

## Forsaking Sin

James 4:17

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

If you arrived this morning early and saw the sunshine on the water and heard the birds and saw the new leaves, you know how clean, in many ways, nature that is untouched by us men and women can appear, and I am sure you must have felt some of that simple, clean joy that we really remember as children before life got complicated.

You know how beautiful it is just to be able to remember that -- and at times don't you find yourself trying to get into it. You try to just jump up a little and get into that kind of life that you knew when you were little and when you just had a dear Dad and Mom who took care of everything for you -- and that is the kind of joy that many of us want with all our hearts. And all I want to share in about three minutes is that, that's what everybody is trying to get. Do you see that?

Everybody is trying to get that. Most of us conventional people think we'll get it with the right wife or the right husband and the right family and the right home and the right car and the right vacations. Most of us feel if we can only get to that, we'll get again that joy, that magnificent joy that birds seem to have and that nature seems to have. And you know what happens: we lose our original destination on the way to it. That's what happens.

You look around, you see us all burdened with our mortgages and burdened with what's going around with the car and mileage, our child isn't developing the way we thought it should and even those of us who seem to have it virtually together in regard to those possessions, even we seem to have lost some of the freedom. We do not have spontaneous joy; it seems to be a kind of dead happiness. It's the freedom from pain but it doesn't seem to be a joy and a delight in life and it doesn't seem to be a freedom from burdens really.

We've just exchanged some burdens for other burdens and I think you all know that's what everybody is trying for with more alcohol than really you can control, that's what we're trying for. We're trying for freedom from worry, freedom from anxiety -- get the old Zeppelin, cut the strings and break loose from the world, get up above it somehow, that's what we're trying for. You know it's not difficult to see that's what we're trying for in the drugs, we're trying to just blast ourselves off the launching pad and somehow get up there. Isn't it strange that most of us here in this room do know what I am talking about? Most of us here sense we were made for something like that.

We sense on the spring morning, "Boy, it's so clean and beautiful and that's what I am made for but oh, inside I don't seem like that, I don't feel like that", and we want to be like that. So it goes on and that's why we try the occult and we try the imitations of it, that's why we try Buddhism. We've got to eliminate suffering, eliminate feeling, eliminate the self somehow -- we spring into this and so everybody is trying to get it.

Of course the key is that the spirit of those little birds this morning and the spirit of the branches and the trees, the spirit that is behind them is the spirit of the dear person who made them and it's by Him that all those things were made and without Him was not anything made that was made. It is His Spirit that gives life to all those things. That's why when a Manson family tried to get out into the world of nature and get from nature itself the joy that seems to be in nature, they

end up in a hell of their own making -- a hell of murder and of drugs and of sex, because the joy is not in the nature itself. The joy is in the hand that made the nature and that person lived in the first century of our era and it's His death that we're thinking of now. Most of all, we know that He rose from the dead and that every morning is a spring morning for Him and that He is able to impart that Spirit to us, and that's why we're here this morning.

You can have that Spirit in your life. You can have that free joy in your own life, you can, right from the bottom right up to the top, you can live like that inside, you can loved ones, you can. Those of you who have heard all the people at times saying "Ah, that's all right for kids, I am an ancient 44" -- you can have it despite the mortgages and despite the responsibilities. You can live free, you can. I live free, you can live free. Jesus, who made all the spring mornings can give that Spirit of His to you, He can. You can receive that Spirit this morning and all I want to say is one thing killed Jesus -- one thing killed Him. People who lived independent of God, people who sinned, they killed Him. They didn't care about God, they didn't care about Him, they killed Him.

I just want to remind you, I don't want to even look it up but I'll tell you it is James 4:17.

"Whosoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it for Him it is sin." That's the only thing that will keep Jesus' Spirit from coming into your life this morning, that's right, honestly. That's the only thing that will keep Jesus' Spirit from coming into your life this morning. Something that you know is wrong for you -- doesn't matter about all the other people -- but it is wrong for you and you keep on doing it. That will keep Jesus' Spirit out of your life and you will see that what all the other things are trying to do is get Jesus' Spirit without getting rid of sin.

That's why the drugs really are wrong. That's really why the alcohol is wrong, that's really why the occult is wrong, and that's really why Buddhism is wrong. It's because they're trying to get that exhilaration and that freedom from our self and that joy in life without getting rid of the sin or the independence of their maker. So I just say to each one of you this morning, anybody can take communion this morning and anybody can have communion with Jesus' Spirit who made the birds if you will, with your own will and your conscience, have done with the things that you know are wrong in your life.

Stop today, just commit yourself. "I will stop it now, Lord." Whether you feel it or not is not important, but the free spirit of Jesus who made the world will come into your life. That's true. And you'll begin to respond spontaneously to Him until you're freer and cleaner than a spring morning -- and that is some freedom and some cleanness -- but until you're freer and cleaner inside than a spring morning. And that's what we're doing, loved ones, this morning.

So, that's what I'll be doing and I would ask each one of you what sin is -- I don't know it. If for some of you, you drink, you drink until you lose self-control, that's sin, you should stop that now, stop it now. I don't want to get into arguments of whether you drink at all or not, but certainly if you drink to the point where you're out of self-control or at the point where you are substituting that false joy or false bluff freedom for this real freedom that God can give you, you're wrong, stop it. You don't need long philosophical arguments about it, it's just wrong to substitute superficial joy for the joy that God can give you.

Same with the sex thing. If some of you are being promiscuous -- that means that you're going to bed with somebody that you are not married to -- if you are doing that kind of thing or if some of us are engaging in dreams and in erotic fantasies to get again the exhilaration that only God can give us then that's wrong, you know it's wrong, you are not dumb -- you know that's wrong. Stop it.

Anybody who knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. And then the rest of us, you know all of us are noble sinners, all are sophisticated sinners that just make a little critical comment about the poor soul in the office and just that destroys the reputation, all that stuff.

You know it's wrong, stop it. Those of us who are involved in habits over a long period of time, stop it, otherwise you will eat and drink damnation unto your own soul, that's right, you will. You will take this bread and wine and it'll just be damnation to you. It will almost stick in your throat. You just won't have any sense of cleanness, you will have no sense of life, you'll just have a sense you've gone through a ritual. So be real this morning. I intend to be real in my response to this and I would ask you to be real. Are there any questions, loved ones? Anybody not sure what is needed? Really just be real about these sins in your life, have done with it.

If you are sitting there and you are saying, "Well, there are some things I am not sure are wrong and I would like to ask you but I don't want to ask out here", if you're doubting, then cut it out, if you're doubtful about it, cut it off. It's probable that God's Spirit is trying to get through to you and you're still not letting Him speak. Okay.

All right if you are willing -- that means the willingness to do that -- then will you stand together?

You that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession unto Almighty God.

Let us be seated as we pray.

We do not presume to come to this, Thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so by faith to receive thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, that the bread which we break may be unto us the communion of His Body, and a cup of blessing which we bless, may be the communion of His blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us.

The Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread and broke it and said, "This is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of Me." In like manner He took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He come. Amen.