

Decide Today!

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Even for those of us who are young, this is a solemn day because this is the first Sunday of another year and however young we are, we know we have only so many of these years to spend. So it is a solemn time and a time when we need to, if we have any intelligence at all, look at our own lives and see where they're going, and try to fix in our minds where we want to try to get them to go this coming year.

Loved ones, if you don't do that, you will drift. And some of us here find we're in the tragic situation that we feel we've been drifting for longer than we care to imagine and we feel we've been drifting from one spot to another, from one job to another, not really choosing our way, but almost just bouncing from one spot to another. Often we have found -- those of us who have believed God for a long time - often mouthing the same old beliefs and the same old clichés but not really being changed at all by them.

Now, I would ask you, whether you believe in God this morning or whether you don't believe at all, would you look at your own life and try to determine in your mind where it is going? Because you only will have a certain number of years like this past one, and they are precious, and there is no guarantee that you will see the end of this year -- there just isn't -- and you and I both know that. That's no "hellfire and damnation preaching", that's a fact of life. None of us know whether we'll see the end of this present year or not, this is an important time for us. There is that pathetic verse you remember in the Old Testament, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not yet saved." So I would ask you, where is your life going and what is happening in your professional life, your job life, and your vocational life?

And then what is happening in your resolution life? Because it's one way out of the difficulty to become cynical about new year resolutions but it really doesn't solved anything, you're still left with a thought that there are countless habits of thinking and habits of behavior that you're still fighting and you were fighting them 10 years ago, you were fighting them 15 years ago and as far as you're concerned, you can see little improvement in your own life over these past 5 or 10 years.

Now loved ones, it's vital to look at those facts and not to ignore them and to see that that is not normal, that's not normal. It's normal in a fallen world that has no God -- but it is not normal in a world that has been made by a Father that makes a new sunrise every morning. The norm for people who live in that kind of a world is that they progress in their lives, their lives become more ordered. They grow into greater and greater peace and contentment, greater trust, they have less anxiety than they had before. They are fighting greater battles because God gives them to them, but they're able to fight them and win, that's normal.

If your life is not like that, if your life -- I remember it was an 18th century novelist called Sterne and in one of his books, I think it was "Tristram Shandy", he did a diagram showing the plot of the novel and of course it went like that, then like that, then like that and then away back there and it was a hideous novel to read because it kept flashing back and going back and forward. Now, if your life is like that, it's not the way your life was meant to be. Your life was not meant to be a trail of unfulfilled promises, of failed resolutions, of broken relationships, of uncertainty about your future and your job life. It's not meant to be like that. Your God put you here to do a job and He has a plan for your life and He means your life to go from glory to glory,

that's it.

So I'd ask you, if your life isn't going that way, will you seriously examine your life before your Maker today? And I would say, will you do something about it? You may sit there and say, "Well, why doesn't He do something about it?" Well, He has done everything that's needed, but He does require you to stand up on two feet like a man or like a woman with some backbone in you and get going the way He has shown you.

And if you say to me, "Oh well, I don't know which way to go", you know fine well, you have a thousand little signals from your conscience from time to time that give you an idea which way you should go and you should head out in those directions. Whether regarding your own personal behavior or regarding your own professional future, you should head out in that direction. It's only in action that your faith is seen by God, and it's only when your faith is seen by Him, that He can operate to bring your life into order.

So I would ask you loved ones, if you've been drifting, or you've been sliding from place to place now for several years, would you stand up this morning inside in your heart and your mind and decide, "Lord God, You have something for me to do, I want to get my life going in a straight line," and loved ones, honestly, believe me, if you even make that kind of move, if you make any kind of a move towards order in your life, the Creator will begin to work in your life.

But loved ones, we aren't jellyfish. We aren't jellyfish, wobbling about like that forever, we aren't. The society tries to make us think we are, that we're the victims of our heredity plus our environment, but we aren't. We are able to make our lives go in a way that we believe our Maker wants us to, that's why He gave us intellects and minds. And you know fine well that the only way you can achieve anything in this world is to determine what's to be done and do it.

So I would ask you, will you think now, each one of you, wherever you are in your Christian faith, wherever you are in your belief in God, wherever you are in your atheism or your agnosticism -- would you pause for a moment now on this first Sunday of this year and would you in the quiet times that we'll have for prayer during this communion service, will you examine your heart and look in and see has God given you any impressions there that would give you a direction in your life? Has He given you any hint over the years of which way you should go? Then will you align your will with that?

Why I pleaded especially for that, is my heart goes out to those of us who have been educated in recent years because we have been the victims of this kind of brainwashing that you can't do anything about it. "You are determined by your father and your mother and your environment" -- you're not, you're not. You're a free person and that's what we say, here in this country we say, "We're free and we can do what we really want to do", and that's true, loved ones, that's true.

I would ask you to think seriously about it. This is what we call in the family here Covenant Sunday. When we renew our covenant with our God, with our Creator -- and we do it in some formal words that have been used over the years, but most of all, we do it in our heart of hearts. So, that's what we're going to do, we're going to have the short covenant service and then we're going to have the communion service. So, I'll just read the words really that we've used so often before and that thousands of our forefathers have used.

I am no longer my own, but thine.

