WALK YOUR TALK

What If Everything Is Going Right?

November 1, 2026 • Unity on Maui

*Based on Rev. Blaine's talk, "What If Everything Is Going Right," given at Unity on Maui. This is the first talk in our five-week series **"Rooted in Gratitude."***

A Confession: The "Ummmm"

I want to start with a confession. A few months ago, we had one of those Sundays. The music was glorious, the meditation was deep, people were moved to happy tears, and someone hugged me afterward and said, "That talk was exactly what I needed today." Yet the whole drive home, all I could think about was the moment I lost my place in my notes and said a long, lonely "Ummmm." In my memory it lasted eleven minutes; in reality, maybe three seconds. Somewhere around Kahului, I was mentally drafting my resignation letter.

Finally, I asked myself a few honest questions. Blaine, how many hugs did you get today? How many people said thank you? More than I could count. And how many mentioned the "ummmm"? Not one. Nobody noticed it but me. **I had let three seconds cancel out two hours of grace.**

The Question

"What if right now, more is going right in your life than wrong?"

Think of the last criticism you received, then the last compliment. Which came to mind faster? Which have you replayed more? Most of us have our own "Ummmm." This question may sound naive at first, but it points somewhere deeper: *What if everything is going right, and the only thing missing is our noticing it?*

The Negativity Bias

Here's the good news about my "Ummmm" moment: it wasn't a personal failing. It was my brain doing exactly what it was built to do. Psychologists call it the **negativity bias**. In 2001, Roy Baumeister and his colleagues published a paper with a wonderfully blunt title:

"Bad is stronger than good." — Baumeister et al.

Through research on relationships, feedback, emotions, and memory, they found the same pattern: negative experiences carry more weight than positive ones. We notice them faster, feel them more strongly, and remember them longer.

Two Ancestors on the Savanna

Picture two of our ancestors. One is admiring a gorgeous sunset. The other is staring nervously at a rustle in the grass. Which one is more likely to survive and have children? The one watching the grass. Missing a sunset cost nothing; missing a lion cost everything. We are the great-great-great-grandchildren of the worriers, and we inherited a brain that is, above all, a threat detector.

Velcro and Teflon

"The brain is like Velcro for bad experiences and Teflon for good." — Rick Hanson

The bad sticks; the good slides right off. That is why one parking ticket can ruin a perfect beach day, and one critical email can outweigh a dozen kind ones. But this is **wiring, not destiny**. The brain changes based on what we repeatedly pay attention to, and spiritual traditions learned to rewire it long before brain scans.

A Hundred Blessings a Day

"A person must say a hundred blessings a day." — Rabbi Meir, The Talmud

You can't say a hundred blessings unless you go *looking* for a hundred blessings: for waking up, for water and bread, for the sound of rain, for the driver who let you merge on the Piʻilani Highway. By blessing, you are scanning your day for good the way our ancestors scanned the grass for lions. Rabbi Meir wasn't setting a prayer quota; he was training attention.

This Is the Day

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." — Psalm 118:24

It doesn't say, "the day after everything gets fixed" or "the day the 'ummmm' doesn't happen." It says *this* day: imperfect, ordinary, and full of more good than we usually notice. Gratitude is not mainly a feeling. It is a way of seeing, and we can practice seeing.

God Is Good and Everywhere Present

Unity's first principle is that **God is good and everywhere present.** If that is true, then good is present here and now: in this breath, in this moment, not only on the good days. Good is present even in the moment of "Ummmm." So, when we ask, ***"What if everything is going right?"*** we're not asking a naive question but a spiritual one: *Am I willing to see the good that is already here?*

Gratitude Widens Our Lens

This is not pretending or spiritual bypassing. Grief, illness, and loss are real, and gratitude doesn't deny what is hard. Instead, it widens the lens. Left alone, the brain zooms in on the one thing that's wrong until it fills the screen. Gratitude zooms back out, so we see the challenging thing *and* the hundred blessings around it. What we behold, we become.

The Practice: Taking In the Good

Rick Hanson's practice for turning Teflon into Velcro for the good: when something good happens, even something small, **don't rush past it.** Close your eyes or lower your gaze. Notice one thing going right at this exact moment: your breath, the people near you, the trade winds. Stay with it for a few breaths and let it soak in like warm sunlight. That is the brain learning to let the good stick.

This Week's Invitation

Three times a day, morning, midday, and evening, pause and ask: ***"What's going right?"*** Then, in the spirit of Rabbi Meir, start counting. See if you can reach a hundred blessings. And when something good happens, let it sink in for a few breaths.

Affirmation

With every grateful thought, I practice a new way of seeing my life.

Blessing

May your eyes be opened to the good that is already here.
May you notice the quiet blessings in your breath, your people, and this ordinary day.
When something goes wrong, may you remember everything that is going right.
And may the goodness of God, present everywhere and in everything,
sink deeply into your heart and stay there.

And so it is.