

## Path to God: Repentance

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think all of us here know that we've been sharing that our Creator is a person and that he really is our dear Father. I think that all of us know that and are aware of it, but you know as well as I do that some of us are still in a position of hearing about a friend's friend. That is, I am your friend and you're hearing about my friend. You're hearing me talk about somebody that I know personally, but you yourself do not know personally. And there are some of us in that position this morning. There are others of us here who not only believe that God is our dear Father but we know him as our Father ourselves, we know Him personally.

Now, I am concerned about those of you who are like I was. You believe all these things, you believe that God is your Father, you believe that He loves you but you yourself don't know Him and you have no personal feeling for Him. You agree with all the facts but you don't know the person about which the facts are stated. So, how do you come into a personal relationship with God?

Loved ones, you have to respond personally, that's the secret. You yourself have to respond personally, you have to. You know the situation so well here even. You know how well you feel you know me and I try to be just myself in every way so that you can see, warts and all -- you know that you feel you know me very very closely and intimately, and you really do -- you know me as I am, that's what I am. I am no different from what you see here, and you know what happens then, when you come up to me, you treat me as a dear and old friend and of course I am seeing you for the first time but your whole attitude immediately welds us together in a friendship because, of course, I immediately can love you because you're loving me.

It's the same with God. He has been giving you things and showing you His love since you were born but there's going to be no friendship that's personal between you until you come forward to Him and take a step in faith. Now, that's the opportunity that you have at every communion service. You really have it every day in your life, but especially here at communion.

Now, if you say to me, "Well, I agree but I don't know what to do." There are three steps and you can explain them in all kinds of ways but I think this is an easy way to explain them. The first step is, agree with what God is saying to you. Now, you may say, "But that's my problem I can't hear Him, I can't hear Him saying anything to me. You seem to be able to hear Him speaking, I can't hear Him speaking." Loved ones, your conscience is part of God's Spirit in you, your conscience -- honestly it is. Now you may say, "Oh no, no, I don't want to listen to that," but that's God's voice in you.

So the first step this morning is, listen to what your conscience has been saying to you, maybe for some years. If your conscience has been saying to you, "you shouldn't be doing this", or "you should be doing that", this morning, agree with that, agree with it. That's the first step to making up any personal relationship with anybody. At least come to an agreement with them about what they're saying to you and God is speaking to you through your conscience.

So, now you each know your conscience at this moment. You know what your conscience is saying to you. Now, if your conscience is saying, "that is wrong, you shouldn't do it", stop arguing, stop rationalizing, stop pretending, stop procrastinating, listen to your conscience, agree with your

conscience.

Now, I don't want to draw it out but that's what confessing is, that's it. In Greek it's "Homologeō". "Homo" is "the same", "Logo" is "to say, say the same thing". Confessing is saying the same thing as God's voice inside you saying, see? Now, if some of you will be like me and you'll say, "Look it's not a matter of that, it's a matter of my mind, my mind has to absorb more what you're saying here on Sundays, and as I absorb more of it, I'll come into agreement with it, that's what's necessary", no, no you won't, you won't.

I can talk here for generations and you can agree with every detail I speak. You won't make one move towards God until you respond to His voice in you, not my voice; His voice is your conscience. Agree with your conscience. Confess that the things He says you ought to change in your life, you ought to change. Now a lot of you are stopping right there, a lot of you have sexual sins that you're just bluffing along on, you are. We're all the same, so you needn't pretend that you're not doing it, a lot of us of a certain age are just bluffing along on some relationships that aren't right, we know they're not right. Or we're playing along with certain ideas in our minds that we know aren't right and we're pretending they're healthy and they're red blooded and they're not. The conscience has been convicting us for a long time about those.

Others of us who are at a different age bracket have been convicted for a long time about what we are doing with our money, or what we're doing in a certain personal relationship or what attitude of criticism we have to a certain person. Deal with those things, do honestly, that's the start. You'll get nowhere if you keep bluffing that. You needn't do anything more with this bread and wine you know, unless you deal honestly with your conscience. Confess that the things that you've known to be wrong for years are wrong. Do you see what I am saying, even if you don't see how to stop them, that's what I am saying.

Even if you're getting yourself in the corner, even if you're painting yourself into that corner, the first step is to agree with God against yourself, that's the first big step towards God, confess. The second step is: stop doing it, repent. That's what repentance is, stop doing it. If you say to me, "Brother, I can't stop doing it," I am saying stop doing it now -- and you say, "But I'll find myself doing it this afternoon," then stop doing it again, -- "But I'll find myself doing it tomorrow", -- then stop doing it again. That's right. Declare with not only your conscience but with your will that you're going to move towards God's plan for your life even if you stop smoking 2,400 times. You're going to stop doing the things that He says are wrong in your life.

Loved ones, keep at it, please keep at it. That thing helped me a lot that some saint said, "A saint is not someone who never falls but one who gets up each time he falls." Get up, get up! Say today, "I am going to stop doing it, I don't know what I'll do this evening but I am stopping it at this moment," and then you're only responsible for each moment, each moment, not for tomorrow, not next week, each moment. Satan wants to bluff you, you see. He wants to steal from you the power that you have. The power that you have is that which God gave you in Jesus to stop it, but Satan wants to bluff you and say, "Oh no, you're not going to be able to keep it going for the next two years." That doesn't matter. You're not responsible for the next two years, maybe you'll be dead after three months. No, you're responsible for today; today is the day of salvation. God is so good. Not tomorrow, not next week, today is the day of salvation. Tell Satan "forget it, I am living at this moment, I am going to stop doing it at this moment. When the next moment comes, I'll stop doing it then, but I'll stop doing it at this moment." Stop it loved ones, don't let Satan in and don't let him steal your relationship with your God from you by persuading you to say you can't do it. No you

can, you can stop, repentance is stop doing it.

The third step is the miracle. God has changed you in His son, absolutely. His death is simply a physical expression of a great miracle whereby God put you and me and all of us into His son and destroyed this old personality that cannot obey Him and recreated us new. Give your life to Jesus. Just say to Him, "Lord Jesus, I have tried to change this life of mine for years, I have tried to change my attitude and my habits for years, I cannot. Lord, I do believe I don't understand it all, but I do believe that on Calvary, You in some way bore me to death and you destroyed this personality that is so intractable. Lord, I give it to You. I give You my life. I give You my personality. Do whatever is needed, however long it takes to change me and make me a child of God." Loved ones, that's it.

If you say to me, "what will happen?", God will do what he promised, he will give you the gift of His Holy Spirit. He will begin to speak to you, you will begin to sense His voice in you, you will, that's guaranteed, you'll begin to sense God's voice inside you and you'll begin to sense a strength that is not your own. Simply because you've been prepared to set your face the way God wants you to, really that's it. But it requires you to make the steps.

What I would do after service is then, if I'd never had quiet times, a prayer time at home, before, then I'd go down and see Tom or some of the others in the bookshop and I'd ask them, "Give me a Bible study course or something that I can read morning by morning." There are several and begin to read it every morning and begin to pray to your Father and give Him a chance to speak to you. Loved ones, that's it. I must say it's easy as that, yet, it is not easy. Costs us everything we have, it costs us our whole lives really.

So loved ones, that's what you need to do if you're sitting here this morning and you're thinking, "Well, I do agree with all that you say but I don't have a personal relationship with my God at all", take those three steps. Confess and repent and give your life to Jesus for Him to change it as He pleases, and then you'll begin to sense a life from your Creator coming to you.

Now, most of us can do it during the time while the bread and the wine is being distributed. There is quiet time there while the organ is playing so I'd ask you to be real about it, okay? So some of you can enter into a new life this morning, just a new life. I'll pray that you will and loved ones will you stand and receive the invitation?

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.