

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I have sensed God saying to me that it's very easy for us to come here Sunday after Sunday and be glad for what was sung to us this morning, and be excited you know, that people like Kent have experienced it and Helen, and we tend to enjoy being in this atmosphere. And yet, God witnessed to my own spirit that there was a great danger of us being snow bunnies, you know. And a snow bunny just goes on to the slopes, and looks beautiful but doesn't ski. And it is very easy to get used to such a good atmosphere because this is the way God wants us to live, you know. Let's face it, this is love and this is the way we're supposed to live and it would be bad if this were not attractive or winsome. There'd be something wrong with it if God's children were not more attractive in many ways than those who aren't God's children.

But do you see brothers and sisters, that it isn't enough to be snow bunnies? It isn't enough to sit there and to watch, and to enjoy because you see that that can bring you into tremendous condemnation because in a real way we have a greater opportunity here to understand what our Creator wants us to do than anyone else in the whole world because again and again we see the joy of people who live in God and we also listen to the explanation of how to enter in. But there is a great danger that we with our student oriented habits will tend to study, and study, and analyze, and discuss, and argue, and admire, and then turn it over the other side and discuss that side, and admire, and look, and talk it over, and question and never really act. And loved ones, do you see that Jesus was wise when he said to us, "Listen, the first thing I want you to do is not to understand, and not to think, and not to discuss, and not to question, and not to talk about it, and look at it, and admire it, but the first thing I want you to do is to repent and believe in the gospel."

Now dear ones, it's good for us to listen to a practical man like Jesus speaking very directly to people like ourselves who are in danger all the time of being academic and of thinking, and believing, and not acting. And do you see that the way into all this, the way into the life of God, the way into making your own life meaningful, the way into getting your own insignificance, the way into getting some purpose into your own life, but most of all the way into making your own life worthwhile and fulfilling the purpose for which you were created is to repent and believe in the gospel. You know? And you may say, "Well, I mean, why should I repent? I have not done anything very bad. I am not a Manson, I am not a prostitute, I am not an alcoholic, I have not destroyed my home, I have not wiped out millions of people, I have not destroyed thousands of people with guns, why should I repent?"

And you know what Jesus said? He said, "Listen, all of you, even though you're very respectable people to look at, and even though you're very good people in many ways, yet all of you have sinned and you've fallen short of the glory of my Father." And Jesus, who is the only one who can really give us any justifiable reason for accepting him as God's son, he said to us, "Look, you've all fallen short of what my Father wanted you to be." And you know dear ones, many of us opt out of the experience of Christianity at that point because we tend again, and again to sit back and say, "I agree with what you say, that all people as a general rule have sinned and I certainly can see it plainly in those miserable Irish that shoot one another. I can see that those people have sinned." Or we say, "You know, I can see that Charles Manson has sinned. I can see that the men who fight in Vietnam they have sinned because they kill people." And we often say, "I can see that the mafia have sinned. I can see that Nixon has sinned. I can see Lee Harvey-Oswald has sinned." And do you

see we have a great danger of accepting ourselves.

We have a great danger of saying, "I'm with you pastor, you go to it and you bring social action into the world and put all those people right because all of them have sinned. But, I'm glad that I have not sinned." Now dear ones, do you see that many of us opt out of the experience of Jesus at that point? Because, we'll agree that everyone has sinned but us, you see. All have sinned except the Presbyterians. All have sinned except the Baptist. All have sinned except the Catholics. All have sinned except the Methodist. All have sinned except the people who come to Campus Church. And dear ones, do you see it isn't so? Jesus said that all of us have sinned, you know. Every one of us and you too as you sit there and I know you're a great person in many ways, I know you can do many good things, and you have done many good things for people, and you've shown much kindness. But do you see that it's Jesus who says, not on the basis of empirical observation but on the basis of his Father who knows all things that you have sinned. And the beginning of your coming together with God is believing what he says about you, and really it's a first step you know, to admit that you have sinned.

That even wonderful, magnificent, faultless you have actually sinned. And you know a lot of us feel, "Well, in what way sinned?" We can see how those primitive people in Old Testament days how they sinned. We can see that sin is disobeying God's will in any way. We see that sin is not doing what God wants us to, and we can see that he said, "Though shalt have no other Gods before me," and we can see how those miserable Jews had all kinds of idols and gods before Gods, and we can see that they have sinned and they deserve everything God is going to do to them. We can see that.

But do you see dear ones, that we are naïve if we really believe that the Jews set up a god called Baal made of wood or stone and worshiped that? You know, they weren't fools. They knew the stone didn't move, they knew the stone wasn't a god. Do you see that it was the meaning of the word Baal that was their god? That's why it was called Baal, the word Baal in Hebrew means owner. It means somebody who gets things. And when they worship Baal, they weren't worshipping a stone. They're no fools, they weren't so stupid that they thought that was a god. But they lived for getting things.

You see, a god is what you live for. A god is what you're thinking about most times when somebody asks you what are you thinking about. That's your god. A god is what you spend most of your time and most of your energy in doing. A god is what you dedicate your future to and your life today to.

And you see, for the Jews they were dedicating their lives, many of them, to getting things. They planned their futures with a view to how much they could get. They planned their careers with a view to how much money it would bring them. And they lived for getting things.

When they got into tight situations where it was a choice of getting profit for themselves and doing somebody else some good, they got profit for themselves. And when you live for getting things, when you live preoccupied with your getting the clothes you want, or you're getting the position or the job that you want or you deserve, when you live, you know, for getting the necessary books out of the library that you need whatever everybody else needs, do you see that is worshipping another God? That is setting up and getting acquisition as our god.

You know loved ones, a lot of us tear down the establishment and say that they're living for what they can get. But dear ones, we often with our poverty, often with our sparsely furnished rooms, we are as covetous over the few things we have as they are over the many things. And do you see that it doesn't take you to be rich to worship the god of getting? You can be poor and worship that god far more by coveting and wanting. Loved ones, I ask you, you know, what are your plans for your own

future and your own career, and what are the considerations that govern your plans? And so many of us talk so high and mighty about serving society and humanity, but deep, deep down in us it's really the desire to get things.

You know, we'll be a social worker because a social worker pays a certain amount and you can live reasonably and do good. Or, we'd love to be a doctor or a dentist because you're helping humanity and you're getting. Now, do you see that it's not that you can't enter into some of those things, but you must enter into them with an honest motive. In other words, many of us sin because we live for getting.

Another of the images they worshipped was Ashtoreth, the god of enjoyment. And that was really what they worshipped, it was enjoyment, it wasn't a stone idol, it was the god of enjoyment and they just lived to enjoy themselves at all costs. Now, do you see that that's what led into the Manson situation? Do you remember, that girl as she stuck the fork in the old man that she had killed and then the judge asked her why she did it and she said, "Because, I enjoyed it at that moment. That's what I wanted to do at that moment so it was right."

But do you see loved ones, that when we act from that motive we're just as great sinners as she is even though we haven't killed anybody? When we make people suffer because we want to enjoy, then we are sinners too and that's what sin is. You know, it's worshipping the god of enjoyment at all costs. And you're honest people and I ask you just to be honest in your own hearts, how many times, you know, we have walked over somebody else so we could get what enjoyment we wanted? Brothers and sisters, you know in our own relationships with each other we have often turned off a friend, we have often shrugged off a friend because there was a certain girl or a certain fella that we wanted at all costs to be with. And you know when that god of enjoyment lifts up in your mind everything goes to the side.

Now do you see that is what Jesus meant? He said, "All of us have sinned," and we've all fallen far short of God's glory. And he said, "Listen, my Father cannot let people like that live. If he lets masses of you live throughout his universe who are living only for your own enjoyment and are living for what you can get, you'll destroy his universe. You'll make it an unfit place for dog, or animal, or beast, or man. You'll destroy God's own plan and his own purpose. Indeed, it's either God lives with his idea of goodness or it's you that live because the two can't exist side-by-side." And that's why Jesus said, "The wages of sin is death," you know.

Loved ones, you know it. In our own experience here this morning you can see it. It only takes some dear one to come in among us this morning who does not love the same things we love, who does not treasure Jesus' presence and that dear one can cut the atmosphere like a knife and you can see it. It only takes some dear one to come in among us who is not in sympathy with Christ and suddenly our own fellowship can be destroyed. Now, do you see it was the same with God? That the two things can't exist side-by-side and that is why Jesus taught us that the wages of sin is death and that's why many of us live in a terrible angst, a terrible worry of an impending disaster, because dear ones we are under condemnation to death many of us. Many of us have never made things right with God. Many of us have never stopped worshipping other gods and therefore we are actually under condemnation from the Creator of the universe and that's what we're living with.

Loved ones, many of us are not really worried about the mushroom cloud. Many of us are not really worried about our futures. Many of us are really worried behind all those things about the fact that deep down our conscious registers that we are sinners and God is going to destroy us at the end

of this world. And that's why many of us have worry and trouble in our consciences and in our emotions.

Now you know, it's no use saying, "Oh well, that's only the very bad sinners that God condemns to death." You see that the heart of sin is living for yourself. It doesn't matter what degree of living for yourself is true in your life, it's living for yourself is sin. You know, sin is the S-I-N, it is the great I, I want to enjoy myself, I want to get, I want to rule, I want to have my way whatever anybody else wants. And do you see that that's why God says that all of us have sinned and fallen short and death is going to take place in all of us even if we've sinned a very little or a great deal because there aren't really degrees of sin. There are degrees of vices. There are degrees of immorality. There are degrees of crimes, but there is no degree of sin you see.

You know, there was a story told and you probably read it before and I've shared it with some of you before about the two men. And one of them, you know, is like ourselves, we are very good respectable people and we have sinned very, very little. And this young man has kept his body in good state, and it's in good physical condition and he's like us, he's like us good and noble sinners. And then there's a very old man, a very old man who has worn himself out by bad habits, has drunk his liver into an unhealthy condition, has destroyed his body and he's about 75 years of age and he's standing there. And in front of them is a great gulf, it's about 50 foot across and it's 500 foot cliffs on each side, and a great rocky gorge with pointed jagged rocks underneath. And the old man says, "Well, I'm going to try and jump that gulf," and many of us are like that.

Many of us know, "Well, I want to be with God, I want to live for him, I want to be where he is, I want to get to the other side. I don't want to have that uncertainty that Hamlet had. I don't want to feel that there's an unknown country on the other side, I want to get over there." So we're like the young man and he wants to jump to the other side, and the old man decides he'll go first and he totters back a few steps and he takes a run, and of course he only jumps about four feet and he goes down to the rocks below and he's killed. And we tend to say, "You see, well that's those great sinners that's what should happen to them. I can see God has to wipe out Hitler, he can't have a Hitler in heaven without destroying heaven. I can see how a Hitler must die, I can see how a [Mussolini 16:15] must die. I can see how Manson must die. I can see how these people who have sinned greatly must die."

And then the young man comes and he is in good physical condition, has looked after himself, has not sinned much and so he takes a massive leap. He takes a great run and he leaps, and it's a mighty leap, it's 39 feet and it's a world record, and he falls short. And do you see, that it doesn't matter dear ones? It doesn't matter that it was a world record, it doesn't matter that you're so much better than the person down the road, it doesn't matter that you're so much better than you ever thought you could be? Do you see that God says, "You've fallen short. You were made to be like my Son Jesus. I made you to be like Jesus and that's why I created you and you've fallen short of that and nobody less than Jesus can continue to live for eternity in my universe without destroying my universe." And that's why dear ones, all of us are under condemnation to death and that's where the gospel comes in you know.

I think a lot of us say, "Well, what can we do about it? We can try harder." Well, do you see there's no point in the poor fella trying harder when he hits those rocks. There's no point trying harder to be done, there's a penalty that has come about and it's been exercised upon him and he has to face it. There is no trying harder. I came here '63 and we drive on the left hand side of the road which is the correct side of the road for any sensible person to drive. And when I came over

here I had to learn to drive on the right hand side and so I tried it my own way for two weeks [inaudible 18:00]. So I drove on the right hand side of the road, and I was just learning your signs you know on the street corners, and I was learning to read those signs do not turn left between four and six o'clock which is obviously a sacred time of some kind.

So, I concentrated on that and I came along at one time between four and six o'clock and I turned left and one of your gallant police officers came up and asked me what I thought I was doing. And I explained to him, "Well I turned left." And he said, "Yeah, but it's between four and six o'clock," and I said, "Ah yeah, I'm sorry I'm just new in the country. I've just come here and I'm just getting to know your signs." And he said, "Well, that's good. You better try harder because it will save you \$10 next time." And I said, "Well, listen officer I haven't even taken this driving test here, I'm driving on my British license so would you consider that? I'm going to take the test, I'm going to learn your laws, and I'll be careful every time I come to this corner." And he said, "Well, that's good it will save you another \$10." And I could make all kinds of substitute penalties and could suggest all other answers to the problem, but do you see that either I had to pay the \$10 or somebody had to pay it for me?

Now, do you see that's our situation loved ones? You know, the psychologists try to psychoanalyze out of a sense of impending disaster. The psychologists try to persuade us that this guilt comes because our pet dog rejected us when we were children. We try in all kinds of ways to deal with the guilt and to psych ourselves out of it. But do you see dear ones, there is no way to deal with the guilt because it is God's penalty. God has said, "Listen, if you sin you're guilty death. That's the only way I can remain the just authority in the universe, and you have to die or somebody has to die for you because I cannot revoke the penalty. If I revoke the penalty you'd laugh at me. You wouldn't accept that I was credible as a just God. My mercy would not be possible because I would have no moral authority." And do you see that that's the gospel?

That God has commanded his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for you. And loved ones, you should have died for every dirty thought that you've ever had, you see? But Jesus took that thought into his own conscience and he allowed God's wrath to burn up that thought inside him. See you and I should have died for every time we've coveted anything, every time we've tried to do some one down in order to get what we wanted, but Jesus took that into his own conscience and he died for that.

In other words, Jesus knows everything that you've ever had in your heart that has been wrong but he not only knows it but he knows the pain that came upon him for that. And God has died in Jesus for you and that's why you don't need to die. And there's no reason for any of us to be under guilt this morning. There's no reason for any of us to fear an impending disaster because Jesus has died and has met that impending disaster for us and we're free.

Now many of us say, "Well, I understand that intellectually but I tell you I still have worry and apprehension in my own heart. I'd tell you I still do feel the mushroom cloud, I still am afraid of death." Do you see dear ones, that though Jesus has died for us you have to enter into this yourself personally? In other words, you don't get it by being a snow bunny, you don't get it by being a spectator, and seeing it, and believing it. Satan believed it, the devils in hell believed that Jesus died for our sins, but do you see that you do not experience reconciliation with God, you do not receive the Spirit of God's life into yourself, you do not know freedom from fear until you personally move into this.

How do you move into it? Jesus made it very plain, he said the first thing you do is you confess the things that you know are wrong in your life. You stop trying to argue that you've never sinned.

The first step is you confess your sins. And brothers and sisters, you know many of us have got all caught up in this business of confession. We've thought that it meant just confessing to a priest, or confessing out loud. The Greek word for confession means I raise up my hand and I agree with God that what he says is wrong, is wrong.

Brothers and sisters, if God has continued to say, you know, sexual sin, promiscuity, masturbation, envy, jealousy, anger, greed, if he has continued to say to your heart, "Look, these things are wrong," then confession is saying, "I'm not going to argue any longer God. I confess that is a sin, I agree it's wrong. I'm not going to try to justify myself any further." And you see it's the first step, and honest confession dear ones of the things that you're arguing with God about.

You see, many of you say, "Oh but why couldn't I experience God the way some of those other people have?" Do you see it's because you won't deal with God about the things he's been pointing out to you for years. You're still trying to prove that it's right for you to do it. Brothers, I did it in my own life in personal things. I tried to prove that I was in a certain set of circumstances which justified this, or I was the certain kind of personality that needed this kind of outlet or fulfillment. Do you see that confession is agreeing with God that these things are wrong? That's the first break in the whole game you know. Many of us are under constant strain and stress because we won't make that first break. We won't start agreeing with God that those things are wrong.

The second step is just repentance, you know. Jesus said, "Listen, unless you repent every one of you will perish." And the second step is just an honest repentance, and repentance is not only saying to God, "I'm sorry for causing your son to die for my sins." It's not only crying over the mess you've made of your life, it's not only being sorry for the people you've hurt, but it's really stopping sinning. You know? I think a lot of us enter into pseudo experiences of Christ because we come up at a grey meeting, or some other kind of meeting, or we pray through in our rooms, or we deal with God in our minds and we confess all the things and we say we're sorry and we feel a real sorrow in our hearts, but we don't stop doing the sins and repentance is you stop doing those things.

You don't do them any longer. You just stop doing them. And I think a number of us, you know, probably need to realize it and I think I've shared this with you before so it's not really new to all of you at all, but it's possible you know for Kent who sang this morning, it's possible for him to say to me, "Now pastor, this is a picture. This is a picture of my girlfriend," and I don't know if you have a girlfriend, "This is a picture of my girlfriend and me and it's very precious to us both and we'd like you to have it but we'd like you to take care of it." And I take it from him and I say, "Oh, yeah thanks kid," but I've torn it. And I say, "Kent, I'm really sorry I've torn that. I really am sorry. Kent, I'm really sorry I'm tearing up this picture because I really respect what you say and I really don't want to tear it up and I tell you I'm really, really sorry and I'm repenting."

Well loved ones, you know, but do you see that's what we do? We say, "Lord God, I know my uncleanness, I know my dirty thoughts crucified your son. I know my greed was a spear in his side, but Lord, I'm really sorry, I'm really sorry." And loved ones, God recognizes not what we say but what we do and that's why repentance needs to be something definite and real. Many of us have entered into pseudo emotional experiences of Jesus because we have not had done with our sins. We haven't stopped doing them, not for a minute. We've asked Jesus to come in on top of them all and

you see, he won't do it.

The last step is really just receiving him. If you are honest in your confession and your repentance God will put the Spirit of his Son Jesus into your life and that's what has enabled many of us to be changed people, because there's a super natural spirit of Jesus that has all the goodness of Jesus inside him. And he transmits all that to us miraculously. And that's why, you know, at times we think of ourselves as new creations because we're different people entirely because we've received the Spirit of Jesus inside us.

Now if you don't honestly confess, and honestly repent then what you enter into is an emotional osmosis, or an intellectual assent or appropriation of truth and intellectual concept. And many of use, you see, are in that position. We have given assent to these things, but we know in our own lives we aren't really Christians because we haven't been honest in our confession and repentance.

Well dear ones, that is really the way to become a Christian, you know, and if you're really concerned about it then I do ask you to just deal with God this morning. I'd rather not spend time because we are a little over time, and I'd rather not spend time having a long prayer time here this morning, but I would ask you if you know you should make a definite step with Jesus, then as we sing that last hymn you can go round and we can pray in there on the stage afterwards. I think that's the best place, it's the only place we have where we can pray. But if you want to take a definite step and you've fiddled along for years and you've never taken a definite stand of faith, then you should do it you know.

Now it's not vital to come forward, no you can do it in your seat, you can do it at home when you go home, but it is a definite step that you take, you see. And so I ask you to consider it, you know, as we sing the last hymn and it does demand just those three steps and God will put the Spirit of his Son into your life. You will become a different person.