

DREAM BIGGER

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Rev. Richard Rogers

Alright. So last Wednesday I did this talk. [Congregation laughs] It's gotten a lot of play. Thank you for those of you who emailed me. I came to church Sunday morning; somebody knew I was doing the service on Sunday morning. And there was a bit of a buzz about that talk. In fact, there were people listening to that talk before the service started. I'm like, "That sounds like me." And she said, "Yeah; I'm listening to your Wednesday talk. I heard it was great." [Congregation laughs]

So if you didn't hear my Wednesday talk and how I lost my stuff, you can watch it online. [Congregation laughs] But it really kind of set up what we're going to do today.

Because why would anybody want to start again or to start over? Because I really want you to entertain that idea? What would possess someone to change the direction of their life and move into a significantly new direction?

Like, I'd like to suggest tonight that it would have to be a dream or a desire so big, so important that you'd be willing to completely restart your life and to move in a new direction. And that's really in total alignment with your soul's purpose.

Because sometimes, you know ... because my talk is entitled, "Dream Bigger," and sometimes when we talk about dreaming bigger, our ego steps in and goes, "*Grrrreat!*" Right? "*Bigger house; bigger car; bigger stuff! Let's go! Let's rodeo!*" And yet tonight, I want to take it deeper, not necessarily bigger.

Because I believe that there is a bigger dream for many of us than we're currently living. But it's not just the "stuff." It really is about fulfilling your divine purpose: the reason you've come. And I believe that, once you fulfill your divine purpose -- once you're on track -- all the other stuff comes.

Jesus said, "*Seek ye first the kingdom and its righteousness, then all things will be added to you.*" That once we get the most important thing right, then everything else is just easier. But when we go after all the stuff, and we're not really on purpose with our life, I think everything gets a little twisted.

And then we come back to ourselves and go, "*What the heck?*" That's a spiritual term. [Congregation laughs] "*What the heck was I doing?*" And then you kind of get yourself right.

So, as we were picking words this year, my word was FULFILLMENT. Thank you! I'll take that word anytime, right? Because I want to be fulfilled! I want to fulfill my purpose; I want to fulfill the reason I've come; I want to fulfill my life. I want to do that!

And so, over and over again, what I want us to really look at today is making sure that we're on track with our life. Because sometimes we go the wrong direction! Can you think of a time or a phase in your life where you were literally going the wrong direction? And then we have to kind of come to ourselves, as it talks about in the Prodigal Son, who "*comes back to himself*" and goes home. And goes back to his right relationship with God. And everything begins to move in his favor once he's back on purpose.

And sometimes it's hard to tell ourselves that we're off track. Anybody have a fully defined ego like I do? [Congregation laughs] And sometimes our ego just doesn't want to admit that we're off base. "*No; no! This is it. This is the way it's supposed to be. I'm not changing anything. It's too much work. I'm just going to ride this out to the end.*"

But over and over again, Spirit says, "*Yeah, but just make two steps. Just move two degrees and see what happens.*"

So the question I have for you tonight is: Are you fulfilling your divine purpose? Are you fulfilling the very reason that your soul came into three-dimensional form? Because you don't have to! Like, you could just kind of blow 70 years and come back and try it again. Or you could actually clear with yourself on the very reason you've come, and get about it.

DEFINE YOUR CALLING

So one of the elements of flourishing and fulfilling your life sense of purpose is finding that purpose that you're here to do ... that brings passion and lights you up and ultimately gives your life meaning and authentic happiness. And most of us go about activities without even thinking about: Is this really fulfilling the reason I've come? Is this really the fulfillment of my soul? Is this really moving me in the highest and the best direction? Or is it just kind of entertainment?

Because there's a part of us that just wants to be entertained. That it doesn't really matter if it's the right direction ... Are there lights? You know, are there twinkly things that can distract us? And yet, what if we actually slow down for a minute and begin this year by asking ourselves the question: Am I fulfilling my divine purpose?

See, I believe at some level we all have a calling. When I was in high school, I knew I had a calling. I knew I had a calling to go into ministry. And I thought it was awful. Like, you had to work every weekend; I mean, what a crummy job. Right? [Congregation laughs] Every weekend and all these people and, "*Oy vey!*" Right? I thought it sounded awful!

And then I went into retail. [Congregation laughs] Then I learned what awful was, and ministry looked better, right? Because at least you got a half day off on Sunday, right? So ministry looked better after. And so it was like, "*Oh, let's go do that!*" Right?

But I believe that we all have a calling. We all have this inner impulse -- this call to action -- that is unique to our soul; that fulfills our divine purpose. And when we're clear about this purpose -- or this calling -- it really defines who we're supposed to be; who we can be; how we can live our life; how we want to create and be and express. And when we explore the roads that lead to our goals, it brings forth a level of joy.

And what's interesting about when we get clear about our purpose, it also brings a certain level of problems that we don't really talk about. But every purpose has those things that we have to overcome. And we just want to focus on all the fun stuff, but really it's overcoming those challenges -- those problems; those obstacles -- that really perfect our soul.

You know, it's always fun when a new minister comes into my experience, where they want me to help coach them or mentor them. And a new minister comes in, and they're convinced that their job is to do Sunday morning and teach a few questions. Yes; that's part of your job, but your real job is to deal with all the problems of ministry. "*Oh, no!*" [Congregation laughs] Like, they can't imagine that they're really actually here to deal with the problems of ministry.

Because how many of you -- when you're doing and fulfilling your divine purpose -- were taught that you're not supposed to have any problems; any obstacles; any challenge. It's just all supposed to be ease and grace, right? It's supposed to be this easy thing. And it's just not! Right?

Life has challenges!

The Buddha said the number one principle was suffering. [Throws hands in the air] Wooooo! I mean, how exciting is that?!? [Congregation laughs] Right? But we don't want to talk about that! We just want to talk about how great it looks when the room is full and everybody's at your class!

But the way that we get there is to deal with the "stuff." And no matter what purpose you have -- no matter what your highest calling is -- those challenges, those problems are going to actually perfect your soul. You're going to actually heal at the greatest level as you deal with all the things that you're being called to deal with. And it's exactly what you're supposed to be doing. That is your purpose! In fulfilling that calling, those challenges, those opportunities, those things are actually for your highest good. Because those are the things that your soul needs to overcome to know its greatness!

That's why I love [laughs] 1 James, right? *"Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete and lacking in nothing."*

And we like to focus on the fact that we are perfect and complete and lacking in nothing. But the way that we get to perfect and complete and lacking in nothing is [laughs]: *"Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials!"*

"Oh ... Can we just kind of circumvent that and just get to the good stuff at the end?" But the reality is that your divine purpose is going to bring stuff up. And as you walk through those obstacles, those challenges, those problems, it is impacting you in such a way that you're discovering the full nature of your soul. The full power of God within you.

So your purpose -- your intention and the purpose of having goals -- is it brings a level of challenge to your soul that your soul wants. It needs. Those challenges are actually for your highest and the best good, and most of us hate them! We go kicking and screaming through life thinking, *"This could not possibly be my divine experience! Like, I thought it was just all going to be little rainbows and unicorns."* Right? But sometimes it's hard!

And it's okay! It's okay! You're not doing it wrong! And I wish more people would have told me that, even when it was hard, I wasn't doing it wrong. That every time you hit a hard spot, God is completely there. God will be with you as you overcome those hurdles. And it's supposed to be hard! Because your soul is bigger than that.

The magnificence of your soul needs challenges for you to realize how magnificent you really are. You didn't come for little baby problems. You're a full-grown spiritual being! You came for challenges that would try you; that may even test you; that challenge you. And in so doing, you know the fullness of God that is within you. That we actually need all that hard stuff.

How many of you would be willing to trade all your hard stuff for almost anybody else's hard stuff? [Congregation laughs] Right? Because the idea is: *"I don't really want my hard stuff, but I've seen other people's hard stuff, and my hard stuff doesn't look so bad."* Right? *"I'd rather walk in my hard stuff for a month or a year than really swap with anybody else's hard stuff, because at least I know my hard stuff."*

And that's what I really want to challenge you. So the first thing I want you to do: I want you to define your divine calling. And realize that your divine calling is going to bring things up, and every one of those things is for your highest good.

TO THY OWN SELF BE TRUE

Two: I want you to be willing "to thy own self be true." You know, it's Shakespeare; it's Hamlet. It's the first Act, Scene 3, when the character says, *"This above all: to thin own self be true. And it must follow, as night the day. Thou canst not then be false to any man."*

And the whole idea is that, as you come to know your calling, you actually come to know yourself in a deep, fundamental way. It's what creates maturity. Like, if you think that you're something that you're not, life will continue to "bump" you until you come to the fullness of who you are and you can stand in the glory of God that you were created to express.

Life is not here to make you smaller. Like, if the events in your life are making you smaller, we're not quite doing it right. But the events in our life are here so that we can stand and truly know who we are. We can stand in the glory of God.

And so we come into this life experience with a divine purpose. And I believe that we even pick the people we surround ourselves with. Some of them are there to assist us. Some of them are here to [hits his forehead with the palm of his hand] ... I don't know what they're here for, but they're here for a reason! [Congregation laughs] Right? And all these people that are in our field. And in this divine activity; we come to know ourselves.

Paul said, *"Now I look in the mirror dimly, but one day I will see face-to-face."* That one day we will look in the mirror and we will see the face of God looking back at us.

Like, in everything -- everything! -- is here so that we "to thy own self be true." That we know who we are and we are about that walk.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR VALUES

The third step; or the third understanding; the third aspect is understanding your values. And really making sure that your values are really your values.

In the story I shared about the transformation of my own life, one of the things I had to do was relook at my values again. And I realized that some of my values weren't very productive. They weren't actually even mine!

One of my values in my old life was that everyone should like me. That's a weird value! Right? It gets a lot of people around, but it doesn't ever allow you to really put yourself as the priority of your own life.

And that, when you really understand what the values are that are driving your life, everything gets easier. But that's a lot of work! Because we then have to ask ourselves the question: What do I truly value? And do I really value it? Am I putting it into practice on a regular basis in my life? Is it really one of those things that I stand on? Or is it one of those nice things that I should value, but I don't?

You know, sometimes I work with corporations. And when I ask them what their values are and they give me this really pretty list of all the things they value. And I say, *"But how do you live this one?"* And they look at me with a blank stare. Because it's like it wasn't really integrated into their experience; it just looked nice on the wall where they had all their cute values. Right? Our values aren't supposed to just be on the wall. Like, the people that are close to us should be able to tell what our values are just by the way we live our life.

As I went through my situation, I came out the other side and decided there were three things ... And I think I talked about those last week. There were three things that I really wanted to base the rest of my life on. I wanted to be happy; I wanted to be free; and I wanted to be wildly in love. And that was it. That was the sum total of everything that was important to me: I wanted to be happy; I wanted to be free; and I wanted to be wildly in love.

And it became the cornerstone. It became the thing that I went back to over and over again.

"Richard, are you happy?" "Mmmm."

"Richard, are you free?" "Ehhh."

"Are you wildly in love?" "Not yet ... " But I got there. I got there!

And I want to challenge you tonight to really articulate the values that are the most important to you. What are those things that are the guiding principles: the thing that you're going to hang on to through rain and shine? What are the values that really are going to call you into being the next greatest version of yourself?

WHERE IS CHANGE NEEDED?

And then the fourth thing. And this maybe is the one that we want to do the least! And the fourth one is: Where do I need to change? Because our ego hates this one! Right? But when we know that we're here for something bigger than ourselves -- that we're here to really express the glory of God -- that question has to be on the table pretty much all the time. Where do I need to change? Where am I not really living my values? Where am I not being the man I want to be?

And we have to ask ourselves that question over and over again and really see what comes glaringly into focus. Where that's not really in integrity with who you are. Or that doesn't really work for you anymore. It might have worked for you 20 years ago, but it doesn't work for you anymore.

And then over and over again, we have to be willing to be in that place of observing ourselves, not with shame or with punishment, but just honestly. Just honestly looking to say: Is my behavior -- are my choices -- lining up with the person I say I want to be? With the person that I believe God is calling me to be? Is that lining up? Am I in integrity with myself?

WHAT'S MY LEGACY?

And the fifth one: What's my legacy? Imagine the kind of legacy that you're going to leave behind. Erik Erikson, the expert on psychological development, said that the final stage is "Ego Integrity vs. Despair." [Laughs] And I love that! Right? I mean, I don't really love it when I'm in despair, but I love that whole concept, right? That we're going to either be in integrity with ourselves or it's going to cause a level of despair.

And I don't want to be a cranky old guy. Old-er guy. [Congregation laughs] Right? Because we're all going to get older, right? If we're lucky enough, we're going to get older. And I don't want to be a cranky older guy! And one of the signs of a cranky older guy is that we haven't really integrated very highly who we really are. Or we don't really like who we really are.

And I want to be in integrity within myself so that I can go through life -- especially the second half of life or whatever phase I'm in now -- and not be in despair with having to look at who I am. That the legacy I want to live is: I want to be a happy guy! Like, it doesn't sound like a lot to say you're a happy guy, but I want to be that for my kids and my grandkids. I want to be a happy guy that they actually want to be around. I don't want to be a cranky old man. I think the world's got enough of us! [Congregation laughs] Can I et an "Amen?" [Congregation: "Amen!"] Right? There's enough cranky old guys!

I want to be happy with who I am. I want to be able to see my shortcomings and my mistakes and the places where I've tripped but know that I'm more than that. That I'm fulfilling the reason that I came.

And I challenge you tonight. This is your homework: to say you've got a period of time. And none of us know how long that is! Some of us think we have forever, and we just don't. Life on this planet is a "now-you-see-it-now-you-don't" proposition. So we have a phase of time and nobody knows how long it is.

And you get to decide with this phase of time how you're going to show up; and who you're going to be; and the values you're going to live; and if you are going to fulfill the calling that God has placed in your heart.

And if we do that, I believe on our very last day we can have a smile on our face. That we fulfilled our mission. Not perfectly, but to the best of our ability.

See, I have a dream that every one of us can be happy with who we are. That we can rejoice and give thanks for all the things that we have overcome in this life. And that we are no longer defined by our limitations, but by our greatness. But that's a step that we actually have to accept. Because our ego, alone, doesn't always facilitate that for us.

There is a higher calling that I believe that each and every one of us is called to fulfill.

Will you pray with me?

And I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that's right here, right now. And I want you to see yourself. And I don't want you to just see the problems or the mistakes or the shortcomings. I want you to see all of you. I want you to see the light. I want you to see your greatness. I want you to see your challenges. I want you to see your shortcomings. I want you to see it all! And see if you can just add love to who you are. If you can just love yourself just the way you are.

And through the spirit of love and joy, if you could just ask yourself the question: Am I fulfilling the purpose for which my soul came into life? Am I being the best version of me? And just listen. Just look. And with deep love, with deep acceptance, embrace all of who you are.

So tonight, we have a dream: a dream that allows us to be who we are called to be. A dream that is more than all the little details. It's a dream for our soul: that we can fulfill the very purpose for which we have come. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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