



LETTING GO

Sunday, December 27, 2020 Sermon

Mike Davis

Can We Talk?

Good morning and Merry Christmas! I'm Mike Davis, one of many volunteers here at the Vineyard. And it's my pleasure to share today's message. The message though, will be more like a conversation, a conversation amongst friends. I'm going to assume a certain level of bible knowledge and I hope that those in attendance that aren't quite up to speed, will ask those they are with to explain as necessary.

How to Trap a Monkey

Some of you parents may have heard this one before, so I'm gonna ask the kids. Kids, young folk of all ages... write in the chat your thoughts on **how to catch a monkey**. Monkeys are fast. Monkeys are agile. Monkeys can be up the nearest tree before you can blink an eye. So, what do you think kids, How DO YOU catch a monkey?

Thanks, those are great answers.

I've never tried it before, but I'm told there is one *sure way* to catch a monkey. According to legend, you put a **banana in a jar**. The monkey **sees the banana**. The monkey is a monkey, so she **wants the banana**. The monkey reaches into the top of the jar and **grabs the banana**.

[Slide 1] With its hand clenched in a fist, the monkey **can't get his hand out**. And so she stays there. Trapped. Because there's no way the monkey's **loosening his grasp** on what **he's focused on**. There is no way the monkey is going to **let go of the banana**.

And so the monkey... is **caught**. Then the trapper walks up and tosses a net over the monkey, and Wha-La! You've got yourself a monkey. Now, we're not here to talk about monkeys are we? Of

course not. It's a great picture though, of how **holding on to stuff** - even **appealing stuff** - can **hold you back**. Can **trap you**. All the monkey has to do is **let go** and he'll be free. But he **won't let go**. Because he's so clenched onto what *seems* of ultimate importance at the moment.

It's been a long, year. No, let me restate that - it's been a LONG, LONG, year! Even after a *normal* year, things can pile up. In a year like 2020, which feels more like 2 years rather than one, I suspect there are things *you* are currently focused on that seem of ultimate importance at the moment, but are they *really*?

Letting Go For the Kingdom

I have always marveled at some of the characters in the bible. It seems that they have an experience of God that fundamentally changes their lives forever. I have often envied these men and women, thinking that somehow if I could experience God like they did, my life would be fundamentally changed. God has since reminded me that I've actually had that type of experience, in fact all who have bent their knee in reverence to Jesus have. The details change but the effect is the same, initially a life devoid of spiritual vitality turns into a life informed and empowered by the very spirit of God. That's heady stuff – if you're willing to live there.

I think that's the real difference between us and many of our biblical heroes. Their willingness to live *there*. To live in certainty and uncertainty, to live in doubt yet with confidence. In fear and courageousness, in awe and in humdrum silence. This morning I'm hoping to convince you to live there in the waning days of 2020. I want you to take time out to **pause, to listen, to discern**. Listen for the still small voice of God. Why? Because I believe the pattern of scripture is that after a time of crisis, reflection, or revelation; God **charges** His people, **promises** His people, and **sends** His people to complete His charge.

We pause so we can encounter God. Author and Pastor, Garriss Elkins talks about this in his book, *The Leadership Rock*. I'm paraphrasing here, but he says, The more you look, the more you see people who have an encounter with God, where the encounter becomes their vision. The Bible is filled with people like that. God bumps into **Paul** on the Road to Damascus goes in

isolation for a time before leaving all behind to serve Jesus. After his denial of Jesus, **Peter** goes back to his day job fishing and ends up at a BBQ on the shoreline - restored. **Jacob pauses to rest** in the desert and ends up wrestling with God and walking away with a limp and a new destiny. After having a time out, **Elijah** stood in the mouth of a cave, straining to hear the voice of God, and then in the stillness of a hushed breeze, he heard Him. And then of course there's Moses. **Moses** is out for a walk and has a conversation with a burning bush that changes the trajectory of his life and others forever.

Now some of you are saying to yourselves, "C'mon Mike, I'm not Jacob and I'm sure not a Moses!" Well, perhaps, but the pattern remains the same for all of us. In 1st Corinthians we're told "...there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." 1 Cor 12:6 [Slide 2]

And speaking of Moses, you'll remember him walking around and the bush speaks and tells him to take off his sandals because he is walking on holy ground? Here's the thing. The ground didn't become holy because Moses was now standing there. The ground was already holy because the presence of God was already there. So, what are you saying Mike? I'm saying that you, *whoever* you are – that you, *wherever* you are – that you, *however* you are – God was and is already there, and you are occupying holy ground. **The pause is to make you aware of that.** God has gone before us and has and is preparing a way for us. **"...for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."**

Philippians 2:16 [Slide 3]

We pause so we can encounter God. **We, like the characters I mentioned, all need an encounter to correct our perspective.** In each of our examples God had to *change* their point of view, each one had to *let go* of their *perceived* reality to walk into God's *designed* reality.

We're no different. Many of us have perspectives skewed a particular way because of the craziness of year 2020. We need to be in God's presence to affect a course correction, to realign our thoughts and actions with his. God's presence is powerful and defines who we are as the people of God. When we live like those around us – focused on the turmoil of the present moment, we *squeeze out* the presence of God in our lived experience. We live absent of joy and instead live in fear and anxiety, in combativeness and division. God desires so much more for us.

In Exodus 19, an interesting thing takes place. In verse 9, the Lord begins by saying, “I will come to you in a dense cloud.” The first thing we notice is that God is the One who comes to us with vision. We don’t create vision and then invite Him to inhabit ours. Everything flows from Him. In fact, when we are in a season of doubt, when we are living in fear, or depression, or planning for the future the single most critical act is not to manufacture a solution on our own, but rather to turn to God and seek His face.

God said to Moses, “I will come to you in a dense cloud.” This cloud was so thick that Moses could not see what was ahead of him. [Slide 4] He was blinded. For God to birth vision in his people, He must first blind us to the tools we normally rely upon. A thick cloud is not a place where one can really see *anything* let alone see clearly. We simply are not in control in His presence.

Are you in one of those moments when you can’t see the next step? Chances are this is God leading you into the cloud of His presence. He has something He wants to show you, but He must first turn off your natural desire to process your circumstance on your own. **A season where you don’t see anything sets you up to hear everything.** [Slide 5]

I think this is what a Kingdom vision is all about—the people of God disappearing into His presence so that only *He* is seen and heard. When people walk out of the cloud of His presence, they are changed forever.

So we pause. We pause to listen and discern what needs discarding – what needs letting go of, and what needs embracing. Letting go is hard, though, isn’t it? Letting go feels like giving up. Letting go feels like surrender, or worse, failure. Here’s the thing, letting go is *not* giving up. **Letting go is Letting Be.** [Slide 6] Letting go is *choosing* not to strive. Letting go is accepting that God is controlling all things, that you are controlling nothing, and allowing yourself to rest in that. When we stop seeking control, God is able to lead, guide, and direct. So what are things we might be holding on to that need to be let go of? Take a moment to put in the chat some thoughts on things which you or those you know might need to let go of.

Things I Hold on To that I Need To Let Go Of

Those are all great answers, here are a few from my personal jar:

Relationships that are somehow different than I prefer. My expectations of others and their expectations of me. Self-limiting beliefs about myself. Pride. My comfort zone. The fear of failing. Comparisons to others. Procrastination.

All of those are worthy of managing, but my current thinking is that God is asking me specifically and possibly all of us - to pursue the making of peace. The past few years I have felt compelled to speak out, to call out that which I felt was contrary to God's will and way. I feel just as strongly in the present moment that I am being called not to ignore such discrepancies but to focus on and pursue common ground amongst those called of God. **It means choosing to neither quit, or surrender but, choosing to let the discrepancies be.** It means choosing to focus on the **possibility of unity** rather than the **evidence of division**. I have a snowball's chance in the hell of making that work on my own. Given who I am, nothing but the Spirit of God can bring that about. And that's the thing about visions in the cloud, they always rest on God and his outpouring rather than on our talents and skills. I'll be leaning into that further the next few days. What about you? Will you get alone with God and PAUSE – LISTEN – DISCERN what God is asking of *you* in this season. Don't be a monkey do as one poet suggests; [\[Slide 7\]](#)

Surrender to what is

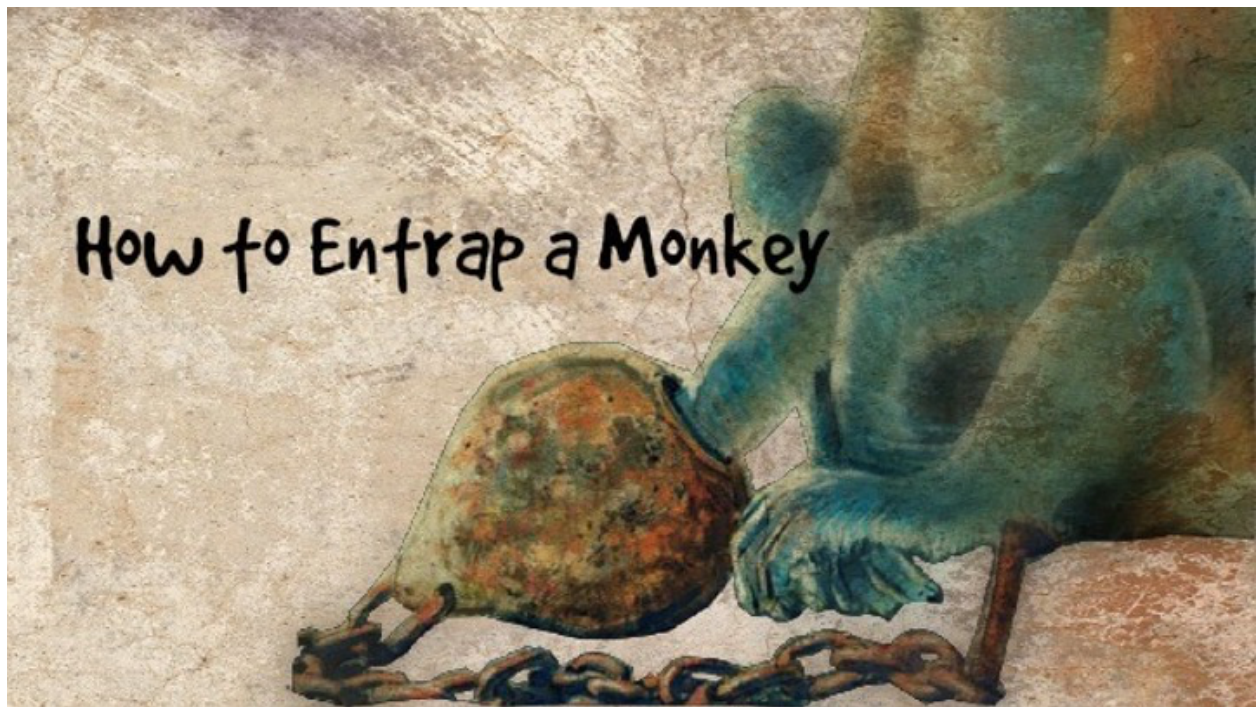
Let go of what was.

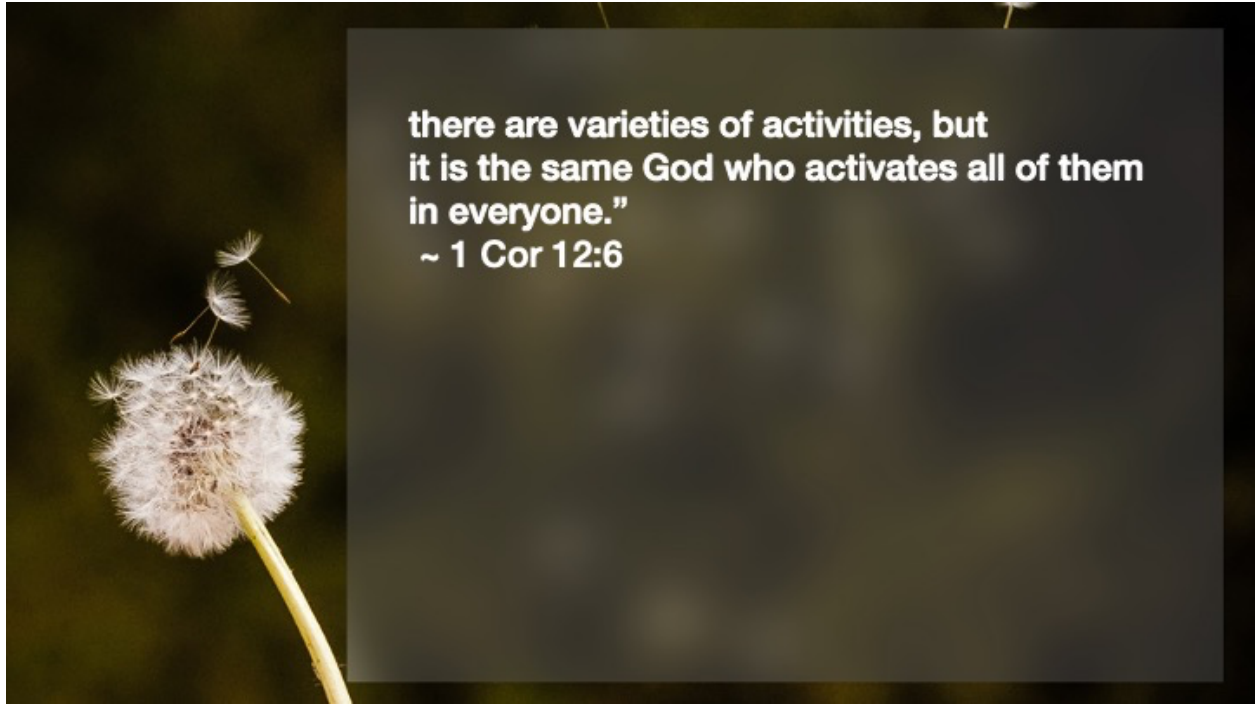
Have faith in what will be.

~ Sonia Ricotti

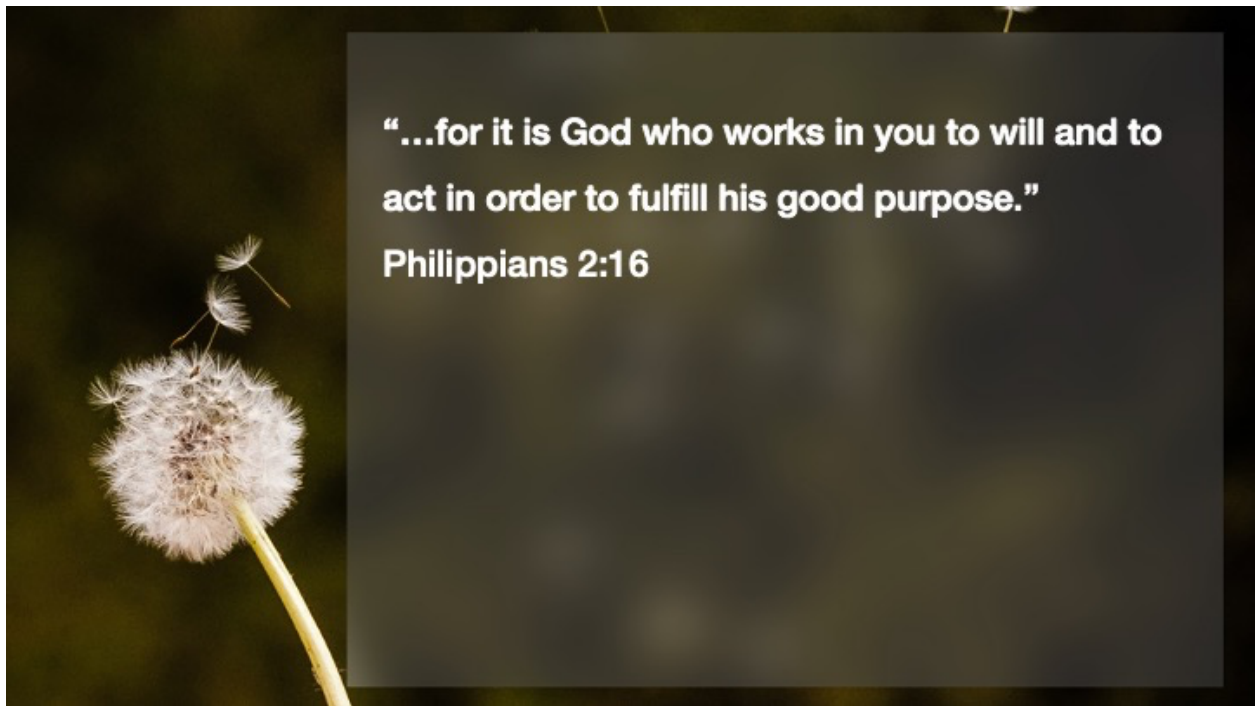
PRAYER

Slides:

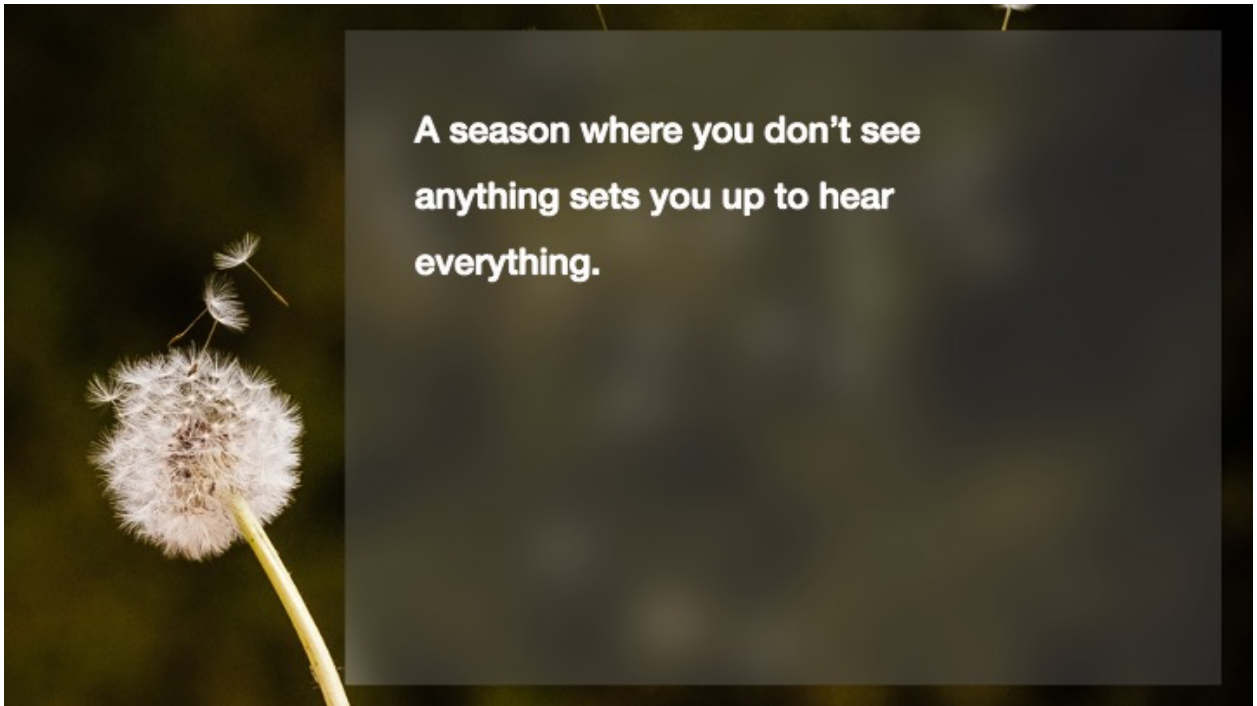


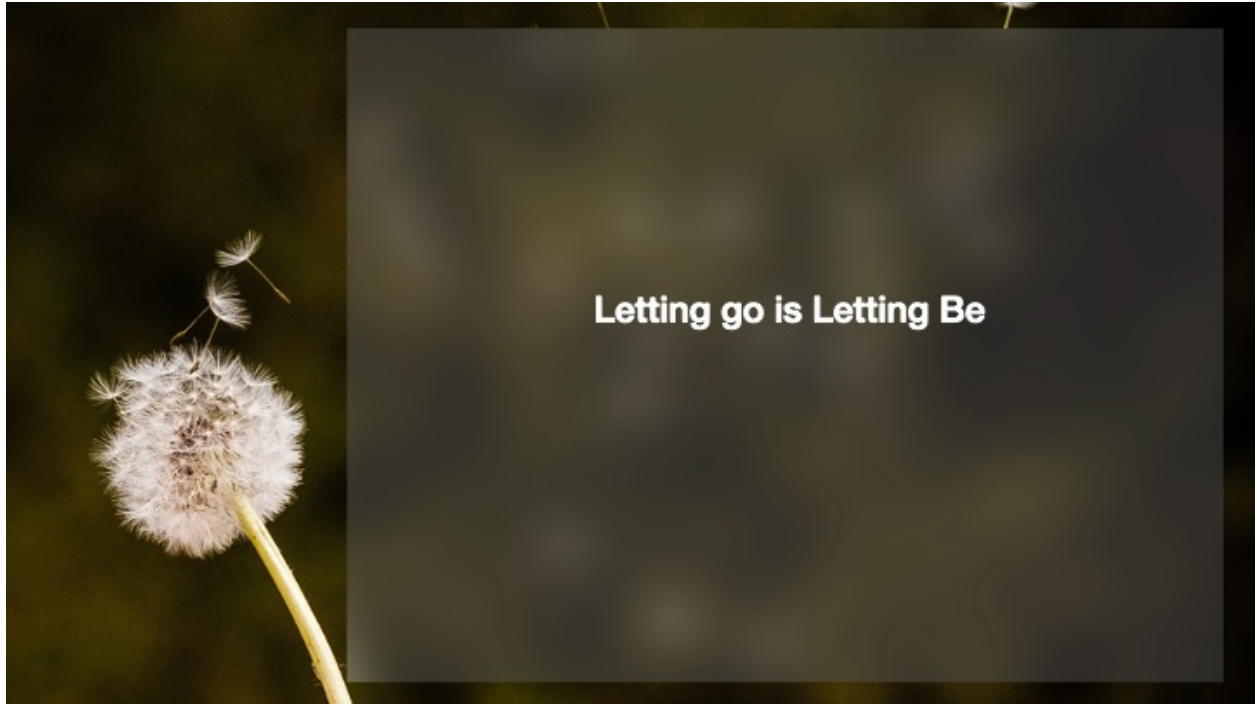


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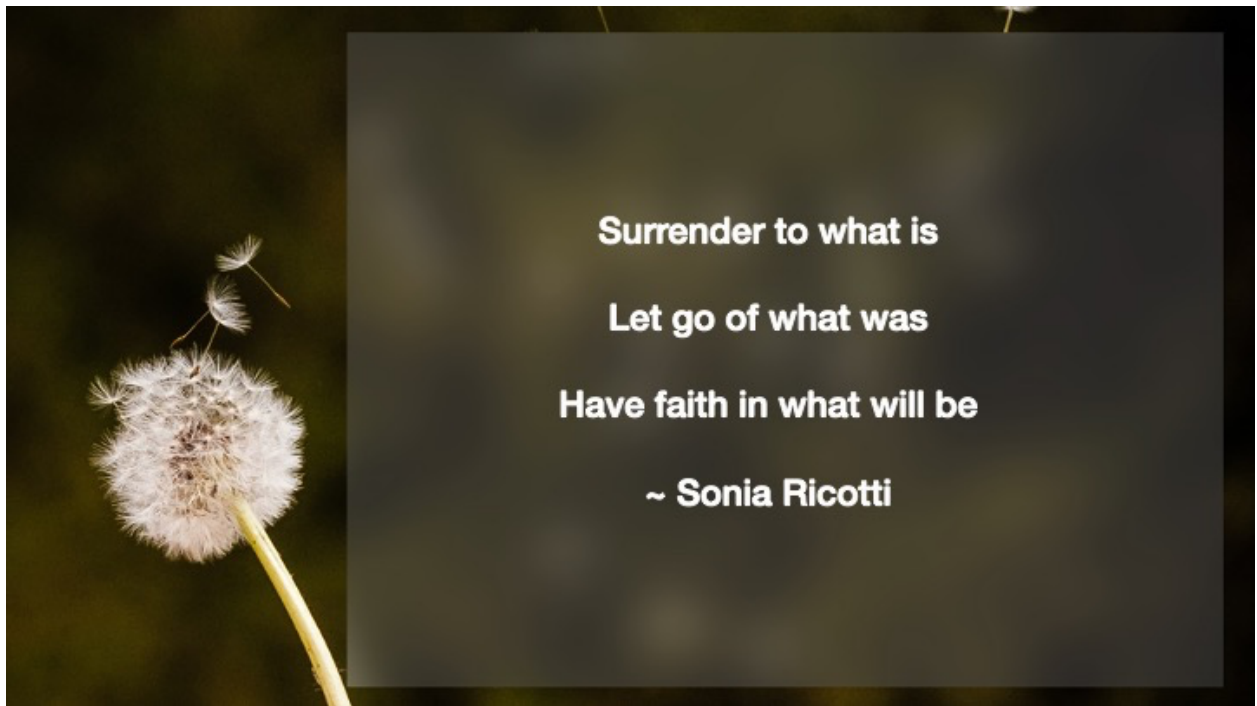


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