

Self Centeredness

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Throughout the history of communion, it has been observed without any break from the first time that Jesus celebrated the last supper with His disciples, that are true, since 29 AD. There has never been a night when communion has not been celebrated and throughout the history of that celebration of communion, healing service has always been connected with the communion service.

Indeed, often there would simply be a healing service after communion down through the centuries. You can see why that was so, when you remember some of the words that we read. "And with His stripes, we are healed". And when you remember how the Hebrew in those lines means not "surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" but "surely He has borne our pains and carried our sicknesses".

So this morning I'd just like to share briefly how "and with His stripes we are healed", can apply to some of us here. Not the only way it can apply, because it applies to cancer and organic diseases also, but how it can apply to a special kind of sickness that probably all of us here experience. You and I are often our worst enemies. You and I often are killing ourselves slowly but surely and we're doing it not so much because of what we eat, but because of the things that are eating us inside.

If you are on a roller coaster and are scared, you grip tight like that and you can see the muscles contracting in your body and you know even you can grip so tightly that you can actually hurt yourself and cause pain. So there are all kinds of emotions that you and I feel that can contract the muscles of our bodies and cause pain.

If, for instance, it's anxiety and it contracts the outlet of our stomach, it can create much more than pain. It can create all kinds of stomach problems that actually bring about physical results and changes inside. If you're very very scared, very very scared, you know how the blood seems to drain from your face. Or you receive a shock of someone's death you just go white, because the emotion of fear can constrict the blood vessels so that the blood is not able to get where it normally flows. So all kinds of emotions can cause the constriction of the blood vessels and can create all kinds of pain and all kinds of sickness.

You know if you're up in front of a crowd and you're nervous, you know how your mouth seems very very dry. That nervousness and that concern about what other people are thinking can affect all kinds of secretions that normally are released in your body to make it move as it's meant to. Moreover, other emotions can release too much of those secretions so that all kinds of adrenaline can be released within the stomach at a time when it cannot really be used in action.

Loved ones, there are all kinds of emotions that create chaos in our bodies and bring sickness to us. One doctor listed them. Fear, sorrow, jealousy, envy, self-centeredness, ambition, frustration, rage, resentment, hatred. He has an amazing diagram that lists the diseases that can be either caused or affected by those emotions. Then he says, observe that these disease-producing emotions are concerned with protecting and coddling the self and they could be summarized under one title, "self-centeredness".

Then he says, "Centuries before modern psychiatry discovered the carnal emotions were important

factors in the causation of many psychosomatic diseases," he says, "God gave a better list of them than any psychological book." I'll read you them and you know them so well. "The works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissention, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like." And they all stem from the one source: from self.

Now loved ones, Jesus took you on Calvary and he destroyed that self. And it is possible for you this morning to come to a place where you separate yourself from self. He has already done it in His cosmic death and it is possible for you to receive the benefits of that in your own life this very day by agreeing with that, by simply believing that and accepting it. It is possible for you to live in Jesus and not in self.

In other words, there is one place where those disease-producing emotions do not exist. There is one place where there is no envy, no jealousy, no anger, no pride, no anger, no resentment, no worry, no anxiety and that is -- believe it or not -- in a place that the whole world thinks is the most painful destructive place that ever existed. And that place is in a dear man hanging on a cross. Now in that man's heart none of those things exist. This morning, you are invited to take your place with him -- that's it.

And if you do, if you do, if you're willing to hang with that man and to say, "Lord Christ, I'd rather be with you on that cross than in the most beautiful place I can imagine in the whole universe" -- if you are willing, there will flow into your heart the healing Spirit of Jesus -- there will. There will come into your heart and life the healing Spirit of Jesus that will cleanse away all the staleness and the sickness of self -- that's right. But you must be willing to take your place with him on the cross and to imagine what he felt like there. And to imagine what his attitude was to his so-called enemies and then to be willing to take the same attitude yourself, to your friends, your colleagues, your enemies.

That's the key and if you do that, you'll find it true "with his stripes we are healed". A supernatural power is released from his death in Calvary into your life, if you are willing to identify yourself with him. So that's the only condition for taking communion this morning.

You don't need to be a member of this church; none of us really are members. You don't even need to have been a Christian in the past. But you do need to be willing to identify yourself with Jesus. To take your place in his heart on the cross and to adopt the same attitude to life in the world as he has. If you're willing, his Spirit will be given to you as you take the wine and the bread this day and you will find that cleanness inside and you'll find a healing stream of life that will make your sicknesses disappear. That's true. He is the only answer to anxiety and the worry and the ulcers and the disease that comes from it.

So will you think -- just think -- and deal with Him? I know I haven't explained every detail but I think you know enough to begin to deal with him during this service. Will you stand?

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, most 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, that we by faith may receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. That the bread which we break may be unto us the communion of His Body, and the 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 on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread and broke it and said, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner He took the cup after supper saying, This is the cup of the New Covenant in My blood: this do, as often as you drink it. For as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He come.