

## The Future is Not a Room You're In

Rev. Blaine Tinsley · Unity on Maui · May 24, 2026

### The Opening Question

How many of you, at some point this week, spent time worrying about something that hasn't happened yet? Most of us live in futures that don't exist — rehearsing worst-case scenarios, bracing for what hasn't arrived. The suffering is almost never in the future. It's in the story about the future, playing on a loop, right now.

### The Default Mode Network

When the mind is not focused on a task, it defaults to projecting, rehearsing, and constructing future scenarios. The brain cannot reliably distinguish between a real threat and an imagined one — so vividly imagining a frightening future triggers the same physiological stress response as if it were happening now.

### Anxiety Is the Future Pretending to Be Now

Anxiety is not a response to what is actually happening. It is a response to a vivid, emotionally convincing story about what might happen. The mind tells that story with such authority that we forget it is a story at all — and respond to a movie preview as though it were reality.

### Affective Forecasting

Psychologist Daniel Gilbert's research shows we are systematically wrong about how bad things will feel, and how long that feeling lasts. We sacrifice the present moment to worry about a future that, even if it arrives, won't feel the way we feared. We are, as Gilbert put it, "stumbling on happiness."

## What the Wisdom Traditions Know

**The Buddha** | Craving for a future state is a primary form of dukkha — suffering. Gripping what might be, or resisting what is, creates a specific and avoidable pain.

**Bhagavad Gita** | Act rightly in the present; release attachment to outcomes. You cannot act in the future. You can only act now.

**Rumi** | The longing, when fully inhabited, is not pointing toward a distant arrival — it is the divine movement, alive in this breath, this moment.

**Meister Eckhart** | "The Now-moment in which God made the first human and the Now-moment in which the last human will disappear are the same." There is only one eternal Now.

**Charles Fillmore** | The faculty of Imagination is not for conjuring futures to cling to. It is for shaping present consciousness toward higher expression — perceiving the presence of God, right here, right now.

### The Story I'm Still In

Emily and I had a vision for our future. We had a picture of how things would go — ministry, then the next chapter together, maybe the mainland, growing old side by side. Then she died. Part of my grief has been the grief of the future. Not just the loss of Emily herself — but the loss of the picture I had been quietly, faithfully, lovingly holding in my hands. As I wrote this talk, something broke open: I have been standing in the doorway of a room I can never go back to. The life that is actually available to me cannot be fully entered while I am still gripping the old dream.

*Presence is not a consolation prize for the future we lost. It is where God lives. It is where love continues.*

### The Future Is a Field, Not a Room

The future is not a destination at the end of a hallway. It is a living, co-creative field being shaped right now by what you are thinking, choosing, feeling, and bringing. Physicist David Bohm called this the 'implicate order' an ongoing unfolding that is responsive to consciousness, alive with possibility. The future is not written. It is being woven.

### The Brain Is Rewired Right Now

Neuroplasticity — the brain's ability to form new connections and new capacities — does not happen in the future. It happens now. Every moment of presence, every conscious choice, every quality of attention you bring to right now is shaping who you are becoming. You don't prepare for the future in the future. The most future-shaping thing you can possibly do is be fully present.

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## Three Practices to Live in the Unfolding Presence

### 1 Notice When You Feel Anxious, Rushed, Numb, or Dissatisfied

Pause and ask honestly: "Am I living in an imaginary room right now? What future am I inside of?" Name it without judgment. You are not broken for being there. Naming it is the first act of freedom.

### 2 Return to the Moment

Take a breath. Feel your feet on the floor. Ask: "What is mine to do, be, or bring — right now?" This is directed presence — the most powerful state available to a human being. You are not opting out of the future by being present. You are creating it more skillfully than anxiety ever could.

### 3 Pray in the Present Tense

Shift affirmative prayer from "I will have peace" to "I am peace, expressing now." Affirmative prayer is not about commanding the future. It is about claiming the nature of God in the present — and trusting that what flows from that claiming is exactly what is needed.

## Affirmation

*I am peace expressing now. I am love unfolding now.  
I am divine life moving through this moment with grace and ease.*

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### Closing Prayer

*Spirit of the living God — present before us, within us, all around us — we release the imaginary rooms we have been living in. We release the futures we have been gripping. We release the anxiety that has been pretending to be now. And in this releasing, we open — to this moment, this breath, this love, this life. We trust that what is ours is already here, already given, already alive in us. Thank you — not for what is coming, but for what already is. Amen.*

### Blessing

*May you leave a little lighter than you arrived. May you find, in the ordinary moments of this day, something so beautiful that the waiting simply stops. When anxiety rises, may you remember the way back — a breath, your feet on the ground, the presence of the One who has never left this moment. May the love you have lost walk with you not as a wound, but as a wisdom. You are not behind. You have not missed it. Your life is here. Go in peace. Go in presence. Go in love. Amen.*