

Ministry of the Spirit: Need for Filling

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

It's quite difficult to explain this question to you so you'll really have to stretch your own minds. I'll do it as well as I can. I know the experience and I think you know it. Have you ever found yourself especially after some enjoyable event, or maybe after some very sad event like a death, or after some annual event like even just Labor Day picnic, or Memorial Day, or Christmas time and you've just come back to your room or apartment after a whole lot of kind of social intercourse and rejoicing with the family and you've just sat there and life is all seems so just blah. And you just sit there and you think, "Oh, it's really a drag why bother? Why even get going?"

I suppose some of us would describe it as depression and maybe it is depression partly but primarily it's just a feeling, "Oh, what are all those people out there flitting and buzzing around for? What's the point? I just don't see any point in getting going." Have you ever had that kind of feeling? And I suspect you know, that most of us here from the person who is just an expert on depression, and I know some of you are just experts on depression, to those of us who maybe have very little trouble with depression, I think all of us have probably known times when we've been like that. We've just sat down and thought, "Oh, why bother? Why even bother going on? It seems just so pointless."

Now loved ones, actually I really do believe that those times are blessed gifts from our Creator to make us realize that we are not able to produce our own dynamic for life. I really do. I think God allows those moments to come to let us realize we don't have what it takes to keep going in this life effortlessly. There's some dynamic that we don't have in our lives. Because you know, as well as your sitting there, you know what you do in those moments. You know what all we healthy minded people do. We say, "Listen, this is stupid. I must get my knitting." Or, "I must go out and ride my motorbike." Or, "I have work to do, and jobs to do, and miles to go before I sleep and promises to keep." And we get going.

And you know every mum and dad that has ever looked after any of us poor little souls here, they have all told us that, "Look, you can't just sit around you know, get up and get going. We all feel like that." And that's what we say to each other, "We all feel like that at some time." And in a way it's good, you know, I'm sure it's – we're not meant to sit there and just deteriorate, but – but I'm wondering are we not taking our typically human way out when we ignore the whole vacuum that is obviously there. We ignore the whole emptiness that we feel at that moment. "I mean, don't you feel as if there should be some life that can come up in me at times like this and can at least lead me on. I don't want it to lift me all the way, but there should be surely something at that moment besides emptiness that kind of goes out in a certain direction. I shouldn't have to wind it all up myself." And yet, that's what we do isn't it?

We get ourselves back to some old goal, "Well, I have to get to work in the morning because I have to get money, because I have to eat, because I can keep alive so I can feel like this again." And probably – probably that's the killer of all the things we do to get going, they themselves end up in futility don't they? I mean, we keep going, you know, say – well, those of us who are working say, "Well, we have to get up and work I mean, they're depending on us." But later on weeks, months hence we come up against a moment again when we wonder, "Well, they're depending on me but they gave the other fella a gold watch after 25 years and business carried on. They probably aren't depending

on me too much.” And then of course, most of us saw in the old recession that they didn’t want to depend on us. They closed up the firm and that was it.

And many of us find that these artificial drives that we produce in ourselves, which I agree, I mean I’m with you, I’m with the most common sensical practical down to earth person here in this room that they’re necessary, but these common sense drives that we produce to get ourselves going in those moments when we feel blah, they in themselves are pretty futile and empty, and are pretty pointless and meaningless because there’s none of them that actually bear much examination, is there? I mean, you know it every mum and dad here who gets going for the sake of the kids, well you get going for the sake of the kids and then the kids grow up and they go off and they get going themselves, and there you are left together and looking at each other. And well, you’ve done something, you’ve give somebody to the world, but inside you still have to keep reminding yourself of that.

Similarly, those of us who gain any kind of significance at all, if that’s our thing, you know we want to be somebody, we want people to look at us, that’s our drive to keep going in moments of feeling blah. We too find that it’s pretty pointless because you get to a certain position and what does it matter? It doesn’t matter much when you die. It doesn’t matter much what kind of casket they give you, or really it doesn’t matter much whether you had thousands at your funeral or whether you had five at your funeral.

And so loved ones, I would suggest to you that maybe those are moments of truth and not moments of untruth. And maybe what you should do at those moments is instead of producing some artificial drive that is in itself pointless. Maybe you should see that that’s why God has made and made available to us a person and a dynamic like the Holy Spirit. And maybe you should just stop in your tracks and see, “Yeah, I have nothing inside me. I have nothing here. Boy, I could commit suicide this very moment.” And maybe you should start saying, “Lord God, have you some life that gets me going? Have you some life that can lift me? Have you some life that I can submit myself to that would take me beyond moments like this?”

And loved ones, there was a moment when it was pretty blah at the beginning of the universe. Really, it was. It’s worse than you. Look Genesis 1:1, and I mean even you are not quite like this. Now sometimes as a school teacher I felt one of the adjectives applied, but still I don’t think any of us are just as bad as this. Genesis 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Then the moment of blah Verse 2, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Pretty chaotic, pretty much nothingness, and the last half of the Verse reads, “And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.”

Now loved ones, right from the very beginning of creation, this person, because he is a person which is referred to in the Bible as Holy Spirit, this person has always been moving to bring order, and light, and life where there is nothingness, and where there is vacuum and emptiness. And that’s what the Holy Spirit does, really, that’s what he does. And he is given to us because we humans are not self starters. We are not self starters. We are not independent in the last analysis. What keeps you on this earth? Why are we all not flying off with the centrifugal force?

Obviously, we’re not self dependent. Obviously, we can’t keep the thing in space. We don’t know why it’s flying around here. You who think you’re most self made and most competent, you can’t even keep your heart going. You don’t – no doctor can explain why your heart keeps pumping. We’re anything but self dependent creatures and those moments of blah. Those moments when you suddenly

think, “Boy, the heavy and weary weight of all this unintelligible world,” when you feel that and think that, that’s a moment when your Maker is trying to get through to you, “Look you can’t, you don’t have it, you don’t have what it takes to keep going on your own. I have a life and a dynamic that will ensure that you are never depressed. That you never have those moments of blah.” And loved ones, that’s what the Holy Spirit is.

Really, I think a lot of you sitting here have kind of missed this at times because I think a lot of us maybe are Christians here. I think a lot of you are Christians and yet you probably have very little awareness of the Holy Spirit in your life at all. I think it’s because you and your turn like the Muhammadins and the Buddhist and the Bahai and the Mormons have taken part in what is purely a mental exercise. Because of course, the whole purpose of Jesus coming was to give us the Holy Spirit. That’s it you see.

The whole purpose of Jesus coming was to fill us with this Holy Spirit. Now, that applies again, and again you know John 1:33, if you’d like to look at just one of the verses. John 1:33 and some of you know it. John that Baptist was talking, you remember, about Jesus and he says in John 1:33 “I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”

Now the whole purpose of Jesus’ life and death was to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. But I think many of us here have entered into a kind of Christianity that is almost independent of that real dynamic inside you. I think there are many of us that still have moments of blah and we’re still Christians. And we have moments of depression and we’re Christians, and we have moments when we feel there’s nothing inside me to lift me and we call ourselves Christians. I think it’s because we have entered into a kind of believism about Christianity.

All of us here have listened to the plain gospel of John 3:16 and I’m afraid we’ve misinterpreted it. Because we’ve heard it, “For God so love the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” And many of us here have been taught, “If I believe in Jesus I’ll have eternal life. I may not sense that anything has happened inside me, I may not feel any different, but I have eternal life if I believe in Jesus.” But we have interpreted belief in Jesus as a purely intellectual experience and we have said to ourselves, “Well, I believe on John F. Kennedy, I believe he existed. I believe in Ford, I believe he exists. Believing on Jesus must be believing that he’s the son of God. Well, I believe Jesus is the son of God.”

And so many of us have taken it at that level and have said, “I’m a Christian. I have eternal life. I don’t feel any different, I still have trouble with my inner life, but I believe that Jesus is the son of God.” Now loved ones, there is a terrifying verse, you know, in James and it would be good just to look at it. And it refers to some people who believe. James 2:19, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.”

Now belief itself is not what enables you to contact this Holy Spirit of life that God has made available. And I think many of us are caught in that. See, I think many of you would go even further and you’d say, “Oh now, we know that. We believe that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Now, that’s what makes you a Christian, isn’t it?” But loved ones, do you see that it’s still intellectual belief. It’s still, “I believe that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.” You might go even further and say, “Oh, I know what you’re getting at. You’re getting at that it has to be personal. Okay, I believe that Jesus died for my sins.”

But loved ones, I think many of you here this morning do believe that. I think you believe that Jesus died for your sins and you've determined now that you're going to live for him and really what you're involved in is still a mental kind of conversion because you have never dealt at any time with the Holy Spirit. And you remember every verse in scripture points to that that the whole purpose of God sending Jesus was so that we'd have the Holy Spirit. Remember, Galatians 4:6 runs, "And God sent the Spirit of his son into us." Jesus himself in that passage in the New Testament says, "It's to your advantage that I go away because if I don't go away the counselor will not come to you. But when he comes to you he will lead you into all truth."

Repeatedly in the Bible Jesus and the Father points to the fact that the whole purpose of Jesus death and life is that we would receive the Holy Spirit. That we would be filled with the Holy Spirit, that we'd be baptized with the Holy Spirit. But loved ones, I submit to you that many of us here this morning at still involved in a purely mental experience which we call Christianity but we have no intimate sense of Jesus as a person in our lives and above all, we have no sense in our lives that we're following and submitting to the Holy Spirit moment-by-moment.

In other words, really this is the situation we're in, I don't know if all of you – most of you have seen this kind of a diagram and probably know it by heart, but you know that if you look at the biblical outline of the personality and you think of that passage, you remember, that verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you holy and keep your spirit, and soul, and body blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus." God obviously shows us that we exist on three levels in our personalities. Not that there's a spirit that you can take out and a soul that you can take out but that there are three levels that you exist on at different times and the body consists of, in a sense, those three and the soul if you follow it through in the Bible is the word "psuche" which becomes psyche which becomes psychology in our own English language. And that's the psychological part of us and includes the mind, and the will, and the emotions. And the spirit part, if you follow through all the references to spirit in the Bible, indicate to you that the spirit has the ability to commune with God, to know what God wants you to do and to judge your actions of your will in the light of that.

Now loved ones, I'm afraid what many of us have experienced is a purely psychological experience of Christianity. With our minds we believe that Jesus died for our sins, with our wills we exercise ourselves to try to live like Jesus, and with our emotions from time-to-time especially, if we are witnessing we feel some kind of uplift. But the whole thing takes place there and of course the new birth takes place there, and the baptism with the Spirit takes place there, and any relationship with God occurs in our spirits. But many of us have run a purely mental experience of Christianity. You could call it a mental experience of Jesus but Jesus is a person and you can hardly even say that it's an experience of Jesus.

You can say it's a mental experience of Christianity as a philosophy, a mental experience of Jesus as an idea or a bundle of principles but not as a real person because, we've seen the thing primarily as something that we do ourselves. We believe with our minds, we obey with our wills the things that we think a Christian should do and from time-to-time, when we're together like this maybe, we have some experience of uplift in our emotions, but all we're involved in is a mental experience of Christianity and the proof of it is that we experience at times what the Muhammadans, the Buddhist, the Bahai, the Confucianists, what they all experience, we experience the feeling that we're carrying a heavy weight.

Many of us have entered into that kind of experience and we have from time-to-time the experience,

“Boy, religion is a heavy load and I’m carrying it.” And we have great trouble in the will area. At times there are things that we don’t want to do and we make ourselves do them. At times there are times when we don’t want to go out witnessing but we make ourselves go out witnessing. And loved ones, the reason is because we have not dealt with this dear person, the Holy Spirit, because of course God’s will is this, that we would receive the Holy Spirit in through our spirits by communion with God. He would tell us what we ought to do through the intuition. Our conscious would judge us on that, that we are passing that on to our wills. Our will would exercise control over our minds and our thought life. Our thought life would pass it through our emotions and into our body and out to the world and that is the Father’s will.

But many of us loved ones, have stopped it at that point. Now, what is the answer? Well, the answer is to deal with this dear Holy Spirit. The whole purpose of Jesus dying for us was so that we’d receive the Holy Spirit into us. And loved ones, the verse is clear and you’ve heard it often at all kinds of meetings it’s Revelation 3:20. And this is the heart of coming alive in God and the heart honestly, of deliverance from that feeling of blah, that feeling that we have no dynamic in our lives, that feeling of deadness. It’s Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” And that loved ones that is the statement of the Spirit because if you look back to Verse 13, the chapter reads, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” And then the Holy Spirit speaks and he says, “Behold, I stand at the door, here, and knock; if any man hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and I will sup with him and he with me.”

Now loved ones, what’s the secret? Well, the secret is that instead of making up your own salvation plan here, “I’m going to believe that Jesus died for my sins and I’m going to exercise my will to do what I think a Christian should do.” You’ll begin to see, “Lord Jesus this Holy Spirit that you have sent to us, I can see that you treat him as a person. I can see that you treat him as an equal and I can see Lord Jesus that you have said that that’s why you died so that I could receive this Holy Spirit. Well then Holy Spirit will you tell me what I can do to receive you?”

And the Holy Spirit will begin to explain to you the things in your own life that you need to do for him to come in to you. Because that’s important loved ones, the Holy Spirit is a gift, but he is a gift given to certain people. And those people are mentioned in Acts 5:32, God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey. So loved ones the reason you do not have the Holy Spirit in your life is because you have never ever, ever asked him what he wanted you to do. You haven’t. You’ve maybe asked me or you’ve asked somebody else or you’ve looked it up in the Bible or you’ve watched other Christians and you’ve said “Oh a Christian prays, he reads the Bible every day, he doesn’t drink, he doesn’t smoke and he tries not to lose his temper and he tries not to get angry.

And you’ve tried to do all these things. But have you ever, ever, ever turned to the Holy Spirit in faith and said “Holy Spirit I even feel corny doing this because I don’t know that you are there but I believe Jesus and I believe that he really lived. I believe that these are historical documents here. I believe that what he said is true and I believe that according to the evidence He’s the son of the Maker of the world and He said that you’re real, so Holy Spirit I ask you what is there in my life that I need to change for you to come in and begin to be a dynamic person and power inside me?”

Loved ones that’s the first step, honestly it is. If I could encourage your hearts, the Holy Spirit is a dear gentle person, really. I’m sure some of you have thought “Oh that old evangelical Christianity, it’s like a bulldozer.” I’ve felt at times like that! It’s a bulldozer, they thump you with John 3:16 and you have to believe it and you have to get up there and you have to do what

they tell you to do. Loved ones, that's not the dear Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is a dear gentle person like Jesus. He will deal with you as a gentleman. His attitude is always "Behold I stand at the door and knock." He is always knocking he will never blast that door down.

That's why you'll never have an experience of the Holy Spirit unless you want him. Unless you want him, really loved ones, he'll always treat you as the host in the house. He'll always say "I stand at the door and knock. I'm the guest, you are the host and that's the way it will always be until you allow it to be otherwise. I won't come in unless you ask me in." Loved ones that's why I think some of you get a bit discouraged because you kind of have the attitude "Oh I've tried and tried and tried." Pascal, you remember the French scientist, he said, "God is a hidden god and he will not reveal himself except to those who seek him with all their heart."

You know it's reasonable, after all you and I go to a lot of trouble to get into a lot of other things and we're prepared to ask very often for some of the other things we have in our lives. God expects us to be similarly anxious and enthusiastic before he will send the spirit of his son into us. Loved ones that's the first step and it's very simple. You could do it at home today. You could do it going in the car on the way home from lunch. You could do it on your knees tonight at your bedside. Don't complicate the thing just close your eyes and say, "Holy Spirit, I do believe you're there. I have no experience of you. I've had an experience of some kind of mental Christianity here but I don't have any real sense of a dynamic within my own life and I have those moments when I just could commit suicide it seems so hopeless. Holy Spirit will you speak to me, will you give me some impression of what I need to change in my life so that you can begin to come in and take over?"

Now loved ones then do what immediately comes to your mind. Believe the Holy Spirit. Don't get a thought and then think "Huh I wonder if it is the Holy Spirit?" You've asked him take him at his word as long as it's not stand on your head and say the Lord's Prayer backwards. As long as it's not something dumb. As long as it's not something that obviously you know from Scripture is not right. Then do it. If the Holy Spirit says to you "You are harsh with your wife. You are thoughtless with your roommate. You've just got hard, hard as nails. You just care only about yourself."

Whatever he says respond. If it's something down to earth, "Don't drink." Then don't drink. "Don't smoke." Then don't smoke! "Stop swearing." Then stop swearing. Do immediately what he tells you. Now loved ones don't say to me "Is it ok if I try?" There's in London, you know Britishers were dumb. In America we say "No smoking", and that's it. You are not meant to smoke in that area. In London in some restaurants they have "Try not to smoke". So you can imagine some fellow that is really belching the old cigar smoke out all over and the manager coming to him and saying "Could you stop smoking?" And he says "I'm trying."

Loved ones I know because I've smoked and I've drunk and I think we've all done these things but you know if you are really determined you stop. You know that. Remember the fellow who was on with Perry Mason (TV program) you remember the defense lawyer who always lost the case or the prosecuting lawyer always lost? Remember the dear fellow; he just smoked himself to death. But you remember there came that time when he saw death staring at him in the face. He stopped the smoking and he came on one of those commercials. In other words when you are faced with it finally if the thing is desperate enough you'll stop. The Father knows that. God knows us loved ones. God knows if we are desperate enough we'll stop. God knows if we're desperate enough to have the Holy Spirit in our lives we'll stop. Loved ones that's it, honestly. It's no use to say you'll try. Sure you'll try

if you're running this old mental thing "I'm trying to be a Christian and I believe the right things and I'm trying to be like a Christian on the outside." There the old will be trying continually, but when the will ceases to be influenced by the things that are coming in here, this Christian saying, "Well if you want to be a Christian you should go to church twice on Sundays. Well if you want to be a Christian you should read your Bible every day. Well if you want to be a Christian you should sing three hymns for lunch. Well if you want to be a Christian....." All those things loved ones when they are coming in that way, it's no use it's just works of law.

But if ever you let that dear will link up that conscience moved by the Holy Spirit, if you ever begin to respond to your conscience the Holy Spirit begins to get a grip in your life and begins to make things real to you. That's why the first step is looking to the Holy Spirit because he influences your conscience and saying "Holy Spirit what do you want me to stop in my life so that you can come in and begin to be real inside me." Loved ones that's the first step and everything in Christianity is the Holy Spirit. Now don't you come at me and say, "Oh you've got it wrong brother, it's Jesus." No loved ones, Jesus said the Holy Spirit will bear witness to me and I want you to look to the Holy Spirit now. I don't want you to keep looking to me if you look to the Holy Spirit he will direct your eyes to me. And that's the way it runs. He is your Lord here on earth as I was the Lord to the disciples here on earth. I at this time am at the right hand of the Father. I'm looking down upon you, I'm ruling over the whole universe at this moment. But my spirit, my Holy Spirit, the counselor that I have sent to you, He's there with you in your room. He is there with you in the car. He is there with you in your study. He's there to counsel with you and He will decide where you are in regards to me and he will make me real to you.

Now loved ones the Holy Spirit is the dear person and I ask you to begin to think in those terms would you? Begin to think in those terms and make your first step dealing with the Holy Spirit. Don't get all caught up in an excessive extreme Pentecostalism. Just see that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of Jesus.

We'll talk next Sunday about the kind of relationship the early church had with the Holy Spirit and you'll see that they always thought of him as the spirit of Jesus. It was Jesus' friend sent to them but he is the one who will lead. He will produce a supernatural conversion, supernatural regeneration; he will lead you on to being filled with himself and being anointed with himself. But the first step is to take him seriously. So I'd ask you to begin to do that? Some of us here are pretty hard aren't we? We've hard personalities, we have brash personalities and some of us are the other way we are like squashy rotten tomatoes we're so soft. We are sentimental and alright and it's quite nice but it has its disadvantages.

Some of us are very hard and some of us are very soft and if you go through with a mental Christianity what do you end up with? You end up with hard Christians and soft Christians. But if you go through a supernatural encounter with the Holy Spirit you're changed. You are changed by the Holy Spirit and you've become like Jesus, now loved ones that's it. I don't know how you feel, I suppose you have read "I'm Ok, You're Ok" and then maybe you are pretty satisfied with your personality but I think a lot of us here could stand a change. We kind of feel yeah there's some things that need to be changed in me. Loved ones you'll never do it. You'll produce your own version of goodness if you go through that mental conversion stuff.

But if you begin to deal with the Holy Spirit and honor him he would produce that dynamic so that loved ones I really want to guarantee this so that you'll become so sensitive to the Holy Spirit that you'll never have those blah moments after Memorial Day, after Christmas Day, after a death,

after some climatic moment that has for the moment raised you above yourself. The Holy Spirit in you you'll immediately sense his activity within you and you'll sense him lifting you up and he won't use you as an automaton. He'll just give you the lead and he'll ask for your cooperation. But I'll tell you it's something to feel that there is something inside to cooperate with. It just changes your life when those moments that are so blah you sense there's a dynamic inside you that you can cooperate with. And that is life.

I really pray that different ones of you would even forget a lot of the stuff that you believe you know and just deal with the Holy Spirit. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit I pray for my brothers and sisters here that you will show yourself real to them. Dear Holy Spirit I know you will I know you are alive and I know you myself. I pray Holy Spirit that you will influence them even when they get up after the benediction and go home that you'll influence them to turn round to you and look at you and believe in you and speak to you and expect you to give them some sense in their own lives through their thought life or through words or through lighting up words in a book or even words in the Bible that they'll sense what you want them to do so that you can take a greater hold in their life. Holy Spirit I pray for my dear friends and we would pray for each other here this morning. Pray for anyone who is even just turned off by this whole deal. Pray Holy Spirit that you are better than every one of us. You are more winsome and more universal than any man or woman and you will be to them what they need.

I thank you Lord Jesus for sending us the Holy Spirit. Thank you sending us a deliverer not a deliverer in our sins but a deliverer from our sins. Thank you. 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 throughout this coming week. Amen.