Walk Your Talk

Thank You, and Let Go

Rooted in Gratitude · Talk Four of Five

Rev. Blaine · Unity on Maui · Sunday, November 22, 2026

The Trap We All Know

The Monkey Trap. A teaching story Robert Pirsig made famous in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle* Maintenance (1974). Rice sits inside a hollowed-out coconut chained to a stake. The monkey grabs a fistful, and its fist won't fit back through the hole. Freedom only requires letting go. Pirsig called the monkey's error "value rigidity."

What's Your Handful of Rice? Our "rice" is whatever we grip past its season: a job, a role, a relationship, an old hurt, or a picture of how life was supposed to go. Naming it is the first step toward releasing it.

Rooted in Gratitude. Having noticed what's going right, named the people behind our blessings, and shared unexpected abundance, we now turn to the hardest gratitude: thanks for what we release, and for what life has taken from our hands.

Why We Hold On

My Handful of Tea. I spent twelve years selling Lipton Tea: freedom, a company car, the open road around the Bay Area. It asked little of my energy or creativity. I was bored to death, and certain I would do it for the rest of my life.

We Hold On to What's Comfortable. We don't only cling to what we love. We cling to the familiar and the safe, long after it has stopped feeding us.

The Endowment Effect. A finding from behavioral economics: once something is ours, we value it more than we would if choosing it fresh. Add loss aversion, feeling losses more sharply than equal gains, and even an unfulfilling situation becomes hard to leave.

Clinging (Upādāna). In Buddhist teaching, upādāna, clinging or grasping, is one of the roots of suffering. The Buddha did not condemn loving or enjoying things. The suffering is in the grip.

It Was the Fist. My problem wasn't the tea. It was the fist I had made around it. Letting go means relaxing the grip, not condemning what we held.

When Life Opens the Hand for Us

When Life Opens the Hand for You. In my twelfth year, Lipton eliminated its sales force, and I was released. I was devastated. I tried selling coffee drinks and roofs, went back to teaching, and worked in restaurants. Nothing worked.

A Time to Keep, and a Time to Cast Away. From Ecclesiastes 3:6, part of the passage that begins "To every thing there is a season." Keeping and casting away are both part of a sacred rhythm.

We Don't Always Choose Our Season. Some endings are done to us. Devastation is an honest first response, not a spiritual failure. Gratitude may come years later, looking back, and it still counts.

Thank You Comes First

Thank You Comes First. Before we can release something cleanly, we bless it. Gratitude is the doorway to letting go.

Ichi-go Ichi-e. A Japanese tea-ceremony phrase meaning "one time, one meeting." Linked to the 16th-century tea master Sen no Rikyū, it asks us to honor each gathering as if it will never come again, because it won't.

Every Season Comes Once. Each chapter of life is ichi-go ichi-e: live it fully, thank it, and let it pass. Looking back with gratitude, I finally saw what my Lipton years taught me: comfort is not the same as calling.

We Can't Release What We Resent. Resentment keeps the fist closed; gratitude loosens the fingers. Research on rituals suggests that marking an ending helps us move through loss, and "thank you" is one of the oldest rituals we have.

Charles Fillmore: Elimination. Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore taught twelve spiritual powers. One is Elimination, also called Renunciation, which he associated with the disciple Thaddaeus. Releasing is a divine faculty, as essential to wholeness as taking in.

Hoʻoponopono. Hawaiian for, roughly, "to make right." Traditionally a family process of reconciliation and forgiveness. A modern form developed by Hawaiian healer Morrnah Simeona has spread worldwide as a practice of release.

I'm Sorry. Please Forgive Me. Thank You. I Love You. The four phrases of modern Hoʻoponopono, spoken inwardly toward a person, memory, or situation. Notice "thank you" at its heart.

Open Hands Receive

After my layoff, I found my passion for life at the Unity Center in Walnut Creek, California. I went to Unity Seminary and found my first church at fifty. My empty hand was finally free to receive my calling.

An Open Hand Lets Go, and Receives. Releasing makes room for good, not as a trade or reward, but because that's how open hands work. Some things take many tries. Letting go is not forgetting; it's loving without clutching.

Guided Practice. Hold what you're ready to release in a closed fist. Say: "Thank you for what you gave me. Thank you for what you taught me. I bless you, and I let you go." Then slowly open your hand, palm up. Repeat it daily this week.

The Monkey and the Coconut. Freedom was always one open hand away. This Thanksgiving week, give thanks for what you hold, for what you have let go, and for what has let go of you.

Affirmation

I bless what has been and release it with gratitude. My open hands are free to hold what comes next.

Blessing

May your hands be open this week,
open to release what is complete,
and open to receive what is coming.

May you bless every season you've lived,
the ones you chose and the ones that chose you,
and find in each of them a gift worth thanking.

When you notice yourself gripping, may you breathe,
remember the monkey and its handful of rice,
and gently loosen your fingers.

May gratitude go before you,
grace walk beside you,
and the good that is yours find room to land.

Go in peace, with open hands and a grateful heart.
Aloha, and amen.