

## The Key to Fulfilled Living

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

There are probably 99 percent of the 3.5 billion of us here in the world that feel that when we come down to breakfast in the morning. And yet it's kind of interesting, you know, the words, "And when I wake up in the morning with my hand down and my eyes and she says, 'Hi.' And I stumble to the breakfast table while the kids are going off to school goodbye, and she reaches out takes my hand, squeezes it and says, 'How you feeling hun?' And I look across at smiling lips and see my morning sun." And it's interesting that probably all of us who listen to that this morning who aren't married say, "Ah, that would really be great." And then probably those of us who are married say, "Yeah, that sure would be great."

And probably all of us you know, would love to kind of – we come down in the morning and we kind of love to receive that tender love and affection that old Tennessee Ernie Ford was singing about. And we dream of that and we think, "Yeah, that would be great." And I often wonder how many marriages have a real hard time and are looked upon as failures by their partners because they don't seem to be living up to those ideals that we all have formed in our minds for the marriage. And I think it would be great but it's kind of tough on the girl, isn't it? I mean, that poor soul she has to be up from four AM getting the old pancakes going, and getting the lipstick on, and looking good, and practicing holding out her hand and squeezing ours. And it is hard, you know, we guys we're such big babies we think, "Yeah, yeah, that's what we deserve. If she's a real wife that's the kind of thing she should do."

And it's even tough you know, on the guy here who does receive that kind of treatment because it's very easy for him to kind of just waft out through the door on cloud seven, you know, and into the car, and onto the freeway and just expect to waltz into the office and there the boss comes to him on a pink cloud of euphoria, and stretches out his hand and squeezes it and says, "How you feeling hun?" And when that doesn't happen, when people don't treat us the way we think they should treat us, I don't need to describe to you the resentment that comes up. I don't need to describe to you the hostility that you feel towards them. I don't need to describe to you the whole critical backlash that comes out from your heart when somebody doesn't treat you the way you feel they should treat you.

And loved ones, that's probably the way the greater part of the world lives, it really is. And I don't know how many of us here but I would dare to say probably the way the greater number of us live here. And deep down as we kind of laugh at the thing, and smile, and kind of think, "Yeah, well it would be great." Yet deep down a lot of us live our lives looking to other people for the support, and for the recognition, and for the encouragement, and for the affection that we feel we need. And that is one way to live life, it really is.

It's one way to live life. You can live life looking at every relationship, wife, roommate, friend, looking at every experience, at your job, your home, your vacation, looking at everything that you can get your hands on and you can look at those people, and those experiences, and those things, and you can say, "I'm going to get from those the security, and the stability, and the sense of recognition, and the sense of peace and happiness that I need. I'm going to get those things that I need from those people," and you can live your life that way, you really can.

And I would suspect that more of us here this morning do than care to admit. And you can live your

life depending on people. Really, what we're trying to do you know, is get a good experience in there. If we could only get a good experience of wholeness in our mind we think we'd be happy. If we could see everything how it's supposed to be, if we could get everything organized so that we feel we have it under control, we feel we would be happy here and so we use our mind to try to get all the things that would give us that kind of security in there. And it's the same, you know, we're after a good experience in our emotions. We feel if we could only get a sense of oh just happiness in there, that's what our aim is and we ought to try to get that happiness through the experiences that we pass through.

That's why so often, you know, we're after a different kind of vacation than last year. Maybe it will do the trick, maybe it if were a little bit longer than last year we'd find more of the peace that we needed. And it's the same with our wills, you know, we want to have a sense of just the will ruling, and the will being important, and us being significant, or gaining recognition from other people and we use our will to try and get that from other people. And most of us loved ones, I think, and you could disagree but I honestly believe that most of us are probably involved in that kind of sucking life where we're trying to get these good feelings in here, in what the Bible calls our soul really, but it's the psychological part of us, we're trying to get them from people, and from situations, and from things. And that is one way to live life. I mean, the greater part of the world is living that way.

There is another way to live life, the best presents that you have ever received have come from someone that you've never seen. Now those fingers are incredible, those fingers that you have on both hands are incredible creations. When you think of all the things that those fingers are able to do, and those were given to you free. Now you couldn't buy fingers like that. It doesn't matter how much money you give, you couldn't buy fingers like that. The best that we can do when you lose your fingers is some kind of mechanical device that you know is hideously clumsily, and very, very slow and there's no sense of touch in it.

And that skin there, that's the best self-sealing system that you could buy. In fact, you can't buy one like it. When it begins to leak it closes up again. The red stuff starts to come out, the old body self-seals. Now that was given to you, you couldn't buy that kind of thing. But then what about all the little things that you've experienced that nobody else in this auditorium has? What about the corny little butterfly, or the corny little insect, or the corny little dog that you played with and you can remember that day that you played with it as a child and nobody else just had the fun that you had out of that little thing. What about the sunset that you've looked at and given your feeling inside that nothing else could give you?

Now loved ones, those are all presents to you from somebody who really loves you. From the Creator who made you, he gave you those presents because he's trying to say to you, "I am your Father. Just as I was Jesus' Father I am your Father. I want you to love me as your Father, and I want you to get to know me. That's why I gave you the presents. Not so you could worship the creation, or the creature instead of the Creator, but so that you'd begin to see that I love you and that you'd see that I am what you need. You don't need the security, and the stability, and the peace, and the sense of recognition and significance that my friendship gives you. You need me, myself. And when you're trying to take the qualities of my friendship and get them from other people, and things, and experiences, you're getting only the superficial shallow meaninglessness of me. What you really need is me. That's why I made you, so that you could be my friend, so that I could love you and you could come to love me." And that's what Jesus says loved ones.

Jesus explained that that was exactly the situation. That most of us are involved in trying to get from people, and experiences, and things security, stability, peace, happiness, sense of recognition, sense of appreciation, sense of significance, from everything around us here in this world and we'll never get enough because what we really need is God himself who is our Father. We really need to have a living personal relationship with him. And so loved ones, you do live one of the two ways, you know. And I think a lot of you here this morning are quite clear about that. I think a lot of you see, "Well yeah, I know that. I know that I'm trying to get from people the reputation and the sense of worth that I'll only have if I know the person who made me. I know that. I know that I can't keep wandering around this world of his avoiding him. I know that that's dumb. I know that he has some purpose in making me and it certainly wasn't so that I would be running away from him for years. I know that.

I know that I shouldn't depend on others for my recognition or for my sense of worth. I know that I shouldn't depend on my friends and my peers for my sense of value. I know that, but there's something inside me that cannot depend on God. I don't know what it is. I come to times when I know I do something and I do it well, and I try to look up to God and I say, 'Father, I know that your approval alone matters in this.' But everybody comes up to me and says what a good job I did and before I know it my whole personality is sucking up all that praise that I'm getting from them. And indeed it's not long before I resent those who are not praising me." And so I think many of us here this morning, you know, would say, "Yeah, I agree I know that's the way I should live but there's something in my personality here that will not work that way."

In other words loved ones, you remember we shared it before, there's something in us that should receive all this from God, you know. We should receive all this security, all this happiness, all this significance from our friendship with the Father. Really, it's a deeper thing than friendship because he calls us sons and daughters. But we're meant to receive that really from God who made us and yet many of us who have tried to operate that way find that our personality has got into such a rut that it seems to operate only in one direction. And loved ones, that's what you're up against, you know, when you have those moments.

You know you have them. At home when the loved ones doesn't do what you think she should do, supper isn't on time. Or, he doesn't do what you think he should do, he doesn't show enough interest in you, doesn't show enough concern about the home or the family. Or, with roommates you know, they just don't take care of the place the way we take care of it. Now loved ones, at that moment we all know that we shouldn't depend on them to do everything to make us feel good. Apart from anything else it makes our own security a very tentative thing utterly dependent on them. They can destroy us in a moment by just not doing something we want them to do.

We know that but at that moment when you know you should love them whatever, don't you find your whole personality seems to work the other way. You want it to work from God down into you so that you can love them but somehow it works back that way. You've got so used to taking from them to taking from experiences, isn't that true. When you have a bad day you know – God says, "Greet it as pure joy when you enter into various trials." You know what you feel like after a bad day. "How was the day?" "Well, it was okay." You know, boy no joy, you don't greet it with joy, you're just worn out and it's because your personality is used to depending on experiences to make it happy. It's used to depending on what people think of it to make it feel good. It's used to depending on how many things it receives to make it feel secure.

Now loved ones, everybody down through history has tried to change that personality. Including

Hitler - they were after that with the SS troops, with the ideal of the Arian man, with the ideal of the Chinese society they were trying to change. Mohammad with the legalism was trying to change it. All the great religious leaders have been trying to change that intractable, perverted, twisted personality. All the psychologists with their theories, their self-help theories have been trying to change it and no one has really succeeded.

Now loved ones, God alone has done something about that. God alone has taken that carnal nature of yours, that's what it is a carnal nature. A nature that has an attitude that depends on people outside and around, and situations around for its happiness. God alone has taken that carnal nature of yours, that twisted, perverted personality that insists on depending on people for your reputation rather than God, on people for your sense of worth rather than God. He has taken that and destroyed it in Jesus on Calvary.

That's really what that verse means, you know. Romans 6:6 reads, "Our old self, that old self that used to depend on people, that used to depend on things, that used to depend on experiences, that has been crucified with Christ that we may no longer be enslaved to sin." Now that's what God did on Calvary loved ones and that has been destroyed there and it's finished with and if you are ready to believe that and to accept it and then to begin to turn to God after the death, after dying with Jesus to other people and their love of you, to other things and their effect on you, to other experiences and their effect on you, after joining Jesus on the cross and saying with him, "Lord, it doesn't matter what these Roman soldiers are doing to me. I don't care what the Jews think of me. I don't care if my own mother really is rejecting me. Lord, it is your approval that counts."

After joining with him in his death to that, you'll find that God gives you victory over that selfish personality of yours and if you turn to God himself, you'll begin to come into a new birth experiences where you'll begin to regard him as your dearest and closest friend and the person who is closest and dearest to you and he'll begin to flood into you a sense of his love and a sense of his life, and there'll be a Spirit of his will come into you loved ones. A different Spirit, just a different Spirit will come into you, a Holy Spirit of his own life and you'll begin to feel like you're a new person completely. Now that's what it is to be born again, you see. It's to have that old twisted personality that depends on people, and things, and experiences for the security, significance, and happiness that it needs, it's to have that destroyed with Jesus. Absolutely turned around and reversed and then begin to receive from God.

Now loved ones, just two very brief comments to some of you here who may want to do something about this, because I think there are some of you who say, "Well, I do believe that. I've listened to it for weeks and I do believe this is the way to go and I do want to change my life." Loved ones, the first step is joining Jesus in death to other people, and experiences, and things as the source of your security, and your happiness, and your sense of significance. That's the first step.

Now loved ones, that's what the Bible calls repentance. It's a Greek word "metanoia", "meta" is to turn and "noia" is mind. You've heard of [inaudible 19:24] and that kind of word in psychology. "Metanoia" is changing your mind, that's what repentance means. It means, "No longer am I going to depend on other people, and other situations, and other things for my security, my significance, and my happiness. I'm going to depend on you Lord."

Now loved ones, that's the first step and you can take that step. If it weren't that your old self was crucified with Christ you could never get rid of that twisted, practical, atheism that is built into your personality, because it is, it's a built in atheism, you know. It's a built in practical

atheism that gets from the world what you should be getting from God. Now, you couldn't change that yourself. By all the autosuggestion in the world you couldn't do it. But because God has destroyed it in Jesus you are able to accept that and say, "Yes, I want that Lord," and then the power of that change that took place on Calvary works in your own life. Now the first step is to take that, make that move.

Now loved ones, I'd encourage you to make it complete. Some of you have got into trouble because you've continued to sip poison. That's right, there are loved ones here who think of themselves as Christians and they're still sipping poison. Here's what I mean, they still want the approval of their peers, or they're still all cast down if somebody doesn't show the right kind of love to them, or they're all depressed if somebody is harsh or critical to them. Now loved ones, don't you see that means you're – it's as if you're on the cross with Jesus and you're saying, "But please Centurion, please say something good about me. Say something good about me. Please, you who spat on my Savior here, please praise me. I can't be without your praise. I know my God loves me, approves of me, but I want your praise."

Loved ones, that's what you're doing and the new birth won't be real if you continue to sip poison. So, you know, today decide, "Father, you're the only one that counts. All these loved ones in this auditorium are going to be dead in 50 or 60 years." Loved ones, even if they weren't what does it matter what they think of you? And say to God, "Lord, it's your approval alone that counts. Lord Jesus, I want to die to this sucking selfish personality that I have that is driving my wife crazy, driving my friends crazy, driving everybody crazy because I can never get enough attention from everybody. I can never get enough happiness from all the things that I'm doing. Lord, I'm willing to die to that." And loved ones, take a stand on that, you know.

Now you know the trouble spots in your own life. Different ones of you here have different problems. Some of us guys, you know, we're all caught up with our wives think we're something worthwhile and we're great providers. Some of the others of us have pride in our jobs, you know, and we're all offended if somebody doesn't approve of us. Some of you sisters, you're in the same kind of situation, you depend on what other people think of you for your happiness. Loved ones, this morning take your place with Jesus on the cross, involve yourself in real repentance and say, "Lord God, I'm finished with that life." Now that's the first step loved ones.

Now the second step is getting to know your own Maker. Getting to know your Maker. A lot of people who think they're Christians here this morning think that you receive the Holy Spirit from God by some kind of autosuggestion. They do. They think, "Oh, God said he would give me the Holy Spirit if I asked him. Okay, I'll ask him, I ask you to give me the Holy Spirit. No? Did I ask him right? Okay, I'll ask him again. Okay, give me the Holy Spirit. Now I've asked him and he hasn't give me him. Yes he has, I have to take it by faith. Okay, take it by faith."

Now loved ones, that's dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb. It's not that kind of game. It's not that kind of game. I'm more like my wife now after 15 years of marriage than I was when I first married here. She's more like me. Any husband and wife after they've travelled together a little while rub off on each other in some ways. That's one of the beauties of marriage. Now, that's how you allow the spirit of God to begin to come into your own life, through companionship with God.

In other words, the first step this morning is, "Lord, I'm willing to turn from other people and things for all those qualities that you alone can give me and that you alone know the meaning of." And the second step is, "Lord, I'm going to start believing you. God, you've seemed to me very far

off and distant. I've never actually spoken to you before but God I'm going to believe that you are, that's what the Bible says, 'Anybody who comes to God must believe that he is a reward to them that diligently seek after him.'" Say to God, "God, I'm going to believe that you're there and I'm going to start talking to you. Now, I don't know how you talk back to me. I don't care whether you do it verbally, or through my thoughts, but Lord I'm going to step out on faith here. I'm going to start treating you for real." And do that, take that first step.

And then loved ones, tomorrow begin to get to know God, your God. This book here was written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit. That's the Spirit that is going to come into your life and give you the power of dynamite to live differently. This book was written by the Holy Spirit. Now as you read this book, the Bible each day, the Holy Spirit of God is able to come through to you. Now honestly it is a miraculous book loved ones. I can't understand it fully myself but somehow as you read about God in this book, the Holy Spirit through this book is able to make Him real to you.

Now that's what I suggest you do, you know. I'm thinking loved ones, you who are old Christians, and I hope you're not really old Christians, but you who have been Christians, you have your own funny little ways of doing this but I want to speak to those of you, those loved ones here who are like me who never went to a Billy Graham crusade, who don't quite know how to start this kind of life. I'm talking to you loved ones, and I'd say the first step is 'will' this morning to stop looking to people, and experiences, and situations for your security, significance, and happiness. And then turn to God in faith.

Just inside you know, when we pray this morning - just close your eyes and just even mouth with your lips, "God, I hardly even know you but I want to start and I want all this old personality that has substituted everybody else for you, I want that destroyed and I accept that you've destroyed it and now I want to get to know you." Then tomorrow morning loved ones, begin a daily walk with God. And if I were you, I'd take something like the gospel of John here - either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, but John maybe is a good one and read maybe a chapter. You know, get up a half an hour earlier than you normally do. Get up half an hour earlier and read a chapter of John and then just think about it and think, "Is God really like that? What does this show me about God? What kind of person does this seem to say he is?"

Then close your eyes and for about 10 minutes, you know, if you can take 10 minutes for about 10 minutes just start speaking to God as if he's right there in the room with you. That's what faith is, it's believing that God is what he says he is. And loved ones, you may say, "Ah, look that's kind of mumbo jumbo stuff. That's silly." But loved ones, God sees you doing it. God sees you being real. He sees you diligently seeking after him and he will reward those who diligently seek after him so do it, you know. And if you say, "Well, what do I do?" Well, I'd remember a verse that you read in John and I'd repeat the verse once or twice, and then I would thank God for what he has done for you in Jesus, and then I'd thank him for the other things in your life, and then spend at least two or three minutes just enjoying the thought that he's your Father. Just enjoying the thought that the Creator of the universe is your Father and just looking at him just as you would with somebody you love. And that gives Him a chance to speak through your thoughts back to you.

But loved ones, that's what it means to be born of God. Now you know, there are lots of loved ones here who say they're Christians and they have no daily living relationship with God at all. Really. They've given up Bible study and prayer long ago and they don't really practice it, and they still claim, you know, they're Christians. Well, the life has almost squeezed right out of them. Loved ones, you can't be alive to God unless you have a living daily relationship with him and so that's

what I wanted to stress today, you know, that it's not just making a decision this morning that you're going to go this way but it's changing your way of life daily and beginning to allow this dear person to become your primary friend.

Now, I could help you in a few other ways loved ones. Some of you will find that it's helpful to have some – we call them Bible study guides, Bible study books that help to explain the Bible to you. Though, I'd remind you, don't get wrapped up in just an academic study. If you keep looking to God and saying, "Lord, this is your word will you explain it to me?" Actually, you'll get a lot more out of it if you do treat it like that. But loved ones, there are some and I'll just mention two that I think are good. Search the Scriptures is really good for helping you if you're just beginning to read the Bible for the first time. Search the Scriptures and it covers the Bible in three years. It covers maybe about 15 verses a day and has maybe about three questions on those verses and they're kind of stimulating questions, you know and they do motivate you to think about the thing. And then there is another book that I use in the evening because it just has one verse and then has an explanation of the verse and it's called My Utmost for his Highest. And both those books are in the bookstore and you can get them after the service. And then those of you who are just beginning to learn how to pray, you know, and just hardly know how to start I would recommend that book, it's one of the simplest, and just one of the best, How to Pray by Torrey.

Now loved ones, that's really the way to begin to turn your life around and it does involve a daily commitment, you know, of half an hour preferably in the morning before you go out to work. And then it involves a definite negative attitude towards getting anything more from people, you know. It's an attitude that says, "Lord, I'm willing to stop sucking from people, and experiences, and things all my security, and significance, and happiness."

Now loved ones, here's the beauty of it, if you begin this you'll find that other people become dearer to you. You'll find at last that you're on the offering end of relationships instead of the demand end. You'll find that your marriage breaks into just a new richer experience. You'll find that your roommate relationships, your business relationships break into a new realm completely where suddenly you find that these are rich dear people that you're living with. Do you know why this is? Because you're no longer expecting from them superhuman things. You're no longer looking to them for what you should get from God who made you and you're beginning to give to them. And then some morning it will be beautiful, you'll come down to the kitchen and you'll be the one and you will stretch out your hand and you'll say it to the other person and that's the beauty of it.

When you get a world filled with that, then that is a world that is like heaven and that's God's will for your life and for mine. So, I'd encourage you, you know, to step into it this morning. Let us pray.

Dear Father, I would pray for my brothers and sisters here who have never taken a step in becoming related to you as a son or a daughter and yet who believe in you and believe all the things they have heard about your Son Jesus and about you Lord Jesus being their Savior. Father, I'd pray for them now that you'd make it clear to them the two steps to take, the one step onto that dear cross with Jesus - dying to people, and experiences, and things for our security, our significance, and our happiness. No longer looking for outside people and outside things for what we are to receive from you alone.

And Lord, I'd pray that each loved one here, especially those who have been Christians and have been sipping the poison and have wondered whether their life still is abundant, who have still been

depending on what others think of them, or how others treat them for their happiness. Lord, I'd ask you to give them grace to take a strong stand this morning and accept what you did to us all on Calvary, you destroyed us and destroyed our old selfish sucking personalities on Calvary. Thank you Lord. Then I trust you to enable each loved one to take the second step of turning to you now Lord, and speaking to you and telling you that we're going to look upon you as our Father from this day forth.

And then Father, I pray for each one tomorrow morning that we get up half an hour early and read a piece of your word and speak to you for five or 10 minutes so that as we go to the office and as we go to the classrooms tomorrow, we will go filled with peace and a sense of identity to give love to others and no longer take from them. We ask this in Jesus' name - Amen.