

WHAT DOES GOD WANT?

Sunday, June 25, 2023

Rev. Richard Rogers

Alright. So every week when I teach, I believe that we need to start with a question. Because in our spiritual life, every time we ask ourselves a good question, it takes us to deeper ground. And that many times, we stay unconscious until somebody asks us a question that really challenges us to go deeper into ourselves and deeper into what we believe and think and want.

So I have two questions for you today. And I think they're two very important questions ... maybe the most important questions. And the first one is: What do you think God wants from you? Like, you were given all this; what do you think God wants from you? And the second question is: What do you want from God?

Have you ever been in a relationship with someone that there were unspoken expectations? [Congregation laughs] Either on your side or on their side, right? They're unspoken! And sometimes in unspoken expectations, there are disappointments; there's frustrations; sometimes there's anger; there's upset. Because we haven't really been straight up with what we expect from the relationship or what we want or what we need.

And so sometimes we think people should be psychic enough -- right? -- just to guess what we want. How'd that work for you? [Congregation laughs] Right? It doesn't always work so well, right? That we actually had to state our expectations, and then people get to choose whether they're going to respond to those expectations or not. But our little heart gets hurt when we think, "*They don't even know what I want.*" [Congregation laughs] Right? "*They don't even know me!*"

Well, have you told them who you are? "*Well, no; they should be intuitive enough to have already figured that out.*" Right? How'd that work? It doesn't work well!

I want you to get so clear! I want all your expectations that you have for God; I want them all on the table so that you can see them and you can actually use them.

And so I've got some ideas for you. So how about health? How many of you have an expectation for you and your family that you're going to be healthy? How about prosperous? Successful? Loving relationship? How many have an expectation that you're going to be radically good looking? [Congregation laughs] How about the Cardinals win more than 12 games this season?

See, one of mine is: I don't think it's too much to ask for me to win the Powerball at least once in my lifetime, right? Like, that's an expectation, right? And I'm willing to own it. Because clarity is power! It just is! When you're clear about what's in your heart -- what you desire -- everything in your life gets easier. When we're vague; when we're unconscious; when we're unaware, life gets weird. And we get disappointed and frustrated that our needs aren't being met.

See, I believe that we're having a relationship with God. And I believe in this relationship with God that there is power and clarity when you're truly clear about what you want and are open and receptive to what God wants from you. Because in any relationship, it's a two-way street.

So what do you really expect from God? What do you expect from life? And what do you believe God expects from you?

Now, how many of you in your prayer life have ever tried to make a deal with God? [Congregation laughs] Like, "*I will go to church forever if I get this job ... or if this happens.*" And then if it doesn't happen -- or even if it does happen! -- we get to church maybe three times. [Congregation laughs] Or we say, "*Oh, I'm going to be the best person ever*" or, "*I'm going to be nice even to my Uncle Harry.*" Right?

And so we make these deals, and they don't always work! Because we don't always stay committed to them. We don't always look at them as really part of our spiritual life.

Charles and Myrtle Fillmore were the co-founders of Unity. And on December 7 of 1892, as a couple, they wrote down their expectations. And they were very clear about them. They were very clear about what they expected from God and very clear about what they were willing to give to God in return. And I think that clarity has power! And I would like us to really look at in our own life: Are you clear about what your expectations are? And are you open to God's expectations for you?

So here's what they wrote:

"We, Charles Fillmore and Myrtle Fillmore, husband and wife, hereby dedicate ourselves, our time, our money, all we have and all we expect to have, to the Spirit of Truth, and through it, to the Society of Silent Unity."

Right? So here's what they do, right? They dedicate all their time; their money; all that they have; all they expect to have to God. They give it up. They push it on God's side of the table. So tithing is giving a tenth. When you give everything, what is that? A hundred percent! Right? They pushed everything to the other side of the table. And they said: And in return for this:

"It being understood and agreed that the said Spirit of Truth shall render unto us an equivalent for this dedication, in peace of mind, health of body, wisdom, understanding, love, life and an abundant supply of all things necessary to meet every want without our making any of these things the object of our existence.

In the presence of the Conscious Mind of Christ Jesus, this 7th day of December A.D. 1892."

I want you to see the power in this! When you're clear about what you're giving and what you're open to receive, or what you expect in return, I want you to see how powerful that is! That many of us are afraid of what God's going to ask of us. But when we get really clear what we're about, and what we expect to receive in return, I want you to see how powerful that statement is, and how transformative it is!

So what do you think God expects from you? What do you think that the Infinite is asking of you? I think that, if we look at two spiritual principles, they give us a clue what God expects from us.

And the first one is ... **The first spiritual principle is that God has given us free will.** Like, absolute, unconditional free will. We can do and be and have anything.

Will you say with me, *"I am completely free."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I am completely free."*

Now, most people do not believe that they have complete free will. Most people believe that they have semi-free will, and they believe there's a whole lot of things that they can't do. And I want you to hear me say today that I believe that you have 100% complete free will. You have complete free will. And the moment you embrace that idsssea -- that you have complete free will; that you can go and be and do and have anything -- your life gets more fun. But if you believe there's a whole bunch of things that you can't do, we kind of miss the whole point of free will.

How many of you were raised in a religion that said if you exercise free will, you will definitely be punished? [Congregation murmurs] Right? How many of us were scared that if we exercised free will, we're going to know eternal damnation? Like, that's not free will! If you get punished for using free will, it's not free will! It's semi-free will. And I want us to really open our minds and our hearts to this idea that we have complete free will.

"Well, Richard, nobody really believes we have complete free will. Most people believe we have semi-free will! As long as it's appropriate behavior, you can do anything you want!"

But what if, from the moment you were created, you have absolute, complete free will? I want you just to imagine that for a moment: That you have complete free will.

Now, the second principle. **The second spiritual principle is: As you give, so shall you receive.** Is that true? Right? The whole universe is based on this idea that as you give, so shall you receive. So whatever you're putting out is coming back to you.

And those two spiritual principles work together all the time. So whatever I give to the world, it comes back to me. Whatever I put out comes back to me! But I have 100% free will what to put out. And God doesn't punish me for using it; I just get the effect -- I get the blessing -- of what I'm putting out, good or evil. But I have complete free will.

In science, we call this a "feedback loop." And a feedback loop in biology says that an organism, when they put out simple systems that amplify their impact, we call that positive feedback. When it inhibits the system, it's called negative feedback. That feedback loops are important, because they allow a living organism to maintain hemostasis and learn to grow.

And I want you to see that **the first thing that God asks of us is to learn and grow.** The first expectation that life has for us is that we will all learn and grow. So when you're five years old, what's your job? Learn and grow! When you're 35 years old, what is your job? Learn and grow! When you're 85 years old, what is your job? Learn and grow! So is there ever a point where you get beyond learning and growing? No!

"I am here to learn."

Together: [with congregation] *"I am here to learn."*

"I am here to grow."

Together: [with congregation] *"I am here to grow."*

Now, the way that we do that is that we get feedback: What behaviors are giving us the response that we want? And is that response meaningful, beneficial, useful in our life? If it's not the response that we want, we change what we're putting out. But we have free will. We have a God-given right to be as miserable as we need to be! [Congregation laughs] We have complete free will.

Now, do we like it when the people around us exercise their free will? No! We want them to check with us before they use their free will [congregation laughs] so that we can help them make better decisions. [Congregation laughs] True? How many of you have a family member that you know would make better decisions if you were in charge of their life? [Congregation laughs] We have complete free will! Our family members have complete free will. Our spouse -- let's say this together:

"My spouse has complete free will."

Together: [with congregation] *"My spouse has complete free will."*

It drives us nuts! Right? We don't people to have free will! Right? We want them to do life the way we want them to do life! But it's in the process of exercising free will that we learn and grow.

So the first thing that God wants for each and every one of us ... No matter where we are on our journey; no matter how old we are; no matter what's going on in our life, the first thing that God expects is that whatever we are learning -- whatever we're going through -- that we're learning and growing from it.

How many of you have ever made a choice that you know wasn't working, and you made that choice more than once? Right? Now, was the problem you didn't see the consequence? Like, was the problem that you didn't get the right amount of feedback? Like, what I want us to see is that sometimes we get stuck in a loop that doesn't work, and we actually stop learning and growing. And the most important thing, over and over again, is to learn and grow. That's the first expectation.

Now, **the second expectation that I believe God has for all of us is that we will actually acknowledge God in our daily life.** That we will acknowledge God over and over again as the Source of our good. I'm going to read from Deuteronomy 8:

"For the Lord, your God, is bringing you into a good land -- a land with brooks, streams and deep springs gushing out into the valley and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will not lack anything; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

When you've eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord, your God, for he has given you a good land. Be careful that you do and remember all that I've spoken to you today: his laws and his decrees that I have given to you. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you've built fine houses and settled down, when your herds and flocks have grown, and your silver and gold have increased, and they've all multiplied, then your heart will become proud, and you will forget the Lord, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

So I love that quote! Because the quote says that, in every good thing, our job is to remember God as our Source. That the second expectation from God is that we will flourish. That we will learn from what we've gone through and, because we're learning on what we're going through, we are actually going to flourish. And when we flourish, we remember God.

Now, you wouldn't think that would be hard. Right? But sometimes when we're really flourishing, we like to take how much of the credit? All of it! We want all the credit! *"Yes, I'm blessed! And look at how great I am! Aren't I spectacular? Look at how great my life is!"* And the point is that, when we flourish, we're supposed to remember God.

Now, does God have an ego? Does God need you to acknowledge God because God's ego is invested in your success? No! So why do we have to acknowledge God? We have to acknowledge God for us! We need to remember God to remind ourselves that our spiritual life is causing the transformation in our life. That our spiritual relationship with God is the source of our success. When we forget that -- and think that our success comes from our ego -- we get upside down.

So the first thing that we are required to do is learn and grow. The second thing that we're required to do is to flourish and acknowledge God in all of our blessings as the Source of our good.

And the third thing that I believe that we are required to do is to acknowledge our oneness with God: to reunite with the Divine. In John 10:30 Jesus said:

"I and the Father are one."

See, for most of us, we are experiencing life as, *"This is me and God's there."* Even when we believe that God's within us, we don't believe that God is all of us. We believe that God's a portion of us. And part of our journey is learning to come home. And coming home means that we realize that we were created in the image and likeness of God, and that we are actually one with God.

And that's the way that Jesus taught it! Jesus taught the story of the Prodigal Son. And it was a story of coming home. He told the story of a rich, young man who went to his father and asked for his inheritance. And his dad gave him half of everything and he sent him out into the world. And when he

was out in the world, he participated in what the Scripture calls "riotous living." How many of you know what riotous living is all about? [Congregation laughs] It's fun! Right? And he had a great time!

And then what happened? The money ran out. And when the money runs out, riotous living is over. And the only job that he could find was feeding the hogs. And for a good Jewish boy, if your job is to feed the hogs, you have hit bottom. And there's a line in there that says he would have gladly eaten the food of the hogs if they would have allowed it.

Right? So even that was withheld from him. And then it said:

"One day he came to himself and remember that, in his father's house, even the servants were better taken care of than him."

So he came to himself and he went home. Scripture says when he was a far distance off, his father sees him, comes out of the house, wraps him in his arms, offers him the finest robe, kills the fatted calf, puts rings on his fingers, and celebrates his return home.

I want you to hear that that's your spiritual journey. It's my spiritual journey. When we have felt separate or abandoned or away from God, when we come back into oneness with God, it is a celebration of all life! That over and over again, God wants you to come home! God wants you to know that you are one; that there is not this idea, *"This is me and this is God."* You were created in the image and likeness of God. You are one with God.

And our job -- our expectation -- is to come out and experience life and all that life is. But it's also to be reunited with the Divine so that we again know our oneness with God. That we were not created to be separate from our Creator. We were created to know life, but then to come home.

See, there's three things that I want you to hear me say today that I absolutely believe are expectations that God has for us. The first one is that, wherever you are, that you're learning and you're growing. That's an expectation! That whatever you're going through right now, that you are learning from it; you are growing from it; and you are becoming a greater spiritual being for having gone through what you're going through. That we are not going through life and doing it unconsciously with no blessing; with no benefit. We're not living that way; we're not living unaware. We're becoming more and more conscious; more and more aware. We are learning and growing in every moment.

Two: That in every experience of life, as we flourish we acknowledge God. And it deepens and broadens our spiritual life. That over and over again, we come back to the realization that every good thing that we have -- every good thing that we are -- comes from God.

And the third: That we're not done until we get all the way home. Until we come all the way into our oneness with God and know the fullness of God. Know the fullness of who we are and who we were created to be.

These are interesting times that we live in. And these are times that require us to understand our spiritual nature in a deeper way. That we are not really here for superficial reasons. We are here for a profound spiritual experience. And that experience happens as we learn and grow in everything. As we flourish and acknowledge God as our Source. And as we experience oneness with God at greater and greater levels.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That today, we are willing to come home. We are willing to know our oneness with God in every situation. We are willing to learn and grow and allow every experience to take us deeper into God. And as we flourish, as our life becomes

better and better, we acknowledge God as our Source. That there is only one presence and one power at work in the universe and in our life: God the good.

Today we acknowledge that one presence, that one power. We acknowledge that we are one with the One. That we are one with all that God is. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks for all the blessings of life, and that we were created in God's image. And so it is. Amen.

God bless you all! Have a great week; thanks for being here!

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