

What is Communion?

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

What is communion? What is the heart of communion? I'll tell you a story that I think will bring it home to our hearts, really. There was once a little man who found himself in the position that many people do in these days when inner cities are being developed more and more. That is, he found himself on a quarter of a city block with his own little wooden house and all the other buildings had grown up all around him. And he was left on this quarter of a city block that he inherited from his mum and dad with this little two bedroom house built of wood with ordinary shingles on the roof.

One day a millionaire developer came along and asked him how much he wanted for the house. And the fellow thought he would be pretty shrewd and he said, "Well, how much will you give me for it?" Because it was worth all of \$26,000 to him and he reckoned with a little bit of shrewd dealing maybe he'd get \$30,000 for it instead. And the millionaire developer said, "I'll give you half a million dollars." So the poor fella just stepped back and then stepped forward and said, "Done."

But after the millionaire had left he felt a little guilty making all this money out of just a hovel. So, he being an honest kind of guy went to work, went to Sears, got new shingles, took off all the other shingles, put new ones on, got to work with aluminum siding, started to put it on over the old wooden stuff, put new doors on, new windows, everything that he could think of to make the house at least worth nearer the \$500,000 that the developer had offered him. And so at last after weeks and weeks of work he reckoned, "Well now, I don't know that it's worth \$500,000 but it certainly looks worth a lot more than it used to be." And so he proudly handed the keys over to the millionaire developer and he went off and bought himself a little piece of land in the suburbs.

Then he came back one day and the house was still there and he happened to meet the developer who was there with some of his architects and he said to him, "Oh, you like what I did with the house, do you?" And the developer said, "Yeah, yeah, I do." And he said, "Ah, you're going to keep it like that?" And he said, "No, no," and he pointed over to the side where the bulldozers were waiting and he said, "No, no, I'm going to sweep that thing right off." And the fella said, "You're going to sweep it right off?" And he was thinking of all the work he'd put into the shingles, and the money he'd put into Sears and he couldn't understand it. And the developer said, "Yeah, yeah. You see, I didn't buy this for the house I bought it for the site. I'm going to demolish that house completely and I'm going to put up a marble, steel, and glass high rise." And the fella just could not believe it.

And eventually he himself had been involved in construction at one time and eventually he was taken on the payroll of the millionaire developer and he was just amazed at what he found. He remembered how he had tried to make his old house worth something and how he was always preoccupied when he was putting the new doors and the new windows on, the new shingles, he was always preoccupied with the fact that he was working on an old structure, an old building that didn't look right and he was trying to make do, he was trying to improve on it, but he was constantly working on the limitations of the old structure. And he was amazed when he began to work for this developer because the blueprints came down to him and he just read them off and he put up beautiful structure in marble, and steel, and glass just from the blueprints and the plans that this fella brought him day after day.

And he asked him one day, "Look, how do you know exactly what to do here?" And the architect took him to his own office downtown and there was a perfect scale model of this massive high rise and the architect said, "You see, I know what this is going to look like and all you're doing is following out my directions and soon what you build will be exactly like this model that I have in my office downtown."

Now that's what communion is about, because there are many of us here that think that communion is remodeling the old structure with a bit of help from Jesus' Spirit here in this service. And so at communion we're always preoccupied with the old structure, and we come in burdened with the fact that the old structure is having trouble with temper, and the old structure is having trouble with greed and coveting, and the old structure is having trouble with depression, and we're always asking God, "Lord, as I drink this wine and as I eat this bread will you help me to have victory over this depression, and victory over this uncleanness in my life, and victory over this anxiety."

And we're constantly preoccupied with the old structure and we're always working within the limitations of the old structure. And we're always limited by how little we can really do because of the shortcomings of the old structure. And that's not what communion is about at all. Communion is a clear declaration that in that eternal infinite space/time world that Einstein pointed to, God took you as you are and he bulldozed you right off the cross and into the grave with Jesus and he destroyed forever that old structure. And he has a perfect model in heaven that he has already raised up by the power of his Spirit, of you, and you, and me.

He has a perfect structure created already and what he wants you to do here in communion is to begin to read the blueprints that his Holy Spirit gives you and he will recreate that new structure on the site of your old structure this morning. Now loved ones, there are dear verses that say exactly that but we always attribute them to funerals and of course, the beauty of it is that this is our remembering a great cosmic funeral that took place.

Maybe you'd like to look at the words, it's 2 Corinthians 5:1. 2 Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed," and it has been in Jesus, "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." Not you see, that we might patch up what is mortal and make it look like life but what is mortal in us will be swallowed up by life. "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

I'll tell you what I'm going to do this morning. I'm going to come to God and say, "Lord, I believe that all that I am was demolished by you in Jesus. And I believe Lord, that you have a perfect model of me, Ernest O'Neil in heaven, and that you intend through the Holy Spirit's light and life to me to recreate that model here in my body on earth in this present life. Holy Spirit, show me what you're going to reveal to me off the perfect Ernest O'Neil here this morning."

Loved ones, if your name is John there's a perfect John that already exists. It's interesting, those of you who studied philosophy and Plato, remember that the dear fella, even though he knew nothing about Jesus, he hankered after the fact that somewhere in the world beyond there were perfect forms of what is here on earth. It's amazing isn't it that he felt after that in some way and writes of it in his Republic which is the basis of all our university philosophy courses. And it's amazing that it's a shadow of the truth.

Loved ones, if you're name is Mary, or Peter, or Jean, or Joan, whatever your name is, there's a perfect model of you that God has already created in his own presence and he has already demolished that old structure that you keep on trying to patch. And he is able to reveal more of that perfect structure to you this morning and if you're willing he can make it real in your life.

Now loved ones, that perfect you has absolute victory. That's what communion is about. So, if I were you, I'd just ask the Holy Spirit, "Show me Holy Spirit how when Jesus died I died and that all that I used to be was demolished in him and that God has already built a perfect person in heaven and can erect that on the site of my life this very day." So do you see that communion is not an in turned thing? It's not a preoccupation with the old structure, it's not a patching up, it's a looking up and a receiving what God has already created and that's for all of us this morning.

So I'd ask you, you know, to join me - that's what I'm going to do and that's what can enable God to create a new person in you this very morning. If you're willing to take part in that loved ones, will you stand and receive the invitation. You that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life following the commandments of God and walking from hence forth in his holy ways, draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament to your comfort and make your humble confession unto almighty God. Let us be seated as we pray.

Lord, we would no longer bother you with the things we were going to bring up. The things you see in our lives that are so miserable and petty. Lord, we see that there is something underneath those, there's a whole self that thinks that we can somehow rectify the weaknesses and shortcomings that we have and that's what continues to give these weaknesses and shortcomings their life. Lord, we would accept this morning that that very old self is flawed and has poor ideas of what you intended us to be and Lord, that that old self with all its low poor petty ideas of what we should be like has been crucified with Jesus.

Lord, we gladly would let it go now. All that self that wants to improve itself. All that self that wants to grow better with a little help from you. Lord, we would let that now go. Thank you Lord, thank you that that is what was crucified with Christ. Now blessed Holy Spirit, we would ask you to reveal to us the beauty and the realty of the person that we have now been made in Jesus. The beauty of the person that has been born again. Now that we have died with him, the beauty of the person that has been born with him by the Holy Spirit.

Lord, thank you that as there was an old generation of Adam, so there is a new generation of Jesus Christ, a new race created in beauty and that you by your Holy Spirit can enable us to be part of that this morning. Thank you Lord. Lord, just show us what we need to let go of so that you can create anew, the person that you have in mind. Thank you Lord, that we're not without direction. Thank you that there's a perfect model that you have already before you. Thank you. We do not presume to come to this thy table most 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 broke it and said, "This is my body

which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.” In like manner he took the cup after supper saying, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it for as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till he come.”

[Audio ends abruptly 18:34]