

Obeying the Holy Spirit

Luke 12:10

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I have something that God brought to my heart as something I should give this morning instead of the sermon. It concerns the verse in Luke if you would refer to Luke 12:10.

Luke 12:10, "And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven." The obvious interpretation of that verse is that if you speak against Jesus or you deny for a long time in your life that He is the Son of God, and you turn in repentance, then you will be forgiven. But blaspheme, it seems from the English meaning of the word, implies if you speak against the Holy Spirit, then you will not be forgiven. In practice, down through the ages, it has seemed it is not just speaking against the Holy Spirit, but ignoring and rejecting the Holy Spirit.

Someone else has said, "If you hear the Holy Spirit's voice within you, and you say that isn't a Holy Spirit, then that's speaking against the Holy Spirit and rejecting Him." So many have said, "If you regard the Holy Spirit and then say that isn't the Holy Spirit, that's blaspheming against Him, and that sin cannot be forgiven."

For those of you who specialize in a lot of condemnation, maybe the best comment that someone made is "If you're concerned about whether you have committed the unforgivable sin (blaspheming the Holy Spirit) or not, then you haven't." Because someone that is at the place where they're not concerned anymore is absolutely blind and deaf to the Holy Spirit.

So, that is the normal interpretation, loved ones, of that verse. If you are all worked up, "Oh have I committed the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit?" Well, if you are still even concerned about that, then you haven't. But it's a person who says, "No, no I haven't", and yet who does not respect or regard the Holy Spirit in their lives, they are the ones that perhaps have. But the message that God shared with me this morning is even a little closer to home than that.

The Holy Spirit speaks in each one of our lives. And if you keep on saying to yourself, "That isn't the Holy Spirit, that was just my conscience, or that was just my own idea", then you will gradually become immune to the voice of the Holy Spirit inside you. So if the Holy Spirit has told you to do something or to stop doing something and you do that little double-take, you know the little double-take, "Well, that could be the Holy Spirit", and then as C.S. Lewis says, "You go outside and you get a breath of fresh air and you see a car pass or a bus pass and then you say to yourself, "That was a silly idea I had. For a moment, I thought that was God speaking to me." Or you get into a book and you say to yourself, "Now, wait a minute, I can't just go out and obey that. I mean that's dumb, otherwise I'd be running around doing all kinds of weird things. Now, I better let my mind examine this that apparently I thought was the voice of the Holy Spirit." And your mind isn't examining it long before you've absolutely eliminated it as the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Loved ones, that's why that sin is said to be the unforgivable one. I'll show you the verse that indicates that. It's in Hebrews 6:4-6, "For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if

they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt."

Now again to those of you who specialize in self-condemnation, it's important to see that those verses are saying clearly if such a person commits apostasy then it is impossible to restore again to repentance. Apostasy is simply forgetting God completely. It's just turning the other way and never giving God any place in your life for the rest of your life. It's becoming apostate, it's denying the faith, denying belief in God, and it's turning completely against Him. That's what apostasy is. But do you see that the first verse applies to what we're talking about?

It is impossible to restore again to repentance. It's never impossible for God to forgive us, but if we won't listen to the voice within us, we'll never come to new repentance. So the Holy Spirit is speaking and saying, "Look, do that, do that", and we're saying, "Oh well, that was just my own idea. Oh, that was just a thought I had." You keep on saying that and the Holy Spirit keeps on trying to speak to you and you keep on resisting it. You eventually get to the point where it's even impossible to renew you to repentance, simply because the Holy Spirit can't get you to even suspect that you're wrong, that's it.

So it's never impossible for God to forgive us. But we can get to the point where it's impossible for Him to renew us again to repentance because He renews us to repentance through the voice of the Holy Spirit within us and through His influence. If you keep on hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit and saying, "That isn't the Holy Spirit, that's just my own idea or that was a thought I had", then God cannot contact or do anything with you.

Now, loved ones, that happened at times among the Israelites. I'll show you what was the result of it. It's in First Samuel 3:1, "Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision." And that's what happens.

In your own life, the word of the Lord becomes rare and there is no frequent vision. That is, you come to church here Sunday after Sunday, you go to all kinds of fellowship groups and Bible study groups, you read all kinds of books but somehow there's a deadness inside you. You listen to other people saying about how wonderful it is to know God and how wonderful it is to be in His service and you don't feel any of that; it's just dead, there's nothing. You haven't heard from God in a long time.

Now that's what happens when you won't respond to the voice of the Holy Spirit within you. When He tells you little things like pray every morning and you don't. Or little things like go and visit somebody who is lonely and old and retired and has no one to care about them and you don't. Or He tells you stop doing that little dishonest thing that you're involved doing at work and you don't. Or He tells you, you should start studying His Word, and you don't. Or, He tells you, you should start tithing or start giving money to somebody and you don't.

If you keep on psyching the Holy Spirit out, if you keep on switching Him out, saying, "Well, that sounded like God's voice but it was just my own mind." If you keep on doing it, then the word of the Lord becomes rarer and rarer in your life. The word of the Lord is the only thing that brings you sweetness and fragrance. The word of the Lord is the only thing that delivers you from the rest of us. The word of the Lord is the only thing that delivers you from the very superficial life that we live dominated by TV ads, commercials, the blaring of the media, the blasting of our colleagues and our friends at work and all our relatives. The word of the Lord is the only thing that delivers us

from that chaotic, noisy world. And the word of the Lord becomes rare in your life. Your life gets empty and dead and cold if you keep on saying, "That wasn't the voice of the Holy Spirit, that was my own mind."

Why I share it with you is because it's very easy for people like us who have such active minds to be deceived in that way. What God showed me this morning was, many of us here who wouldn't dream of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and who wouldn't dream of ignoring God are involved in deception in this area. Many of us who say to each other, "I don't feel God's real in my life, I don't. I know what He is talking about but I don't feel what He says on Sunday. I don't feel that thing, it's not real to me."

Loved ones, it's not real because you're not listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit within you who is telling you to do some little things. They're so little and they seem to you so non-religious and so unconnected with your relationship with God that you keep on thinking, "Oh, that was just my mind. That was just my own idea. That was just a thought I had. But when the voice of the Holy Spirit comes, I'll know it's the voice of the Holy Spirit."

Loved ones, you can sin your way into hell if you keep on doing that. The fact is, all of us here who come Sunday by Sunday, have enough knowledge in life to choke us. We have enough knowledge and understanding to choke us. And it will choke you unless you respond to the little words that the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Now, what about the suggestion that comes to us all at this moment?

Well, what if it is just my own good idea? I've been brought up in an ethical society, and isn't it reasonable to believe that the thought inside me is just my own idea and therefore I am free either to ignore it or practice it later or postpone it? I mean if I knew it was the voice of Jesus or the voice of the Spirit, I'd do it immediately because I know they don't burden me by telling me to do something long before the time that I have to do it. I know they don't do that. I know they tell me to do a thing when I have to do it. But it's because I think it's the thought of my own mind that I think I have control over it. I have a right either to do it now or do it later. How do I tell whether it's my own good idea or whether it's the Holy Spirit?"

Loved ones, there's a verse that I think solves that. Luke 18:18-19, "And a ruler asked him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.'"

If a good impulse comes from inside you, there's nobody good but God. You're being self-righteous by saying, "Oh, that was a good idea, I had." You or I can't produce one good idea if we had eternity to do it. The only good thoughts and good impulses that come from within us come from Him who alone is good.

In other words there's nothing good in us but the Spirit of Jesus, loved ones. You see even those of you this morning who feel, "Oh, I am not a Christian brother, I am not a child of God, I haven't made that step yet. How could I have anything good in me?" Loved ones, the seed of Jesus' Spirit is in you, that's why you're here on Sunday mornings. Even those of you who haven't made a decision for Jesus or haven't committed yourself to Him, the seed of Jesus' Spirit is within you. When anything good comes to you in a sense of an impulse or an impression or an intuition that you want to do something, that is proof that Christ is within you speaking because you have nothing good yourself.

It is blasphemy to say of any good impulse. "Oh, that came from my own mind, that came from myself."

Loved ones, it didn't. If there's anything good in you, who are basically a selfish, self-centered person like the rest of us, it's because Jesus is within you and has spoken that to your heart and if you will obey that, immediately, His word will grow stronger within you and you'll begin to have a central direction in your life that comes direct from God.

If you say, "I think sometimes it does seem so much myself. I have had many of these thoughts before. I have had many ideas like the ones I am thinking of now as you're speaking. I have had many of them." Well, you see it is reasonable to believe that it is going to seem as if it comes from you. That's what they felt back in the first century in Acts 15.

Acts 15:28, outlines a great difference that occurred in regard to the Holy Spirit's relationship to those of us in the New Testament and those of us in the Old Testament. It's Acts 15:28, "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."

Then he goes on to outline that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols.

But you see the way the apostle puts it, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit appeared as an angel, appeared as a pillar of fire, a cloud, appeared as something outside the person. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit came to dwell within us and so they used that kind of wording: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

It ought to seem good to you. Stop thinking that if it's the Holy Spirit it should seem something absolutely outside yourself or something different from yourself. It should be you. That's the difference between us and the people of the Old Testament, since Jesus came to the earth, died and was raised. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was external to people. He spoke through an ass at one time, through a cloud, through fire, through an angel, through other men, and through prophets. But ever since Jesus rose to the right hand of the Father, the Holy Spirit has been able to come and dwell inside you and me.

And so, His ideas seem like our ideas. And the only way you can be sure that they're from Him is if they're good. If they are good they are from Him, they're not from you. That means, loved ones, you need to obey. You need to obey. You need to listen to the Holy Spirit when He speaks to us and says, "Oh you should do this on your vacation instead of that, or you should go and do something with this person because they have no friends, or He says you should buy a little book and send it to somebody, or you should write a letter to some friend or your mom or something, or He says you should give money to that thing. You know those little things.

When you and I ignore those thoughts and treat them as if they're our good ideas, we're treating ourselves as good and we're refusing to believe God's Word that there's no good in us. Secondly we're blaspheming against the Holy Spirit because we're rejecting Him and saying, "Holy Spirit, you're not the Holy Spirit, you're my idea."

So loved ones, would you think about it? It certainly concerned me when God showed me this. There could be many of us who are experiencing great deadness in our Christian lives because we are just extravagantly rejecting the guidance that the Holy Spirit is giving us. We have in our minds a false idea of how He is going to speak and because He seems to be speaking through our minds, we keep on saying, "It isn't the Holy Spirit, it's just my idea." And therefore you know what we do. We say, "It's my own mind, so I can obey it whenever I choose or maybe I can think it over and analyze it away or maybe I can give it another kind of form." But you see if that's Jesus' voice within you,

you're crucifying the Lord of glory afresh inside you.

You're killing Him inside you and that's why the word of the Lord is becoming so rare in your life. That's why your life is becoming boring, becoming unexciting, becoming predictable and routine because you're ignoring the words of the Holy Spirit. If you say to me, "Well, brother you can't just go off and do whatever any voice says inside you, there are all kinds of voices." Well sure, but you know that isn't the problem.

We know fine well if a voice says, "You've got to wash your hair 35 times a day", we know there's something corny about that one. I mean we're not all running around with all kinds of wild impulses inside us, we're not. We know fine well the impulses that we're talking about this morning. We're talking about those good impulses that are good and responsible. We know they're fine and in line with the Bible. We also know that other people that we respect would agree that they're good. We're talking about those.

So I think Satan sometimes throws us off track by suggesting, "Oh by doing that, you'll go off track." Well, then just compare with a brother or sister that you respect or that you know is solid. Just say, "Do you think this could be the Holy Spirit?" If you have nobody to compare it with, then do it. Do it and let God show you.

I don't know how twisted your mind is but my mind can get pretty twisted. On the way here this morning the question occurred to me, "What if God didn't want me to share this with you this morning? Maybe it wouldn't mean anything to you." Then God was so good because He said, "Well, that will show them that you have to obey, anyway, won't it?" So even if it makes a fool out of you, even if it all turns out wrongly, you're still far, far on the right side of the fence to obey and do the thing and let God show you.

Loved ones, I have a feeling that hundreds of us here, week by week, are probably suffocating the word of the Lord within us because we're so determined to do only what is sensible or reasonable or what is 20th century intelligent to do. And we're all preoccupied with what everybody else would think or what the books say we should do. Loved ones, I think we should forget that stuff.

You're a separate individual from everybody else in this world and God has a place for you in heaven that is reserved for you alone. He has a place in His heart for you and you only. He has things for you to do here in this world that only you can do and none of us can tell you how to live your life. But if you don't obey the voice of the Holy Spirit within you, you won't know either, and you'll spend your life drifting from place to place in continual and increasing frustration.

So loved ones, would you really consider this in regard to your own life? And if you say to me, "Oh brother, I am startled because there are all kinds of intuitions and impressions that I have had over these years, even over this past month and I've just psyched them right out. I've said that's my own idea. Where do I start?"

Well, you don't go back over all those. They are no longer the word of Lord to you. Don't go back over them. But now, from this moment, commit yourself to believing that if any good impulse comes from within you, it's Christ Himself that you're hearing speak. Obey Him. Obey Him, and do it. It doesn't matter what it is. Obey Him, obey yourself into life but don't resist Him.

Don't reject Him, loved ones. Otherwise you'll lose everything. That's what Thomas Moore was about.

He meant there were many moments when you hold your life in your hands like water, and if you open your fingers just a moment, your life drains away and it's lost forever.

Loved ones, there are moments continually through the day when God is giving you signals. Obey them, or you'll sink into a purely animalist life. You'll have no guidance but what the rest of us can give you. So maybe we could take just five minutes while Carmen plays the piano, where you could come up and kneel here. Just commit yourself to listening and obeying and then go back to your seat.

You don't need to do that. If you want you can do it where you are sitting but I think some of us have gone so long on this that we need to take some action this morning. So maybe that would be a good thing to do. For those of us who have maybe drifted a long time in this, if you know that there is something that you have in your heart at this moment that God has told you and you've kept on psyching it out, then will you just come quietly up here. Commit yourself to it and then go back to your seat. After about five minutes, I'll just close with a benediction. Let us pray.

We would commit ourselves to honoring you in our lives and ask forgiveness for any deception that we've been under. It's still wrong Lord, so we ask forgiveness for the times that we have ignored You and of all things, put ourselves and our own minds in place of You -- unthinkable as it is -- regarded your voice as our own voice. Lord, we see how far our self-centeredness carries us when our God speaks to us and we think so much of ourselves that we think maybe it's us.

Lord, we ask forgiveness for that and for the deadness that it has brought into our lives, for how the word of the Lord has seemed so rare and there has been no frequent vision in our lives. Lord, we apologize and we commit ourselves now to this new life different and guided by you. We don't know what's ahead of us. We don't know what things this will result in. But Lord, we know that that's what we have to do, whatever.

So Lord, we commit ourselves to this new life of doing what the good impulses and intuitions and impressions within us prompt us to do -- and to do them immediately. If you have to correct us in the doing of it, then do that, or if you have to check us by the results, do that.

Lord, we take this iron hand off the dear Holy Spirit within us that prevents the dove of the Spirit flying freely in our lives and bringing us into new levels and new heights of life and of satisfaction and joy and peace. Holy Spirit we set you free in our lives by committing ourselves to obeying you and believing your voice. We will no longer call it our own voice and blaspheme against you.

So, Lord we commit ourselves to this new life and trust you to lead us along it from strength to strength for your glory. 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 week, forever more. Amen.