

Jesus

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I felt I should speak on something a little different than what's in the bulletin and that is that many of us here are very anxious to have a relationship with God. Many of you may have tried to have one and may have tried to go through the motions, and somehow nothing seems real and that's what I'd like to speak to on the basis of the words of Jesus in John 5:39. "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." So Jesus was saying to the Jewish scholars of that day, "You search the scriptures because you think in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness to me but you refuse to come to me that you may have life."

Now I'm saying to you, could it be that you read and search the books written by men like Francis Schaeffer, and Andrew Murray, and Watchman Nee, and Oswald Chambers because you think that in them you have eternal life? And yet it is they that bear witness to Jesus, but you will not come to Jesus that you might have life. Each of us would need to answer that question ourselves, because it's obviously good to read books, we all know that, but you know what God is suggesting this morning; could it be that some of the unreality that pervades your relationship with him comes because you're searching the books to try to find eternal life but you're not coming to Jesus himself? Or could it be that you're going through the motions but you're not coming to Jesus himself?

I think a lot of us come under the conviction of sin. If we come to Sundays like this where God's word is being preached, you come under conviction of sin. Many of us get annoyed with that and think, "Why am I feeling so depressed and so terrible, and why am I feeling that I'm bad?" We deal with the thing as if it's some psychological problem that we're having and we're hoping that maybe the next sermon will be an uplifting one that will overwhelm us with a sense of God's love. But do you know what conviction of sin is? It's you saying, "My hand is so sore that I hope next day they do something that will make my hand feel better." But there's a dear Savior who is saying, "Your hand is sore because you're beating me with it -- that's why it's sore."

So I wonder; could it be that we have a tendency to think of a thing like conviction of sin as if it's some wrong psychological experience through which we're passing when it is simply your dear Father witnessing to you in a way that you can understand that you're killing his son and that the soreness in your hand is nothing compared to the welts that you're leaving on his heart. I think at times we have a tendency to think of this as if it's some reforming psychological experience that we're passing through, so we expect somebody should come along next week and smooth it over for us.

Well, it's really the Son of God saying to you, "These things that are in your life are killing me. They're the things that destroyed me on Calvary and they're killing me at this moment, this sin that is in your life." It isn't just some irritating depression that you're feeling, or some wrong guilt, it isn't. There is false guilt, but guilt about things that you know God does not want you to do, that is the human reflection of the divine pain in God's heart. And when you're complaining and crying about the pain in your hand, realize that there's a Savior at the other end of things that is not complaining but is bleeding from you striking him.

Some of us say, "The first step is confession. I ought to confess." But loved ones confess to

whom? I think there's a tendency in many of us to think, "As long as I confess it, that's what matters. So I confess it to my mother if I've been doing her harm, or I confess it to my wife if I've been hurting her, or I confess it to my employer if I've been dishonest in our business, or I confess it to the IRS people if I've been dishonest with them. But I confess." That's the first thing you have to do, if you confess your sins he's faithful and just to forgive you your sins. But confess to whom?

I wonder if there are any of us here who make a big thing of confession and we feel, "Oh, if there's any problem in my relationship with God it's because I haven't confessed the sins that I've committed against different people." Well the Psalmist said it, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this wrong." Confession loved ones, is going to our Savior, Jesus, and confessing to him. It's saying, "Lord Jesus, I didn't know that this was destroying you. I didn't know this was crucifying you again. I didn't know that every time I was sarcastic with my wife it was like a whiplash across your face. I didn't know that. I didn't know Lord, that when I swore, that that was like a sword in your side. I'm sorry. I confess this. I did not know it. I agree with you Lord, I see that this is what makes it impossible for you to be real in me. Every time you rise up inside me I crucify you again and destroy you. I confess to you."

Loved ones, could it be that you search conviction because you think that in that you have eternal life? Could it be that you search confession because you think that in that you have eternal life? But you will not come to him that you might have life. Confessing sins is confessing personally to Jesus, the son of God, the one by whom you were made. That's who Jesus is; by him all things were made and without him was not anything made that was made. It's confessing to him that you have been crucifying him again in your life. Then again, some of us talk about repentance and we say, "Oh yes, you have to repent if you're going to be saved, or you're going to become a Christian, or you're going to know God -- you have to repent." So we get all caught up in this business of repentance.

So you think, "Well repentance is making restitution. I have to give back everything that I've taken from anybody dishonestly. I have to make apologies to people that I've hurt or offended. I have to make things right with everybody." That's what repentance is. It isn't just feeling sorry or feeling remorse its making things right. But first of all it's taking the sword out of the side of the one who has borne it for you. That's the first thing. Repentance is not, "Lord, I realize that my unclean actions and my unclean thoughts were a sword thrust into your side and I'm going to do my best to stop that from this time on." That's not repentance, that's mockery. That's saying, "Lord, I'm going to try and stop doing this next week if I can, I'm going to try to stop doing it."

Loved ones, repentance is saying to Jesus, "Lord Jesus, I realize that you have borne these sins in your own body and I'm not going to make you bear this one any longer. I am stopping this. I am laying my sword down today. Whatever the cost to me, it's nothing compared with the cost to you of not laying it down." So it's a personal thing, you see. It's saying it to Jesus personally; it's you and him as persons. It's a dear friend who has given his life for you. Repentance is telling him that you're not going to ever do it again by his grace and then it's receiving Jesus. So often we use some of the formula and we say, "Oh, we pray to receive Jesus" as if accepting Christ is accepting a bunch of principles or a way of life or a philosophy.

But loved ones, receiving Jesus is receiving a dear person into your heart and into your life and letting him live inside you as a whole real person that you can talk to at night and in the morning.

Receiving Jesus is receiving a dear person, a friend, a person who is alive. Do you realize – one thing I realized, I should have known it long ago but I only realized it in a long discussion we had in one class about five years ago, that Jesus is forever human. Have you ever thought of that? I often thought he took our humanity upon him but as soon as he leaves the earth he becomes kind of some effervescent massive spirit. But do you realize Jesus will always be recognizable?

When you and I see him, he'll be recognizable; he'll be a real person. And when you receive him you don't receive some vague effervescent spirit, you receive a person. He's standing here this morning asking you to let him come into your life and he comes in as a real person. And then how many of us try to live like him after we've received him and we begin to come into that old, defeated life where the good that we would we cannot do and the evil we hate is the very thing we do and we want to come free of that. There's a loved one who talked with me last weekend, I'm sure she'll excuse me if I tell you part of the conversation because many of us, at that point say when I ask you, "Well, you're not looking very happy" you say, "No I'm not." I then ask, "Well, why aren't you happy?" And you reply "Oh well, I'm trying to die to self."

Now do you know what that's like? That's like you're walking along together with Jesus and he has his arm around you, because you're his friend and you've received him into your life, and as you walk you trip an odd time and you pick yourself up, and you trip an odd time and then he looks at you and you have this miserable sour face on and he says, "What's wrong?" And you say, "I'm trying to die to self." And he says, "You're what?" And you say, "I'm trying to die to self." And he says, "Really? I thought I did that?" And you say, "Yes, but I'm trying to do it." And he says, "Why do we both need to do it? I mean, I did it for you didn't I?" And you say, "Yes, but to be real in me I have to make it real myself." And he says, "My son, my daughter, I died to self for you. Now, come close to me, come close to me here on this cross. Just stay close to me and I'll show you all that that involves and I'll reveal it to you bit-by-bit in a way that you're able to bear it. But stop trying to do it yourself. Stop trying to enter into some technique that will deliver you from the power of self. Keep your arm around me. I have my arm around you. Come up here on the cross, I'll show you. Now, it doesn't feel so bad does it?" "Well, it feels a wee bit sore." "Well, it was a wee bit sore for me too but just now – there, is that alright?" Then you have a tendency to say, "Well, what about this other bit?" He says, "Forget that other bit, I'm just giving you the bits that you can take at this moment." And that's the way it goes loved ones.

It's not something you do or I do. The baptism -- isn't that a terrible name, "the baptism?" That's what we call it when our dear Savior, our dear friend lays his hands upon us and gives us his own life and his feelings, we call that the baptism. It's like "the marriage." Are you enjoying "the marriage?" If you're like me you hate marriage but you love living with your loved one that you love! But the marriage itself is pretty impersonal. It's so with Jesus, the baptism, who could enter the baptism? Who could enter death to self? But can you stay with your Savior; can you stay close to him? Can you hug him to yourself in your prayer times and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to come into everything that you've achieved for me." And he'll say, "My son, my daughter, that's what I want, so just trust me and I'll show you bit-by-bit what it means. It will mean some little hard things, but I'll have my arm around you so let's go together." Then you look up and your old sour face goes as you look into your Savior's eyes and you walk along. He'll show you the way, that's it loved ones.

It's you and a dear person who has given his life for you and who loves you and knows your name, and that's what it is. And we pitiful souls here on earth try to tell each other what he's doing but we

always mess it up. He alone really can make it all real to you and he'll make it real as long as you continue to regard him as a dear person and a dear friend -- not as an "it" that has done something for you, but as somebody who loves you, who loves each one of us here in this room.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord Jesus, we apologize to you for the difficulties that we create and the way we make things hard for ourselves. Lord Jesus, we see that we were put somehow into you miraculously by our Father and we're part of you and we're closer to you than our own breath. That has been done and that's real and we can't change that; all we can do is ignore it and live in misery. But Lord Jesus, we see how dumb that is. We see that if our great Creator has remade us by placing us in you, then if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation so we are new, we're new creations, each one of us in this room this morning. We're new because our Father has put us into you. Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for us and for allowing us to rise up with you in your resurrection. Thank you Lord, that all we need to do is draw closer to you day-by-day and talk to you as a real person and stop this silly business of practicing some Buddhist or Christian technique.

Lord Jesus, we would turn from all our techniques and our systems, and we would thank you that after everything is said and done, salvation is a person, the person of Jesus; you Lord Jesus, inside us as our dear friend. Lord, we thank you that we each know you in a way that nobody else knows you because you adapt yourself to each one of us and treat us all differently and individually. So Lord Jesus, we thank you that we can each one approach you this morning as our own personal friend and our own personal Savior and we can ask you to make us more like yourself day-by-day.

And now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and ever more. Amen.