THAT'S NOT THE WAY WE’VE ALWAYS DONE IT
Week #4 of a New 5-Week Series
October 5, 2022
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Alright; so you ready for tonight?

So I want you to think about three things. The first thing I want you to think about is something that you've desperately wanted to have changed in your life. Maybe it's something that you've been disappointed or frustrated or angry about; that you've desperately wanted it to be different. Maybe you're a little mad at God that it still is the way that it is. But I want you to think about something in your life that you have desperately prayed -- and maybe a little cursing about -- wanting it to be different. You've stomped your feet, maybe banged on something, because it just shouldn't be this way. Does everybody have at least one thing that you have wanted to be radically, wonderfully different? Great.

The second thing I want you to think about is something in your life that you hoped would never, ever change. Right? Something that either you loved so much; you loved it exactly the way it is. You hope you can just hang on to it just the way it is forever and ever and ever. And you just wanted never, ever, ever to change.

And then I want you -- the third thing I want you -- to think about is the things that can just kind of flow in and out of your life. That can change -- maybe like the weather -- and you just are at peace no matter how it rolls in, no matter how it rolls out ... you're okay. I think I have a picture that describes these three. Do we have it? Is there a ...? There it is!

Those are the three faces of change.

[Congregation laughs]

Right? I love that! I love the little ... And I don't know if they're little boys, little girls ... right? But I love the little, "Pleeeeeeease change! Pleeeeeeaseease!" Right?

And I want you to think about all the times when maybe you've been down on your hands and knees going, "Pleeeeeease change!" And then the other one is so like so happy that it is the way it is, and never wants it to change, is just giggling with delight that it is so fabulous. And the third: the enlightened state, right? The enlightened state that's just at peace: it comes, it goes. Right? And it's just in pure bliss.

And I want you to see that those are the three faces of change. And over and over again, we tend to live in one of those three places. You know, Group 1: you know, the places where we've maybe been upset or disappointed or angry that we haven't gotten the change we wanted. And maybe that's in your health or your finances, relationship. Maybe it's been with weight loss, or whatever it is. Right? But it's the place where we've been frustrated that it hasn't changed fast enough. That we didn't get exactly the way it was supposed to go. And we're just upset.

And Group 2: it's the place where we just want to hang on to it. Have you ever read a novel, and just never wanted that novel to end? Like, it was so good; it was so ... Like, and on the last page -- not that I've ever done this! -- but you have a little tear, a little cry that it's over, because it was so good that you
just didn't want it to be over. You wanted to know what was going to happen next, and you just couldn't imagine not being in those characters' lives. Right? And maybe when it's your kids or maybe your relationship has hit that sweet spot that you just never want it to change.

And then in Group 3: it's those things where it's like, "Please; let it go. Let it come; let it go." We've risen to a higher spiritual dimension and we're not attached to it.

And I want you to see, in your life, how much of your life is in Group 1; is in Group 2; and is in Group 3. Like, when you look at your life, are there things that you're just upset that haven't changed fast enough? Or haven't changed the right way? Or haven't been exactly the way you wanted them?

Or do you feel like most of your energy kind of is in Group 2. And it's just perfect the way it is. And you just want to hang on to it and dive deeper into it and just enjoy it.

Or is most of your life in that place of just non-attachment? "Huh. If it comes; if it goes, I'm okay." Right?

Because over and over again, what I want you to see tonight is that the way that we embrace change actually matters. It either allows us to know a level of freedom and peace and joy, or it sends us deeply into suffering. And that, for most of us, our greatest way that we are suffering in our lives is either in resistance to change or in wanting change to be different and not coming fast enough.

I've been doing this series on Think Again by Adam Grant. And one of my favorite quotes that he shares in this book is, "If knowledge is power, knowing what you don't know is wisdom." And I love that! I mean, I just literally love that!

Because the title of my talk tonight is "That's Not the Way That We've Always Done It." And in church life, there tends to be a strong desire for nothing to change. Right? "This is the way we've always done it; this is the way the Sanctuary has always looked. This picture is always supposed to be there. There's chairs -- always supposed to be there." And we have a desire for everything to be very stable.

But if I did the same talk for three years in a row, how many of you would still be here? Right? [Congregation laughs] I literally did the same talk over and over and over again, how many of you would find that at all interesting? Or challenging? Or progressive? Would it challenge you in any way? And I would say, "No."

So our humanity wants us to be highly stable, but our spirit's not asking for that. In fact, our spirit trusts God so much that our spirit really does embrace change at a very high level. Because our spirit never goes into fear. Our spirit trusts that God -- the power and the presence of God -- is going to see us through and watch over us and bless us and allow us to embrace change.

But our ego, over and over again, wants to have control. And the thing that we resist the most when your ego wants to have control is change. Over and over again, we have to really allow ourselves to challenge ourselves; to embrace change.

1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "Eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, nor heart of man conceived what good God has prepared for those who love him." Right?

I want to invite you for a moment to pretend you're God. Now, some of us do this on a regular basis; we actually think we are God. [Congregation laughs] But for the rest of us, I just -- for a moment -- I want you to pretend that you're infinite wisdom; infinite love; infinite intelligence, and you know how much good you have for each and every one of us. Right? You're infinite good; you're infinite presence; you're infinite God. Right? You're God!

And I want you to feel how much good that you would want to bestow upon all of creation. You know how much good you are! You know how much good you have for each and every one of us! How much
love; how much joy; how much abundance; how much health and wholeness that you have for all of us. Right?

And how frustrating it would be that we were all given free will. Right? How frustrating it would be to say, "Look, I am infinite goodness, and I want to bestow that upon all of you, but you have free will. And I can't force you to even accept a higher level of good. I can't! Even though I'm God, I gave you free will, and I cannot demand that you change anything."

And then you also know that, because people have free will, that most of us are averse to a certain level of change. But you also know that, unless you're willing to change, life's never going to change! Like, you know this level of good; God knows this level of good. And the only way you can go from this level of good to this level of good is to allow change to happen in your life.

And so how frustrating might it be to be infinite goodness and watch people day after day, year after year, settle for less good than is possible for any of us? And all the great teachers talked about how much God wants to bless us.

Jesus said it this way in Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

And all we have to do is be willing to change! All we have to do is be willing to let go of what we know and embrace that which we don't know; that which we don't yet understand; that which we have not yet experienced. That change is the only way that we can move into higher and higher levels of good. And if our ego refuses to embrace change, we're actually denying the goodness of God.

Now, does your ego -- does your will -- have a right to say to God, "No, thanks!" Yes! God will wait for eternity for you to get over yourself. [Congregation laughs] Right? "No, no; really, I just want a little cup. No, no; don't change it. I just want a little cup. Don't confuse me with possibilities; I just want a little cup." God goes, "Fine." Right? "Fine."

Anton St. Maarten said this: "Blessed are the flexible, for change is inevitable. To fulfill our true destiny as spiritual beings, we must trust in our divine power to adapt."

So what does it mean to embrace change? It means that we are willing to adjust to unfamiliar situations, demands and changing roles. Right? I want to slow that down.

**To adjust to unfamiliar situations, demands and changing roles.** So the situations you've known in the past by definition are limited. They're limited! And the only way that we can move into a higher level of good is to allow the limited to be let go of; to allow it to just flow away as we are willing to embrace unfamiliar situations. And we know that the unfamiliar scares our ego. It sometimes scares our humanity. But it is a requirement to embrace the infinite goodness of God.

Now the next one: **demands.** How many of you can see that the demands in your life are different than they used to be? Can everybody see that? That there are at least a couple of demands in your life that are different than they used to be? And every day, do we wake up and say, "Thank God there are new demands on me that I've ever had before!" [Congregation laughs] No! Most of us, when we have a demand that's put on us, we feel victimized! Like, "Why should I have to change for this? How do they have a right to ask me to do that? I shouldn't have to grow! I shouldn't have to change! They should just suck it up and allow me to be who I am!"

But it's all God; it's all good! Right?

And the last one: **changing roles.** [Laughs] How many of you know that you are being asked to play a different role in your life than you ever have before? Anybody? And over and over again, what I want
you to see is we have to embrace these unfamiliar situations; unfamiliar demands; changing role. And to see change as an opportunity and being receptive to new ideas.

And I've got to tell you, sometimes I hate it. Can I get an, "Amen"? [Congregation: "Amen!"] Sometimes I hate it! Sometimes I just want to keep doing what I've always done. Just keep living the way I've always lived. And Spirit just keeps whispering in my ear, "That was nice." Right? "But it's not the full total of all the good that I have for you, Richard. I have greater good for you, and you have to be willing to change if you're going to open the door to greater good than you've ever known before."

And you can be pig-headed. Because God loves it when I'm pig-headed; he thinks it's cute! [Congregation laughs] Right? And you can just keep doing what you've always done. Or you can grow. Or you can evolve. Or you can change. And you can open a door to new possibilities and live a bigger life than you've ever lived before. And allow God to do something special that is greater than you can even imagine.

The whole definition of a miracle is this idea that you have envisioned this, and God gives you this. And when you envision this, and God gives you this, it looks like a miracle! It looks: "How did that happen? There was only this possibility in my life; how did this come about?" Because over and over again, as we embrace changes, we open the door to all that God is. Our life is transformed right before our eyes.

So let's look at some problematic behavior. [Laughs] Not that we want to, but let's look anyway. Right?

Some of the behaviors that don't work -- that get in the way of us embracing change -- is being unable to move beyond negative reaction to uncertainty. So when uncertainty shows up in our life, do we get the opportunity to respond to it in any way we choose? We do! We can say, "Oh, great! This is another growth opportunity." [Congregation laughs] Right? Or we can say, "Ohhhhh. God, come on! Cut me some slack!" Alright? We can complain instead of doing something about it. We can consistently block change and fail to build on new ideas for change and growth and improvement. We can generate idea after idea after idea, but not follow through on any of them.

So you ready for your homework? I want you to look at one area in your life where you know life is asking for you to change. And one of the ways you know this area in your life is that you already feel stuck there. You know the place in your life where you feel "stuck"? And if you don't have one, I'm not suggesting that you do. Right?

But if you have a place in your life where you feel stuck -- a situation; a relationship; your finances; your health; work ... If you have a situation where you feel stuck, I'd like to suggest that it is a change opportunity. That the places where you feel stuck, I would like to suggest tonight is because you haven't been willing to change so that situation could evolve.

That every time we feel stuck, I believe that there was guidance a week ago; a month ago; six months ago; a year ago preparing us for the change we were being asked to make. And we just pretended that we didn't see it. And so we kept marching in the direction that we were going. We kept going the way we were going, and then we get to the dead end -- we get to the stuck place. Then we get angry and mad that it's not working.

And what I want you to see is that your "stuckness" isn't a God thing. It's an ego thing. That the place where you have felt the most stuck I believe that six months before that, God was guiding you and directing you about a change coming in your life, and you just didn't want to ... You wanted to pretend that you weren't hearing it.

And then we get to these dead ends and feel like God has abandoned us. Like, "What's the deal, God? Why am I stuck here? What's going on?" Right?
And it's only when we're willing to listen to say, "Did I miss something? Was there guidance that I wasn't paying attention to? Was there knowledge that I just didn't want to see? Or direction that I just didn't want to hear?"

And then over and over again, in our world today, we've reached some stuck places. Not only individually have we reached it, but collectively we've reached some stuck places. And we want to be mad at God that we're stuck! Like, "What's going on? Why are we stuck?" Well, we're stuck because a year ago, or five years ago, or 10 years ago, or 30 years ago, we were guided to make a change that we just never made. And then we get mad at God that we're in this predicament or this situation.

So tonight I want you to pick one area where you feel an invitation to do it differently. To live it differently. And to allow yourself to be transformed right there.

Now, do you have to know how God wants you to transform? No! You just have to listen! You just have to pay attention! You just have to allow the Spirit to lift you and move you and guide you and direct you! Your job is just to pay attention. And if God guides you, just don't fight it! If God's lifting you higher, don't resist it! Allow yourself to go with the process and trust that the activity of God that is right where you are knows exactly how to "unstuck" you.

And don't email me ... I know it's not really a word. [Congregation laughs] But it's just the best word for that situation. Right? So I'm going to say it again, and those of you that are just put your fingers in your ears if you need to.

So God is going to "unstuck" you. True! It's true! All you have to do is to be willing to embrace the change you didn't want to see yesterday. That's it! All you have to do is embrace the change that you didn't want to see yesterday or the day before or the day before or the day before.

Because living a spiritual life requires that we trust the process. That we don't deny it. That we don't resist it. That we don't pretend that we can just do it our own way. There is a need to cooperate with the Divine. To dance with the Infinite. And every day, we have a choice whether we dance or not.

Tonight: one area in your life where you have felt stuck. Where you would be willing to listen to God again and say, "What do I do from here? Right here: what do I do? I know I got myself into this; tell me how to get myself out of it."

Will you pray with me?

I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That today we are willing to change. We are willing to give God everything, to hold nothing back. To give God our hopes; our dreams; our thoughts; our fears. All that we are; all that we hope to be. To give it all to God. To become fluid; to become active; to be lifted higher than we've ever been before. Today, God, I give you all that I am; all that I hope to be, and I ask for your will -- your infinite good -- to fill my life in ways that are too great to count, that I may know that I am your beloved. That I may see your blessings all around me. And that I may be lifted higher than I've ever been before. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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