

## Break Up Your Fallow Ground

Hosea 10:12

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

During Lent we remember Jesus' suffering which preceded His dying on the Cross for us. Down through the centuries since Jesus' death and resurrection, Lent has been a time for self-examination. So those of us who are Catholic in background remember how Ash Wednesday with the mark of the ashes signified the sackcloth and ashes in which we examined our lives in preparation for our death with Jesus on Good Friday and then our glorious resurrection on Easter Sunday.

So Good Friday and Easter Sunday will mean the world to you this year, if you begin to honestly prepare yourself during this time of Lent. It's not so much a time when you give things up for Lent. That's not the right attitude to Lent. That's just an excuse that we invented to offer to God instead of real change in our lives. We shouldn't in that sense give up things for Lent and then go back to it after that. We need to see this as a time for rooting out from our lives the things that God has convicted of us as sin. We need to be real about that, just down to earth and practical.

Repeatedly, when all kinds of buildings are put up in large cities, men are amazed that through the slightest crack in a piece of concrete slab there will poke a little snowdrop or a little daffodil. Men are constantly amazed at the "dearest freshness deep down things." That's the way the poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins told it. "There's a dear freshness deep down things." There's a dear life underneath all the concrete that man can put over the earth. There's a dear life that surges up and pokes its head through if it gets half a chance. Men are constantly amazed at the way little flowers poke their heads up through slabs and slabs of concrete if there's even a slightest crack. It's as if the earth is full of life and just wants to burst forth if men will let it. It's the same in your life. It's the same in your dear heart this morning.

God has put you into His Son Jesus and there is springing up within you a Jesus life. A beauty of God's life that will spring up if you'll give it half a chance. If you'll just give it half a chance it's there surging within you. It will burst out. The fragrance of Jesus will burst out in you along with hope and joy and delight if you'll give it half a chance. That's the truth, that's what Lent is about. Get the things out of your life that God has shown you are a substitute and an alternative for his life. Get them out of your life and His life will spring up within you.

Get the lust out of your life and the beauty of God's pure love will begin to pour forth on you. Get the anger out of your life and the beauty of His gentleness and His patience will begin to lift out through you. I don't know if you realize it but in spite of all our medical research, most surgery is cutting away the bad stuff to give the good stuff a chance to grow. There are some exceptions, but most surgery is cutting away the bad stuff so that the good stuff will grow. In other words, the only hope of man being healed is the power of healthy life that God has put in every physical body. That's the life that He has put in your heart and your spirit.

That's why He has told us that our primary contribution to Him changing our lives is simply breaking up old hardened concrete that has settled in any area of our lives. One prophet put it this way, he said, "Break up your fallow ground so that the Lord can come and rain righteousness upon you." Fallow ground is ground that has been trodden over again and again and again and left without anything growing in it. It's dead and solid. It's been stomped on like that, flattened and pressed

down.

All you have to do to get some flowers growing there, to get some crops growing there, is to break up that fallow ground. That's what is involved in a time of repentance. Don't see it as a time of negativism. It's a time of positive breaking up fallow ground, fallow areas in your own life where you've become blind and dead and therefore where God's life has ceased to spring. You break it up and God will make it spring up.

One dear man that was used in America mightily in this kind of revival experience was Finney. He just listed some areas of sin that you and I might want to look at this morning. I really think I should just read them slowly and you should listen to the Holy Spirit and if He speaks to you about any of these, you should during our time together in prayer put them away from you, and repent of them. God said if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. You should just do that. Just agree with God, "This is a sin in my life, Lord. I am going to repent of it. I am going to put it away now. I know this is what caused Jesus to go to the Cross. I am going to put it far from me now so that when I take this wine and this bread, the life of Jesus will spring up within me." That's what will happen, loved ones, if you do that.

Break up your fallow ground and God will take care of bringing forth the fruit.

Here is a listing of some sins of omission: ingratitude, want of love to God, neglect of the Bible, unbelief, neglect of prayer, neglect of the means of grace, want of love for souls, want of care for the heathen, neglect of family duties, neglect of social duties, neglect of watchfulness, neglect of watchfulness over your own life, neglect to watch over your brothers, neglect of self-denial. Those are sins of omission.

God will through His Spirit, settle your mind on one or two of those. Don't let them all fall on top of you. God will deal with you on one or two. So settle those two now at this moment. And determine to deal with those in the prayer time.

Here is a listing of sins of commission: worldly mindedness, pride, envy, censoriousness, slander, levity, lying, cheating, hypocrisy, robbing God, bad temper, hindering others from being useful. I know what I should deal with God about and if you do, I believe that we should just go before God and be honest about these sins. Confess them to God and repent of them whatever the cost. There will spring up in your life a new freshness that is of God. There will. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank You for Your patience with us over these years and now, as we come to this holy season of Lent, when we remember the beginning of Your Son's dark journey to Calvary for us Father, we would engage ourselves in solemn and holy self-examination so that our Savior Jesus will not have died in vain for us. As we face You Lord Jesus, we would be honest now about any sins in our lives. In these sacred moments we would now confess them to You. We would repent and we would ask You to replace them with the fragrant virtue of Your Holy Spirit. Lord, we would amend our lives. We would not wait for that moment before death. We would amend our lives now Lord, we would change our ways this very day, we would prepare ourselves now for burial and not wait till that moment of panic.

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 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 when He had given thanks, He 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 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 this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He come.