

THE 'I AM'

Week #16 of an ongoing series on "Unity's Foundational Teachings"

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Rev. Richard Rogers

Okay, so are you ready? Okay, so if someone asks you who you are, how do you respond? Do you start with your name? *"I'm John Smith,"* or *"I'm Suzy Sunshine."* Right?

Or maybe you give them your religion, like *"I'm Jewish."* *"I'm Catholic."* *"I'm Buddhist."* *"I'm Christian."*

Maybe you lead with your occupation: *"I'm a teacher."* *"I'm a banker."* *"I'm an attorney."* *"I'm retired."* *"I'm unemployed."*

Or maybe your marital status: *"I'm married."* *"I'm single."* *"Widowed."*

Or maybe you give them your gender or your sexual orientation. *"I'm a man."* *"I'm a woman."* *"I'm gay."* *"I'm straight."* *"Trans."*

Maybe you give them your position in your family: *"I'm a son."* *"I'm a daughter."* *"I'm a father of two."* *"I'm a grandmother of eight."*

Or maybe you give them your political party: *"I'm a Democrat."* *"I'm a Republican."* *"I'm liberal."* *"I'm a conservative."*

Maybe you give them where you grew up: *"I'm a Southerner."* *"I'm a Californian."* *"I'm a New Yorker."* *"I'm a Michigander."* *"I'm a Bostonian."* Maybe you give them your country of origin: *"I'm an Italian-American."* *"I'm a Polish-American."* *"I'm African-American."* *"I'm English."* *"I'm Scottish."*

Maybe you give them your age or your size. Maybe you give them your dominant emotion: *"I'm a happy person."* *"I'm a sad person."*

And what I want you to see is that we wrap ourselves in so many identities that sometimes we get to wonder what's underneath all of that. And sometimes when we get so busy in life, we have to just kind of clear a space so that we can see what's truly going on.

So tonight, I want to clear the field. I want us to let go of some of the ways that we sometimes see ourselves, so that we can see ourselves in a deeper way and a more profound way. And I want you to see yourself without all the "stuff." To see who you were before all that stuff.

You know, I've been doing this series on Unity fundamentals. And each week I've been exploring one of the basic teachings of Unity. And tonight, I want to discuss the "I AM." The "I AM" principle.

And in hindsight, I think I should have moved it up three weeks. [Congregants laugh] Right? You know, you live and learn, right? Because the last two weeks I've talked about the power of thought; I've talked about the power of the spoken word. And what I want you to see is that the "I AM" really needs to come before all that. The "I AM" is that which comes before anything else. The "I AM" is truly our deepest, truest nature. It is your spiritual identity. It is the infinite possibilities. It is who you were before you were anything. It is the creative process.

In Exodus 3, we read that Moses said unto God, *"Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and say unto them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, has sent me unto you.' And what shall I say to them? What is his name? And what shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM.' He said, 'Thus shall you say unto the children of God. Tell them I AM has sent me to you.'"*

The time we get to talk about the "I AM." The first creative cause. Because what we add to the "I AM" -- any word that we add after the "I AM" -- we are calling into being. And what I want you to see, that

when we talk about *"I am love."* *"I am joy."* *"I am peace."* *"I am power."* *"I am wisdom."* When we talk about any of the spiritual qualities, I don't want us to miss, that the "I AM" is the driving force in that presence.

That in Revelations we read, *"My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done."*

Right? [Repeats] My reward is with me and I will give to each person according to what they have done. And I want you to see that, I believe, that is the very nature of the "I AM" principle, right? That my reward is with me! That whatever I add to my "I AM" is always with me; that I will give unto each person according to what they have done. So whatever we add to the I am is creating our experiences; is creating a reality.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."

And I believe that that's it. The "I AM" is the Alpha and the Omega. It was the beginning and it is the end. It is who you were in the first moment of spiritual creation, and it will be who you are in your last moment. It is the first; it is the beginning; it is the end. And blessed are those who wash their robes.

And I think that that's so interesting, right? That this statement that Jesus makes, that *"I am the Alpha and the Omega,"* and then he talks about doing laundry! [Congregants laugh] Like, I love that, right? It's like, okay; so maybe the most powerful statement in the Bible – *"I am the Alpha and the Omega; I'm the beginning and the end ... and blessed is he who washes his robes."*

Like, you've heard me go off on tangents. [Congregants laugh] Come on, that's a pretty big tangent, right? You're talking about the beginning and the end; you're talking about creation; from the moment of creation to the end of creation ... and then it's like, *"Blessed is he who shows up in clean clothes."* [Congregants laugh] Right? And it's like, I don't know. That's kind of a hard ... it's kind of a hard jump to make.

So what does that mean? *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life."* And the more that I sat with this, the more that I loved it. Right? Because we have the beginning and the end within us. We have the I AM. *"I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am the Beginning and the End."*

But blessed is he who washes the robe ... who washes our understanding; who washes our identity; who washes who we think we are away. And as we do that, we get the tree of life. We get infinite possibilities. We get every possibility available to us.

And then when the more that I looked at this verse in Revelation, the more that I loved it! It's like, I am the beginning and the end. I am the first and I am the last. And the "I AM" in me -- that infinite creative power in me -- is the beginning. That is who I was from the beginning. And yet I have added so much things to my "I AM." So many ways that, through the course of my life, that I have come to know myself. So many identities that I have taken on.

That, as we do our spiritual work, there's a time when we have to wash ourselves of all of our personalities and all of our identities and simply let them fall away. Let all those old ideas of who I was or who I should be or who others wanted me to be: all that has to wash away so that I can stand in the "I AM." I can stand in that infinite spiritual power and acknowledge that "I AM."

[Repeats] Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right -- the right! -- to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the holy city.

That's it; that's our process. That you were given the "I AM." You were given the name of God. And then you were also given the wisdom and the understanding to use that "I AM" to create anything.

Like, what's so powerful about the "I AM" is that you can actually use it to destroy yourself or to build yourself up. You can just as easily say, "I am stupid." "I am ugly." "I am terrible." "I am an awful person." "I am broken." "I am less than." "I'm a sinner." You can use the I am and tear yourself apart with it. Literally, you can destroy yourself by using the "I AM" in a negative way. And there are people that will tell you that that's being humble; that that's actually righteous.

Or you can use the "I AM" to build yourself up as the full, complete expression of the Divine. And that's our choice. That's our path; that's our way. How what you add after those two little words makes all the difference in the world!

And you're the only one that gets to decide what you add to your "I AM." But before you add anything, I want you just to stay for a moment in the "I AM," and feel that. Feel the power of that. To just stop and sit for a moment in the fullness of your "I AM."

Because the "I AM": **there are two qualities that I want to call your attention to about the "I AM."**

The first one is I exist. I AM; I exist. I exist in God. I exist as an expression of God. I exist in the kingdom of God. This is beyond good and bad and right and wrong. I exist. That you have a right to exist. That God created you. That your essence -- your existence -- was God-given. It was not a human act. It was not a human experience. Your spiritual identity -- your "I AM" -- was totally God-given.

"I exist."

Will you say that with me? [With congregation:] *"I exist."*

That some of us are still feeling bad that we exist! That we shouldn't have existed, or we did it so wrong or we did it so badly that we should have absolutely taken away our own existence.

But the first gift of the "I AM" is that I exist. That I have a God-given right to exist. I have a God-given right to exist in the kingdom as an expression of God. I exist.

And the second one: I have been bestowed with the infinite power to create. I have the infinite power to create. That whatever I add after my "I AM," I am creating. And there are no limits -- there are no boundaries -- to the power of your I am to create. To rise to higher and higher levels; to claim the man or woman, the expression that you want to be.

And yet, we have to own both of these: I exist and I have the infinite power to create my existence. And that, with free will, God has bestowed upon you an infinite number of ways, an infinite possibilities of existence. That there is an infinite number of ways that you could show up in this moment. And when we own our "I AM," we stand in the full glory of that possibility.

Jesus said in Matthew 12:37, *"By your words, you will be justified, or by your words, you will be condemned."* I mean, that's a strong statement. That you're either going to use your "I AM" to be more and greater than you've ever been before, right? And feel that!

When you use your "I AM" to go higher and to be more than you've ever been before, there's a part of us that thinks, *"Oh, that's ego. That's a little too much, Richard. Dial it back a little bit. Too much."* [Congregants laugh] Right?

But that's the power of your "I AM" -- that you have a God-given right and a responsibility. Jesus said, *"If I be lifted up, I draw all people unto me."* He didn't say, *"If I be lifted up too high, I make some people uncomfortable."* [Congregants laugh] *"I'd freak some people out!"* Right?

And I want you just to feel the power of your "I AM." That you exist for the glory of God. I want you to hear that! You exist for the glory of God. And that your existence gives you free reign to create yourself in any way you choose, even if it's negative. Because eventually we're all going to get so sick and tired and tired of creating negative outcomes that we're going to stop doing it. And the reality is there's no limit to what you could be!

Isaiah 55:11: *"So shall my word go forth out of my mouth, and it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I intended."* I mean, these are strong statements! That your "I AM" gives you the power to create a reality that is the essence of who you came to be.

But before we even get into the creative process, I want you just to sit in your "I AM" and just meditate on the idea that "I AM." *"I exist. I have a right to be. I have a right to be any of the infinite possibilities that God has laid before me. There are no limits to who I can be. I get to decide. and I get to use the wisdom and love and guidance of the universe to guide me in that endeavor. I AM."*

1 Corinthians 13:12. Paul said this: "For now I see a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I will understand fully as I have been fully understood." Like, when you look in the mirror, and all you see back is all the roles and all the identity and all the feelings and all the emotions that you've had in this experience of life, we're looking in the mirror and we're seeing dimly. But one day, you're going to look in the mirror and you're going to see the face of God as your face. You're going to see yourself as that divine expression of God's infinite good! And you're going to be able to see that and say, *"I am that! I am that much! My spirit is that big! I am that wonderful! I am that powerful! I am that much of God!"*

And our ego will say over and over again, *"Yeah, dial it back. Too much. Too big. You think you're too special."*

The reality is: you are.

"I AM."

Will you say it with me? [With congregation] *"I AM."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I AM."*

See, I believe this is the most profound spiritual truth. That you were given this "I AM" nature. That God unleashed you on the universe to express the glory of God. And up to this, point, most of us have done it in a little way. We let a little light shine. We let a little good come out of us. Not too much! We don't want to rock the boat too much. We don't want people to notice or stare or pay too much attention.

But tonight, what if you were willing to go all in and truly claim the "I AM" as your primary identification. *"I AM!"* And then decide with wisdom and understanding and love and abundance -- too whatever you add after those two little words is your possibility of creating!

"I am wise." "I am loving." "I am goodness." "I am light." "I am peace." "I am power." "I am creativity." "I am pure joy."

That, over and over and over again, we have to own our "I AM." That, as part of our spiritual development, that until we can claim our essence, our nature -- our core, if you will -- we are missing the point. God created you in God's image.

"I AM."

"I AM. And I have a right to be!"

I AM."

Together: [with congregation] *"I AM."*

One more time, like we mean it: [with congregation] *"I AM."*

I want you to feel that! For every time you felt like you had to turn yourself down. For every time you felt like you were too much or not right or there was something profoundly wrong with you, I want you to hear yourself say these words: *"I AM."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I AM."*

"I exist."

[Congregation:] *"I exist."*

I exist in the name of God! I AM THAT I AM!

And so tonight, I want you to actually just sit with the *"I AM."* Don't add anything to it right now. Just hold the magnificent: that you were created in God's image. You were given God's Spirit. That it is a power to create any reality in your life. And that, right now, you don't have to add anything to it. You just have to hold on to that nugget: to that truth, to that power.

And then, once you can fully own the *"I AM,"* then you can add anything onto it, and that will become true for you. It will become the living expression of you in your life.

But you will use that power very carefully! You won't say things that are actually destructive to your spirit. You won't call yourself names that are unbecoming to a child of God. You will use that *"I AM"* as the power of God expressing in and through you to create and to live a happy, joyous, wonderful, loving life. Because *"I AM."* And anything less than that wouldn't make sense! It doesn't honor God.

"I AM."

Together: [with congregation] *"I AM."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I AM."*

Let's pray. I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the truth of who you are. And imagine, tonight, that we're just going to take off the robe. We're going to take off all the old identities: all that we've been; all the thoughts and emotions and feelings; all the roles that we've played; all of our human drama and upset. And we're just going to take off the robe and see ourselves as if for the first time. That we are more than our stories. We are more than our human experience. We are the expressions of God.

So tonight, we rejoice, we give thanks, and we dwell in the *"I AM"*: that pure creation. That pure possibility. That divine nature. That we exist in God. That we were created through God. That we live and move in God. That we've been given the kingdom to express God.

"I AM." "I AM." In the name and through the power of the living Christ, we give thanks and so it is. Amen.