and finished my final year with the classmates who had already begun their process there. And I graduated in 1984.

The first job opportunity was in a little town of St. Charles, Missouri ... just outside St. Louis. They invited me down; they had about 30 congregants there. And I thought that would be a great experience to begin this journey of ministry. So I went down and I did my "try-out" talk, and that went well. After the service, they were carrying Mary and myself around to different places to visit. Took us out to lunch. Then we went to downtown St. Louis to the Arch and went up over the Arch. Wrote the ride up and came back down. And as we came down, we were looking around at some of the displays.

And Mary and I were off in a corner, looking at a display. And I heard one of the board members say to the other board member who was with him, *"This guy is probably going to be able to do a decent job. We need to hire him."* And the guy whispered back. He said, *"But he's black."* I'm hearing this. Hmmmm.

Long story short: I went back to Unity Village. They didn't hire me. Four months later, the little ministry folded. I got an offer for a second gig in Nashville, Tennessee, as the associate minister with a nine o'clock service. And we started with 12 people. I took that job for an amazing \$12,000 a year. I had two kids about ready to graduate high school, and who wanted to attend college. and I knew that, somehow, I had to stay in the flow. So I took that gig and then sooner than later, that 12 people turned into 150. And before long, it was a couple of hundred and 50. Before long, I became the Senior Minister. Another year we built a million-dollar building. Thirteen years there; 15 years. I don't remember now; it was a long time. One thing happens when you get 80; you don't remember exact stuff! [Congregation laughs and applauds]

But the point is about being in the flow. I'd never gotten out of that flow. And there has been some challenging times in the past 40, 50 years. I watched TV a few days ago and saw all of these kids being massacred in a school setting, and I'm thinking to myself, "I've seen this movie over and over and over again. And when is the consciousness going to change and shift? And when are we all going to get into the flow of love and understanding?" And it comes back: this is a long journey. and we have to be in it for the long haul, whatever that is.

Read an interesting article this week that said despite all that we've been through up until this point in time, that in the very near future, there would be many people living into the mid-90s. Many! Not a few, but many! And it said in order for us to do that, there are six things that we have to consider.

One is to watch the diet. Well ... [Laughs] I've had two doughnuts already this morning! [Congregation laughs]

The second is don't worry. Worry does more damage -- more psychic damage, more spiritual damage -- than any other thing that we can go through in life.

Third one is get enough sleep.

Number four is keep active. Brief story about keeping active. I'm sitting in my bedroom a few days ago; Mary's in the front living room. And I hear her say, *"Shut up!"* [Congregation laughs] So I'm thinking, *"What have I said now?"* [Congregation laughs] So I get up and I walk into the living room; I find she's talking to her smart watch ... [Congregation laughs] who was reminding her to keep active! [Congregation laughs and applauds]

Number five is maintaining a sense of purpose. Maintaining a sense of purpose. I still have a sense of purpose, and I'm hoping to see another 20 years to allow that focus to remain strong. [Congregation whoops and applauds]

And the last one is feeling young. Feeling young. Some days I have to force myself to get up and walk a couple of miles, but I know it's good for me. And it helps me feel young! Easier said than done.

But again, more and more of us are catching the vibe. And we're going to shift the axis of this planet that we live in. that's my hope for the next 20 years of my life. And I hope it's true for you, as well.

God bless; stay in the flow!

[Congregation cheers and applauds]

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