

## Communion Forsaking All Sin

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We have suffered for years in our own lives and in our church lives from hypocrisy, religion that was religion in words but wasn't religion in life. You know, the kind of thing, and it just put us off completely, off God and off Jesus and all that. Now brothers and sisters, there is no Christianity that doesn't show itself in our life, you know. If it doesn't show itself in our lives it isn't Christianity that we have, you see, it's something else and that's what Jesus is bringing home to us here in Matthew 7:15. And he points out that people who do not live what they preach are really false prophets you see, they're really sent to deceive us not to lead us.

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits. Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.' Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” May God help us to be like the man who built the house on the rock and be cleared from hypocrisy this morning in our own lives.

I think a lot of us Sunday-after-Sunday have been coming and are in that position that I described a few weeks ago, you remember, when I said many of us have listened and wanted the kind of life that we talked about, and that we have seen in some others here at the theater, but somehow we never seem to be able to get into it. We really feel more and more that we're kind of like 'snow bunnies' who dress up for the whole Apres Ski deal and just settle around and look beautiful and don't really do any skiing. And we feel that very often we're that kind of spectator. It's a kind of spectator game for us and we kind of watch it all and we think, “Yeah, it would really be good but oh he just has a kind of optimistic personality, or she just is sort of naturally bright and I'm naturally just a more passive quieter kind of person.”

And we've looked at it and wished that it could be better and more real for us. And we believe it all, I think a lot of us in the theater here, we believe it all - we believe all about Jesus and all about God loving us and all that kind of stuff but it hasn't become real for us. And it isn't real for us, and God isn't real in us and we find when we go home after the service on Sunday mornings that we're just back in the old depression or we're back in the old work - a - day world, and all the glory that we felt when we're singing a certain song with somebody else or praying here in the theater has faded and we're back to the grind. We don't seem to carry the glory away with us because it isn't real in us.

We feel it while we're here with others who really experience God but when we're away from them we don't actually experience God ourselves. Now brothers and sisters do you see that the way to experience God is very, very simple. It honestly is. And it's simplicity I think that has led a lot of us away. Do you see that for God to be made real to you, you just have to take God seriously? That's it. If you want God to be serious with you and to show himself to you as he has shown himself to many of us, then all you have to do is take God seriously.

You know, if you push me and say, "Brother, do you mean that that's the only difference between me and somebody who really knows God?" Yes loved ones, honestly it is. Honestly it is. It isn't because they're more mystical than you, or because they're more emotional than you, or because they were brought up with needs you haven't got. It isn't. It's because you really don't take God seriously, you know. You treat him as you treat the latest theory that you heard in philosophy class. You treat him as an idea and at times you even treat him as a principle, but you don't take him seriously.

See, He keeps telling us, "Your sins have killed my son. Your sins have killed my Son." And you won't believe that, see. That's it, you won't believe it. It's as if you met me during the week and you joked with me and said, "Oh well, I know you don't mean any of what you say on Sunday and you tore into a whole lot of swearing and a whole lot of dirty stories, and you just didn't take me seriously." Then no relationship can exist between us, you can see that. I would love you but I would have to say, "Look, you're not treating me as I really am." Now do you see that is what God is really in with you? You're not taking him seriously.

See, he says to you, "Your sins killed my son, will you admit that they're in your life and will you stop doing them?" And you keep saying, "No, no, no they're not in my life and I won't stop doing them." That's it. Loved ones, that's it honestly. It's that you won't look at the things in your life that are destroying God and his Son and therefore He is not able to make himself real to you. That's it, you're not taking Him seriously, you're playing a game with Him.

I think one of the problems is many of us don't want to admit a thing is wrong in our lives because we still have the old idea that God only accepts us if we're good enough. Brothers and sisters, do you see it isn't so? God accepts you now as you are, he sees all your sins. Brothers and sisters he sees all the things in your life that you think are so secret. He sees those things and he loves you despite them because he is accepting you because his Son died for your sins. God knows full well you deserve to die. He knows more about you than you know about yourself. He knows you ought to be destroyed but he accepts his Son's destruction in place of yours so he accepts you because of his Son's blood.

But do you see, you and I won't admit our sins because we keep on believing the old lie that God only accepts us if we're good enough? And therefore you know what we do, we keep up that repression. You know full well you have things that are wrong in your life, you know that. You know there are things wrong in your life but you keep ignoring them, you keep pretending they're not there. You keep sort of smoothing them over or rationalizing them.

Now loved ones, do you see that God sees them anyway? And there just comes a great openness between you when you at last admit they're there and say, "Well Lord, it is there. It's there. Yes, yes, Lord I do gossip. Yes I do spend a lot of time on just evil, morbid, lustful thoughts. I do and I know it's wrong." That's a big step loved ones, when you just identify the thing as wrong. But do you see you can't get anywhere with God if you won't admit his judgment on the things that you're

doing in your own life?

You know, a lot of you are criticizing, you know. You're criticizing your friends, you criticize your parents, you criticize me, you criticize everybody but you will not nail criticism as something that killed Jesus and yet God is nailing it as that and that's where you see, he has a controversy with you. So it's a tremendous step brothers and sisters allowing God to become real to you if you accept that the thing is wrong. I can't tell you the relief it is, you know, it was a great relief in my life when I stopped having to try to pretend that I was good. It was such a relief when I stopped trying to pretend I'm good, or I'm pure, and I started to accept the things that I saw in my life and to confess them to God and say, "Yeah, I know they're there."

Now loved ones do you see a lot of you have strain in your faces because you're trying to repress a lot of those things. That is so. I mean, the kind of approach that we've taken today has encouraged it. The psychologists have kind of encouraged us to look away from those things. Loved ones, bring them right out and say they're there. That's the first step. The other thing is stop doing it. Stop doing it. If you masturbate, stop masturbating. If you criticize, stop criticizing. If you have lustful thoughts when you look at pictures in books, stop looking at the books, stop thinking those thoughts. If you're lazy and indolent, stop being lazy and indolent.

Now brothers and sisters, the world has tried to persuade us that you cannot do that. The world today has tried to persuade us that no you can't change you just have to rearrange the circumstances to suit you. Loved ones, you can change, you can stop. God wouldn't command you to stop sinning if you hadn't the power to stop sinning, or if he wasn't willing to give you the grace to stop sinning. Now you see, you can stop sinning if you choose to.

Now you know it fine well, if you discovered you were on the last legs in cancer through smoking, you know you'd stop smoking. I mean, we will stop a thing when we see that it's absolutely necessary to stop it. Now brothers and sisters, God knows that you see, and that's why he expects you to stop doing the things that kill his Son in your life. And dear ones, he won't take us seriously until we do that. He won't honestly. While you keep on saying, "No, no, no I have nothing wrong in my life. I have nothing wrong, my Lord. Just keep looking up, keep looking up, I have nothing wrong in my life." While you do that he can make nothing with you. While you keep on saying, "Well, I've tried, and I've tried to stop but I can't stop. Lord, just be patient with me while I'm trying to stop." He knows you're bluffing him you see.

Now dear ones, that's it and that's what you need to do to receive Jesus this morning. Jesus will really come into you in his Spirit and will create a new dynamic life inside you as you take this bread and wine, if you will admit that the things that are wrong in your life are wrong and if you'll stop doing them. And that's it. You know, I know there are older brothers and sisters here but I know you younger brothers and sisters, those of us who are at school, at college, you know we're doing this. I mean, we know this is the way we're living our lives. We're saying, "Oh I'm going to try harder, try harder." But in the midst of all the trying hard we're bluffing ourselves that we're not as bad as we really are. And then we're persuading ourselves that we can't help being bad.

Now loved ones, that's death you see. Get the thing right out into the open. Say, "That's wrong and I know it's wrong Lord. I know it's destroying your Son in my life. I know it's wrong and I'm going to stop doing it whatever it costs me." Now that's it dear ones, and that's the only thing that will deliver us from hypocrisy. Do you see that? You know, if you say what really draws us

all together here in the theater? I'll tell you, I really think it's that we believe we're each one being honest about the whole business. We've seen so much hypocrisy that we're fed up to here with it and it's just so good to see some people who seem to live as they say they live.

Now loved ones, do you see that's the key to it? Be really honest about the things that are wrong in your life and stop doing it. That's it. Dear ones, could I press once more because I do think Jesus wants me to say this? If you're in and out of bed with some fella or some girl to whom you're not married, or if you're pushing your courtship too fast too far, then stop it. Stop it now. You know, just stop it. Just say to your loved one, "Love, let's get this out into God's light. Let's get it back onto the main road so that we don't need to blush when we're before God together." You know, just stop doing the thing.

Loved ones, if you're being dishonest at work, just stop doing it. That's it, just stop it, you know. But don't keep on pleading, "Oh Lord, you won't show me yourself." It's because you won't be real with God, you see. Will you think about it dear ones, and during communion would you deal with those things, you know? Loved ones, a lot of you come to me and ask, "Pastor, how is it not real to me?" Loved ones, it always comes down to this thing that I'm talking about, you know. I mean, after you've settled the intellectual side through reading the books, then it comes down to this. It comes down to just not taking God seriously yourself.

So will you consider now that as the bread comes around and the wine, it's the body and blood of Jesus. The body was broken and the blood was shed because of your sins. Now, if you continue to commit those sins you're continuing to share that blood and to break that body you see, and that's why that body can't be real in you. It can never come together. But if you're really real with God this morning, you'll find a new spirit coming inside you just as you take the bread and the wine, just a new clean spirit. A new feeling that you're walking in God's eyes and in God's light and it's just different, it really is. It takes all the concealment and the stealth away, it just enables you to be an open transparent person. It really is good, you know.

Now you know, I ask you all to stand so that nobody will feel out of the thing, but you have only to take these words to yourself if you really mean them - dear ones. You see these words, and you've only to take communion this morning if you're really ready to identify the things that are wrong in your life as wrong and to stop doing them. That's what God asks. Otherwise, you drink damnation onto your own soul, you see. Okay, will you stand?

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 henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with Faith and take this holy sacrament to your comfort and make your humble confession onto all mighty God. Let us pray, let us be seated.

Dear Father, we want to be honest with you this morning. We don't want to play act, we don't want to be hypocrites, we don't want to be people who are washed on the outside and unclean on the inside. So Father, we want to be honest about the things in our lives that are destroying you and your son. And Father, we trust you by your Holy Spirit now to point them out to us. Will you reveal to us now if there is anything in our lives that is destroying your Son and that is causing you both the pain and torture you endured on the cross?

Lord God, especially those things we have been rationalizing and that we have been pretending are psychological shortcomings. Lord God, we would call sin – sin - this morning and not try to be

sophisticated and philosophical. And Father, we tell you we intend now to turn from these things. We've tried hundreds of times but Father, we tell you we do not simply intend but we are turning now from these things. We are stopping this sin of word, or act, or thought this very moment. Father we're making a break now, we're putting these unclean things far from us.

Father, we're regarding them now as things we are not going to touch in our lives whether it be eating, or whether it be drinking, whether it be our thinking, whether it is our sleeping, whether it is our indolence, whether it is our aggressiveness. Father, we confess these things now before you and we turn from them now. We're not going to wait for grace, Father, to turn from them we're going to turn from them now. We're exercising our own wills this moment and we declare them now an anathema to us and we intend no longer to have anything to do with them.

Lord God, we trust you to fill the vacuum that those things will leave. We trust you to give us the strength and the grace to live a positive life in place of these negative things. Now Father, we trust you to give us that sense of cleanliness as we receive Jesus this morning, and if we're having any trouble experiencing that we trust you to show us why it is and what it is we have not confessed or turned from.

Now Father, we trust you to give us the grace of truth as we come to Jesus' table. We do not presume, most merciful Lord, to come in our own righteousness, but only in the light of thy mercy, for thy 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.