

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, I spent the whole afternoon working on the Sermon about the mind for tonight, but I know I shouldn't preach it. I know Jesus knows what he wants to say, so loved ones, turn to Revelation 3, and I am so sure of this loved ones, that I don't care whether it benefits anyone or not, I have to get it out of my heart because I'm so sure God wants me to say this.

Revelation 3:14-22, "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" And I think that last verse means that not everybody here is to receive this, but some of you here are to receive this and you who have ears are to listen to it.

Now loved ones, one of the things that came home to me so clearly during the past few Sundays when I tried to make the first step of the new birth so clear to loved ones who are not Christians is absolutely simple; you're either a Christian or you're not a Christian. Loved ones, it is so clear and with my miserable little mind, I've tried all kinds of ways of ministering it gently and softly and diplomatically and strategically to all kinds of people, but loved ones, the more you get into this dear word, the more you see you're either a Christian or you're not a Christian. You're either born of God or you're born of the devil and it's either one or the other.

And one of the things that Jesus said to me as I was coming in the car, I said to him, "But Lord, a lot of the brothers and sisters have problems." He said, "Did I spend much of my time talking with people about their problems?" And I said to him, "Well Lord, you did talk to the woman who was married to several different men and the disciples asked who she would be married to and you dealt with some issues like that." And Jesus said, "Yeah, but you notice those were just problems, they were little intellectual questions, they didn't refer to a person's failure to live the abundant life, or a person's failure to be living in complete joy and fellowship with me day-by-day." And then I saw it loved ones, because I had to say to him, "You're right Lord, when many of my brothers and sisters come to me they say, 'I've got this problem,' they mean they have a problem with their anger, or they have a problem with their prayer life, or they have a problem with their Bible study life, or they have a problem with their business life."

And Jesus said to me, "Yes, you see, there aren't any problems that keep people from me, there is only rebellion and resistance that keep people from me. People may call the rebellion all kinds of things, they may say, 'I'm going alright with Jesus but I have a problem with this.'" But Jesus said, "You be very clear in your own mind; if a person is not living in joy with an open heaven above them and with a great sense of my fellowship in their lives, and a sense of my pleasure in them then it is not a problem they have difficulty with, its rebellion or resistance against me."

And then loved ones, I saw other verses that made it so clear that you're either a Christian or you're not a Christian.

And it's amazing how much conversation you can get into in a ride from home to here, but when the Holy Spirit is moving, you can cover a lot of ground and that's what Jesus did. I said, "But Lord, some loved ones have difficulty giving up some things and some of them kind of are holding onto some things. They're trying to grab you with one hand and hold onto these things with the other." And he of course pointed me to these parables.

Matthew 13:44, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." And I saw that that's right; the guy gives up everything to get the field that has the precious treasure in it. And then verse 45, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." And Jesus said, "Many of the loved ones, even in the body here have pearls and they're treasuring those pearls more than me and they will not sell those pearls. They're trying to make out that it's some kind of big problem to them, but it's just that they will not let go of those pearls."

And then loved ones, it came to me so clearly this morning when I was sharing that there are two ways to live life here on earth. You can live by what we're getting from each other, by the approval you know that you would give to me if you laugh at my jokes, or the recognition that you give to me by not criticizing me, or the approval you'd get from each other. You can live by that or you can live by the things that we get, we possess. The little jackets that we have, the coats, the new shoes that we have, the car that we have, or you can live for the experience. And you know, it is so stupid if you think of it, the strawberry ice cream that you might get tonight, or you just multiply it a wee bit more, the girl you might go out with next week, or the guy you might marry, or the vacation that you might go on. You can live for those little excitements, for the little happinesses that you can get from people, or the security you can get from things, or the significance you can get from other people, or you can live by what God your Father gives you and actually, it's either or.

In order to be born into his relationship, you have to die to all those other relationships. And it came so clear to me this morning when Jesus gave me this phrase; that some of you are sipping poison. Some of you are sipping poison. That's why you get upset if somebody criticizes you. You who are in Fish, that's why you get upset when somebody is a little harsh. Sure, they're not right for being a little harsh with you, but you get upset because you are still living off their approval and their recognition, and you're not willing to die with Jesus to man's approval. All these big problems that we're talking about having just resolve into simple unwillingness to die with Jesus to getting from everybody here and everything here the significance, and the security, and happiness we want.

Many of you are not really Christians, truly. God stated it clearly to me and I'm not going to fiddle around it; many of you are believers. You believe all this that I say, I know you do, I've talked with some of you, and I know you believe it. Some of you can outline this better than I can. You know it, you believe it with all your hearts but do you see you keep thinking that you're a Christian even though you haven't done it. And you'll come and say to me, "But Pastor I have done it in some ways. In some ways I've entered into Jesus' death, it's just I'm having a little trouble with this." Well loved ones, do you see the fact that you're conscious of it and are still tolerating it shows that you're not willing to sell all the pearls that you have.

Now, if you say to me, "But Pastor, aren't there some ways in which some of us depend on the outside world and not on God and we don't know it yet?" Sure there are, and me too. We don't know it yet and we're doing the thing in ignorance, God doesn't hold us responsible for that at this moment. That's not what brings us spiritual death. That's not what prevents us being crucified with Christ. What prevents us being crucified with Christ are the things we know about. The things you know that annoy you when people cut you down, or put you down. That's it loved ones. The little things you're living for in this body; the little things that you're trying to get for yourself from it.

The little things you're still trying to get from even tonight, because some of you are still thinking, "Well, what little excitement might I get tonight? Maybe we'll do something after the service which will somehow make the evening worthwhile." Loved ones, do you see it's not that God wants you never to enjoy those things, but it's that you get your main kick from those things. If you don't get that you get disappointed, or you think it's been a bad evening. In other words, you're not prepared to get your full kick from just God your Father and from his love for you and from your kneeling down and praying to him. You're not prepared to live for that alone. In other words, you're not prepared to die to those other things.

Loved ones, I know that many of you are not real living Christians because you're still sipping poison. You are. You still live for – maybe it's me, poor creature that I am, maybe it's living for a little approval that I'll give you, or a kind word that I'd say to you, or that somebody here will say to you, but above all it's that nobody will criticize you, that nobody will be hard on you, that nobody will be harsh to you. And even in Fish many of you are looking for something for yourself in the thing. That's why it's hard at times, that's why serving in the restaurant is hard because you're still looking for something for yourself; you're not prepared to die to getting anything more from this world and dying with Jesus to anything that anybody could give you. The first step in becoming a Christian is "metanoia", its repentance, it's turning from the world and it's turning to God alone.

Now the weakness is that that phrase has been destroyed for many of us who were brought up in fundamentalist churches because we think turning from the world is putting way behind us all the "don'ts"; you don't drink, don't dance, don't go to the theatre, don't have anything to do with non-Christians. Now loved ones, I don't mean that, I mean the world in the real sense. It's turning from getting from the world the happiness and the significance and the sense of security that the rest of the human race gets from the world. Dying to that is the first essential to being born of God. There will be no new creation unless that old creation is dead.

Now here's the truth; Jesus is saying to each one of you tonight, "I have allowed you to die in me and it was not easy, and it was not painless. And when I died to what everybody thought of me, when I died to getting anything more from this world, I allowed you to die with me. Are you going to reject what I have done for you?" Now loved ones, that's it, that's what Jesus says tonight to you. And you may plead with me and say, "But brother that's a radical kind of Christianity that says I'm no longer to look to people for my sense of worth, and my sense of value. You mean, I'm not to be annoyed when somebody cuts me down, or somebody is harsh to me?" That's right. That's what dying with Jesus means and when you continue to say, "But that's a further stage in the Christian life. That's a stage of saintliness that I'll come into later on." I say Jesus says, "That's why I died for you. I died so that you could be clear of those things. Won't you enter in?"

And loved ones, I think too many of us are saying, "I want to sip more poison. I want to have

Jesus' approval but I want my peers' approval, after all it's only human. Loved ones, don't you see that all you're doing is confusing the issue? You're talking about problems when there is no problem. You're trying to confuse the issue and say, "But isn't it just human to be disappointed when a vacation doesn't come off the way it's meant to be?" Loved ones, it's carnal, that's what it is, it's not human, it's carnal. It's just because the greater part of the human race reacts that way that we call it human but it's not truly human. Truly human are those who get their joy from the one who stands behind the vacation and behind the flowers and behind the beaches that you would experience. True humans see behind all that stuff and see the dear one who gives all that to them and true humanity is receiving from God all that you need. Loved ones, that's the first step in being a Christian; repenting.

I think some of you have just not repented, I really do. I think some of you have repented of little things you're doing wrong, little things you're saying wrong, and you keep on repenting day after day after day. But it's not repentance in the sense of "metanoia." It's not "I'm going this way and I change and I turn around and I go the other way." It's not that. It's just "I'm going this way and I go a little bit more slowly this way" with regret in my heart all the time, "I'm sorry Lord, I'm sorry." But you're still going that way and the proof of it is that you continually are having problems. You're continually having problems with "This one said this to me," or, "My roommate says this to me," or, "I have trouble with this one or that one."

Ah loved ones, I'll tell you one thing that helps me to know that this is right, what I'm preaching tonight; every time I say it my own spirit responds and says, "Yes, that's the way it was for me. That's the way it was." It was a whole immersion in Jesus. It is a full death to what the world and what others can give you. It's a total death to what others think of you. And then loved ones, I have to say to you I don't care if you all think this is the rottenest sermon that I have ever preached. I don't care if you think I'm miserable. I don't care what anybody thinks, I really don't because that was part of what I died to with Jesus and I have to say to you that it is a complete work. You either go into it or you don't.

Now loved ones, don't you see there are other things that all of us here are ignorant of and God understands that. But once you become aware of them then he expects you to enter into Jesus on them. But the problem is with the things that you know about. Now, you know them, you know when you get hurt, you know when you get offended because somebody criticizes you. You know when you feel put down, and reprov'd, and rebuked and you have a wee bout of self-pity. Now loved ones, you can't be in that dear one who died on the cross and still be having that kind of self-pity. You're either baptized into Jesus' death or you're not and if you're not, if the old creation is not wiped out how can you get a new creation? And you know how you get it: you have a kind of syncretism in your life, a kind of "both/and" kind of experience. Those of you who have troubles, you know that's the problem, you have a wee bit of God's Spirit that somehow comes from all the other people you know, but you have this other thing rising up inside you and the battle is on. Now that's not God's will for us. God's will is a complete death and then a complete new birth.

Now, can I just share a wee bit on that, which God showed me so plainly? Loved ones, there are other good verses. John 12:24-26, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him." And Jesus says "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Now loved ones, you have to die to begin to bear fruit in Jesus and some of you have fruitless lives because you haven't died to all those things. Now, I speak just as directly to you sisters and brothers who aren't married; some of you are keeping yourselves out of a full new birth because you're hankering too much after getting the man or the woman that you think you ought to have. Now loved ones, you're either going to die to what you get or don't get from a husband or wife, or you're going to live in eternity in hell. Now that's right, because those of us who are husbands and wives know fine well that you can't live off each other anyway, so you're being led by the nose by Satan if you're thinking, "If I only had a wife. If I only had a husband, I'd be okay and I'd be whole and complete."

Loved ones, you're striving after a pearl that you should be cashing in for the pearl of great price and you love the creature more than the Creator. Unless you're willing to die you'll bear no fruit. Jesus makes it very plain and I think some of you in this regard have been like Lot's wife in its Genesis 19:24-26. "Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."

I think some of you started off right, but you've started to look back to some of the things that you took an attitude of death to and some of you are hankering after just a little pleasure, just a little excitement, just a little satisfaction, just a little thrill, just a little approval from other people, just a little more money, just a little more security, and you looked back and you've become a pillar of salt. And the only way to allow God to melt you is to come again into a death to those things. Loved ones, you have to die to the security and the significance and the happiness that you get from other people. You have to.

You know the older ones of us here would say just from a commonsensical angle that it's unreliable. You can never rely, finally, on those people to keep giving you significance. You can never finally rely on the job to keep giving you security. They're soap bubbles. But do you see, we don't always love the truth when we see it and even though that's the truth, you still want those things rather than God, and loved ones, you're just spiting in God's face. Now, you better be clear on that, you're just spitting in God's face and saying, "You are not enough for me I must have these other things." And I'd press you on that; why would you otherwise get upset if somebody is hard with you, or criticizes you, or rebukes you? If you don't actually care what they think of you, why would you get upset? And the truth is that too many of us here are still dependent on other people for our significance, our security, and our happiness.

Now loved ones, before going onto the second part I'd like to point you to Romans 6:8 because the Bible is so clear -- it's only after we mess it all up with rationalization that it becomes complex, but the Bible gives forth a clear sound all the time and the wayfaring man will be able to find his way. Of course, it has to be a wayfaring man; it has to be a man that is faring, that is going on his way. It's us creatures that stop and sit down that get in trouble with it. Romans 6:8, "But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." And if you haven't died with him you won't live with him. That's it.

Now in the new birth, God can only bring his Spirit into you if you've turned away from everything else. God will not give you his most precious gift unless you turn away from all other substitutes and so it's just foolishness; I don't see how you think you're going to persuade God to do that.

How you think you're going to hold onto all these substitutes that you have and he is going to give you his most precious gift? It just doesn't make sense, nobody else would do it, so how you think the mighty God is going to allow himself to be bluffed like that, I don't know. God will not give you his most precious gift unless you turn from all others. You will not live unless you die. Unless you die to what other people give you, you won't come alive to God. Now that's why many of you have no reality in your own spiritual life. That's why the prayer life is miserable, because you're still trying to get from others some of what you should get from God alone.

Now, what is the new birth? You remember this morning I shared with you that I think a lot of us get into all kinds of little juggling contortions in our own minds and you remember how I mentioned that verse about the promise of the word of God, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask, and we kneel down and say, "You made a promise Lord, now won't you make that promise real to me? There's no reason why you shouldn't." And we try and persuade ourselves.

Now loved ones, let's not be stupid any longer. What God is calling us to is a relationship with him. Now, a relationship is a personal encounter with a person. It involves conversation and sharing with each other. That's what the new birth is, it's coming alive to God and that's something that happens day-by-day. In other words, God gives you more and more of his Spirit as you enter into companionship with him. Any of us here who are husbands and wives know that we could have entered into that agreement at the altar but if we didn't live with each other and grow closer to each other, we wouldn't even call that a marriage. Indeed, the law doesn't. The law says if you don't consummate what is done at the altar it is no marriage. So it doesn't matter what kind of big ceremony you've had, it doesn't matter what kind of decision you've made at an altar at a church; you're not born of God unless you're day-by-day in a living relationship with him; in other words, unless you're walking in prayerful communion with him and receiving from his word more information about him. Now loved ones I think that's the second step and I think many of you have given up that step long ago.

I think many of you have no Bible study or the prayer life that we're talking about. I think a lot of you are still on the old thing that you're good when I preach about it but then after two or three weeks of enthusiastic application it goes to pieces and then it's the old business of trying to remember when you last read a chapter. Now loved ones, it doesn't matter what you say about your being a Christian. Jesus showed me this clearly, "Would you stop listening to them as if you're some dumb kind of idiot? If they're not walking in day-by-day communion with me and Bible study, how can they say they have my Spirit flowing through them when the only way to receive my Spirit is by talking with me and getting to know me." And loved ones, I saw it suddenly, "Yes Lord, that is true. They can say they believe it all, they can say they believe everything in this Bible, but if they're not receiving your Spirit from you day-by-day then not only can others tell that but Lord, it's obvious that they are no longer living in your Spirit. They're just playing theological games if they start planning on eternal security because if they were truly born of God, if they were truly alive Lord, they would love you. They have either committed apostasy and have turned on you completely or they have never known you and therefore are not in a relationship with you. But if they really know you, they'll be carrying on a day-to-day relationship with you."

And loved ones, God showed me that so plainly; that the new birth is a living with God day-by-day. And of course the truth is this loved ones; why do you not pray -- because you don't need to pray. Why do you not need to pray --because you're really getting your strength from other people and other situations, and other things. That's it, and you should stop all the fiddling around. Why you don't pray is because you don't need to pray, and you don't need to pray because you have never

really died to getting security, significance, and happiness from other people.

Loved ones, when you die to all that, when you put that behind you, you grab at God in prayer. You grab at him. You can't do without him and that's what enables you then to go into the world of men and women and to give love rather than to be always draining it from others. That's what enables us to come to a service like tonight filled with God rather than dying for another drink from him. Now loved ones, Jesus just showed me that's what I've to share.

There is only one other verse and its 2 Timothy 3:4-5 and I thank God for giving me the words because I knew that even if I just read these verses that's what I should do. God is talking about the last times and then he describes the people who will be alive in the last days. Verses 4-5, "Treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people." And I think that's what some of us are who have turned back, we are actually just downright lovers of pleasure. I think some of us actually belong to this body because we just like pleasure and we like the enjoyment of having nice people as friends. God obviously knew what he wanted to say to us and much is wrong with saying "We've got used to Campus Church and it's quite a nice place -- we're not moving on with God and we think we're not moving back." Actually, we're dead, we're nowhere near them, but we like the situation and we maybe enjoy all the business things, and all that, and it's an alive place, and it's nice to be around, but actually we just love pleasure, we're just pleasure lovers. It's just we're dumb because we're satisfied with less exciting pleasures it seems to me. I mean, I wouldn't want to be around a church if I didn't know God. If that's all the excitement you're going to get -- dear help you. But I think that for some of us that's the stage we're at. We love that, it's a pleasure that kind of keeps us jumping along, but we're just lovers of pleasure.

We have the form of religion but we deny the power of it, so we can repeat all the words, all the verses of scripture, we know it all, but we deny the power of it and we deny it in the most potent way we possibly could; by lacking the power of it in our own lives. So we make nonsense of the idea that Jesus is a power in your life because we have no power in our lives, and actually of course we're doing more harm to God than any good because we're going around in our businesses and our schools claiming to be Christians but we don't have the power of Christ in our lives. So we're actually doing harm because we're giving a false picture of what a Christian is.

Now loved ones, I suppose that's heavy stuff, but Jesus, I know, wanted to say that and I don't care if you take it or not. I know he wanted to say it and now there's no mystery so just don't go away and cry and say you have another problem. You have no problem; it's plain what you should do -- you should die to what you're living off of instead of God. You should. Whatever it is; a vague hope that you'll get a better job, or a vague hope that you'll get the right husband, or a vague hope that you'll somehow arrange your social circle a little more enjoyably. Something there that you're living off, something that you're not prepared to do without, you have to die to that and then tomorrow morning you have to work out what half an hour is before your normal rising time, and you have to get up and get the Bible out and start reading it and start seeking God and start allowing his Spirit to come through your life.

Now loved ones, I think God has made us a body that prefers to be straight with each other, so I think you know what to do and I think you should just do it. Don't go through a whole lot of contortions, just do that and come alive in God and begin to live as he meant you to do, and be a Christian, because it's a black and white thing. You either are a Christian or you're not a Christian. Really. Shall we pray?

Lord, I pray for the loved ones who have the ears to hear this and who needed to hear this. And Lord, I remember your words that there are people who hear your word but do not do it. They are like men who build their house upon sand and when the storms of life come, and when the final storm comes on judgment day, the house will be swept away. And then there are those who hear and who do what your word tells them, and they are like people who build their house and their life on a rock.

Lord, I pray now for the loved ones who need to act this very evening. I ask you now to make it absolutely clear to them what is the secret idol in their hearts that they have to die to, what approval of men, what recognition of their peers, what security they're trying to get out of, something that they're not willing to give up if you should ask them to give it up, what little happinesses and excitements they're living for thinking that something is more exciting than you.

Lord, I pray that you will enable them to see that and simply die to it this evening and accept what you have done for them. And then I pray that tomorrow morning you will see your children proving that they're born of you by talking with their Father and receiving life from you, Lord, as people who cannot do without you.

Father, we would die if we did without food for our physical bodies as long as some of us have done without food for our spiritual bodies. Thank you for making it plain to us that we must be dead by now and that it's time to come alive and look to you who all the time says, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow and though they be like crimson they shall be like wool. Come let us reason together, serve the Lord." Lord, thank you that your arms are always open and that you ask us to come to you tonight and make things right once and for all this night and be what we claim to be, children of God.

I ask this Lord Jesus, in your name and 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 forever more. Amen.