

Jesus in You

Romans 5:19

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Tomorrow is Jesus' birthday. It's very hard to believe that he's a myth. Every time you try to dismiss him as a myth, you kind of "bark your shins" on Christmas. The human race is pretty stupid at times but it's unlikely that for 2000 years, we'll observe the birthday of a man who never existed. So Christmas is great proof that Jesus really did live. Yet this morning I'd like to ask you the question and try to answer it: "Why is it easy to believe in Him and yet very hard to believe in Him? Why is it easy for us to believe in Him in our heads and yet very hard for us to really believe in Him in our hearts?"

It's easy to believe in him in our heads because of the historical evidence. Here is a piece of it. I have a picture here. This is Bruce's books – "The Parchments" it's called. I have a picture here of a manuscript that is in the museum in Manchester, England. It's dated both on the basis of its writing style and on the basis of the content of the Papyrus itself. It's dated 125 A.D. and this is part of the Gospel of John.

This is the way it reads; it's these few verses, John 18:31-33, "Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.' The Jews said to him, 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.' This was to fulfill the word which Jesus had spoken to show by what death he was to die. Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?'" And that piece of manuscript is dated 125 A.D.

Now John wrote his Gospel not earlier than probably 90 A.D. and not later than 100 A.D. So that manuscript is just 30 years later than when John wrote the Gospel. And you can see how difficult it is for anybody to change that manuscript over a period of just 30 years. There were people alive who read it when it was first written. Now that's good evidence for Jesus' existence.

Is it as reliable as the evidence we have for Julius Caesar's existence? Well, I'll tell you how good it is. Caesar wrote his "Gallic Wars" about 50 B.C. It's about 50 years before Jesus was born. Now the oldest manuscript we have of Caesar's "Gallic Wars" is -- 30 years later? No. 50? No. 90? No. 200? No. 300? No. 400? No. 500? It is 900 years later that we have the oldest manuscript of Caesar's "Gallic Wars".

Now you can see how much better is the historical manuscript evidence for Jesus' existence than for Caesar. It's really easier to believe that Jesus really did live than to believe that Caesar lived. It's the same wherever you go in the ancient history. It doesn't matter whether you take Homer's poetry, whether you take Plato's "Republic", or whether you take Livy's histories. All of them have a gap of about 1300 years between the time they were written and the first and oldest manuscript we have of them -- whereas with Jesus, the manuscript is only 30 years later than when it was first written.

You can see that classical scholars would need to give up belief in the classics before they would refuse to believe that Jesus really did live in the first century. You may say, "Do we just depend for our knowledge of Jesus on one manuscript dated 125 A.D.?" Well, that's what you do with Homer's poetry. We believe Homer's poetry as it was written, on the basis of one manuscript that is dated

about 1100 A.D. With Caesar's "Gallic Wars" we have 10 manuscripts. With Tacitus's histories we have two manuscripts -- yet we accept them without any question.

How many manuscripts are there for Jesus' existence and for the history of his life? 10, 20, 40, 60, 100, 200, 400? No. 4000. Between the year 1 and the year 1100 A.D., there are 4000 different Greek manuscripts that reinforce the documented history of Jesus' life and they each confirm one another, however old or young the manuscripts are.

Now brothers and sisters, that's why it's really difficult to refuse to believe in Jesus as an historical figure. You can see that. It's because the evidence for his existence is far beyond existence of any figure in ancient history like him. He is so certain and sure compared with Mohammad or Buddha, with Caesar, with Homer, with any of them. That's why it's easy to believe in Jesus. Especially when you take into consideration the archaeological evidence for the New Testament events, when you begin to take into consideration the sufferings and the reliability of the eye-witnesses, when you begin to take into consideration lectures like Karlis Kaufmanis on the Bethlehem Star which proves scientifically that the star must have been at that particular year when Jesus was born.

When you begin to go into the reinforcing evidence, it's impossible to refuse the fact that Jesus really did live. That's why it's easy to believe in him. That's why most of us here in the theater probably do believe in Jesus. It's easy to believe in Jesus in your head as a historical figure. And most of us do. I think that's why most of us regard ourselves as Christians here this morning. We say, "I believe in Jesus", and isn't that what you're asked to do? You know where we get it from -- John 3:16. If you look at it, it says it plainly.

John 3:16; "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." And most of us feel, well, there it says it. "I believe in Jesus. I believe in him as an historical figure. I believe he really existed. I believe in some sense he exists today. Yes, I believe in Jesus." And so, most of us feel, "Therefore we're Christians." But brothers and sisters, if you go into the original Greek of that verse, you'll find that the word we have translated "in" is the Greek word "ice" and it means "into". The verse really means, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes INTO him should not perish but have eternal life".

So God really says, "I have sent my Son so that you can believe into him". Now that's something you can't do with Caesar. You can't believe into Caesar, he's dead now. You can't believe into Plato. You can believe in Caesar, you can believe in Plato, but you can't believe into them. They aren't real living people now that you can believe yourself into. And that's what God says we are to do with Jesus.

You can see that that's why it begins to be hard to believe in Jesus in that sense. You believe in Archimedes principle. Do you believe in Pythagoras's theorem? Do you believe in Einstein's theory of relativity? Most of us have to examine and are competent to examine some of these. We say, "Oh yes, I believe in them", because they don't affect our lives. We're not being asked to believe INTO them. But you see that part of the problem we have with Jesus is we're being asked to have a relationship with him that is not simply the mental assent of our minds to his existence. It actually involves something about believing INTO Him.

Brothers and sisters, that's why God sent his Son Jesus. It's so that we would psychologically and

spiritually enter into his Son Jesus. It's so that his Son would psychologically and spiritually enter into us. And that's what it means really to be a Christian. It means to believe into Jesus. If you take the face value of his words, "Abide in me and I in you", that's what it means. And when you talk about believing in Jesus, you really mean entering into him spiritually and psychologically and allowing him to enter spiritually and psychologically into us. Why? Because he's still alive.

Caesar isn't still alive. Plato isn't still alive. Homer isn't still alive. Einstein isn't still alive. But this person Jesus is alive today. And God sent him to us so that he would enter into us spiritually. That's the importance of the birth with Mary. You may have wondered, "Why did God make such a great deal of Him being born inside an ordinary woman?" It's because God was illustrating physically and graphically what is to happen with each one of us.

His Son is to be born again inside us. He's to come up fully and grow in us until suddenly the world will begin to see him instead of us. All eyes will turn upon him and not us. That's what becoming Christian really is. And it's in that sense that it's hard to believe in Jesus. To enter into him that way and to allow him to enter into you, that's difficult. For Jesus to be born in you, he begins to meet a whole lot of obstacles and difficulties.

You may say, "Oh, what are they? I have no obstacles to him being born in me." Well dear ones, they are the same obstacles that he met when he was going to be born into our world, just the same obstacles. Would you look with me at the Christmas story and you'll see them. God is so good in making it so plain and obvious to us. See Luke 2:7 there.

Luke 2:7; "And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." And Jesus found one of the obstacles to him being born into our world was there wasn't room. The inn was crowded with other people, and there was no room for this baby to be born. That's the same difficulty.

A lot of us wonder why this Spirit of Jesus has not come alive inside us. A lot of us believe all the things that I have said. You have examined the historical evidence and you believe Jesus is really alive. And yet he hasn't come alive inside you. And that's why -- there's no room in your life for him.

Your heart and your mind are like an inn or a house. It's crowded with all kinds of things and you have never given him room. It's crowded with first of all, yourself and your own happiness. Most of our lives are filled with a desire for our own happiness. Then it's crowded with your job and the success of your job. You're always thinking of your job. You're crowded next with your family and with their happiness. Your mind is always preoccupied with those things. You might never have enough room in it to give Jesus the quietness that is necessary for his Spirit to come alive inside you.

Then, after that, your mind is crowded with your future and with insuring financial success and security. Now that's why, brothers and sisters, many of us never experience the reality of this Spirit of Jesus coming alive inside us. We look at other people who seem to experience it more vividly than we do and we don't understand why. Loved ones, it's because we never have enough room to give any time or place to dealing with Jesus.

Blaise Pascal was a leading scientist you remember, in the 17th century in France. He took that passage in Isaiah and put it in Latin. "God is a Deus absconditus." God is a hidden God and those who want to find Him must want to find Him. We're so unused to that attitude. We feel, "No, no, it's

up to God. He ought to hit us over the head, strike us with lightening or show us Himself plainly." But dear ones, God is a hidden God. Some of us never are prepared to take half the trouble for Jesus to be born in us than any mother takes before the baby comes out of her own body.

But that's part of the problem. We don't have enough room. Pascal puts it strongly. He talks about such people and he is talking of course from the point of view of a Catholic. He says this, "They believe they have made great efforts for their instruction when they have spent a few hours reading some book of scripture, and have questioned some priest on the truths of the faith. After that they boast of having made vain search in books and among men. But verily I will tell them what I have often said that this negligence is insufferable. We are not here concerned with the trifling interest of some stranger that we should treat it in this fashion. The matter concerns ourselves and our all." That was a scientist of the 17th century speaking.

Brothers and sisters, many of us fail to experience Jesus coming alive inside us because we don't give him room or time. We really don't give any time to thinking about him or dealing with him and yet it's the most important thing in the world. We are crowded out with a lot of other concerns. If you look at the Christmas story you can see something else. It's in Matthew 2:1-3. You will see what I've mentioned, that the reason Jesus has not come alive inside many of us is exactly the same reason that almost prevented him coming alive in our world.

Matthew 2:1-4, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

You remember Herod was so troubled that he killed all the one and two year old babies to make sure that this Jesus was not born. It was because this Jesus was reckoned to be the king of the Jews and there wasn't room in Jerusalem for two kings. Now, that's it with us. Jesus will not come in to be a subject. He will not come in to be your servant. He will only come in to be your king. The reason why he hasn't come into many of our spirits is that we want to be king and to remain king. We will not give up the kingship of our own lives.

Brothers and sisters, every time we have a problem with finding Jesus real inside us, it ends up being a problem of kingship, not of intellectual difficulty, but of kingship. It's amazing that even the most intellectual of the agnostics among us confess that that's the real reason why they refused to believe in Jesus himself. There's a revealing piece in one of Aldous Huxley's books, who talks about his own philosophy and why he is rejecting Christianity.

Brothers and sisters, this is finally the real reason why Jesus does not come alive inside us. He says, "The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics." (In other words, he is not concerned with just an intellectual problem.) "He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do." That's amazing coming from someone like Huxley whom we regard as being so honest intellectually. He says that a philosopher who pleads that the world is meaningless is doing it because in a meaningless world he can do what he wants.

"For myself, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation -- sexual and political." He says in essence, "the reason why I believe that the world is meaningless is that it enables me to do just whatever I want sexually and politically." Brothers and sisters, that's the

real reason why Jesus cannot be born in many spirits today. He demands that we obey him. He demands that he be crowned king in the life in which he comes to dwell. We refuse to do that and so we keep on pleading intellectual difficulties with people like Huxley. But the real reason is that we don't want this man to rule over us. Brothers and sisters, the Spirit of Jesus will not come to be your prisoner or to be your subject. But so often we will not allow him to be king over our marriage desires. We will not submit our career plans to him. We will not submit our bank accounts to him. We will not submit our futures to him.

We say, "We are kings of those things", and we intend to remain so. And that really is why Jesus is not born in many of us. If you are having difficulty allowing Jesus to be real in you, deal with some of those issues that you are arguing with him about. You'll probably find him beginning to be real inside you.

The last difficulty I'd like us to look at this morning is in the Christmas story, as it's told in Luke 1. It's part of the lesson that we read.

Luke 1:31-34, "'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.' And Mary said to the angel, 'How shall this be, since I have no husband?'"

And Mary became immediately caught up with just sheer human difficulties because she was looking at it in a human way. She said, "I am not even married. I couldn't have a baby. There is no man that could put the sperm into my body so that the baby could be born, so this could not be." And many of us fail to experience Jesus coming alive inside us because we're always looking at it from a human angle.

We are always wondering, "Surely you mean when you talk about Jesus being born inside me, that I experience more intensely the concept of his teachings or that I experience more completely the reality of his existence." Many of us fail to allow Jesus to be born in us because we think that a king being born in us is just a metaphorical way of saying that you're more intensely related to his ideas or to his existence in your mind or in your emotions.

So we tackle it the way Mary does, we try to produce it humanly. We think, we read, we pray, we meditate, and we introspect. We do anything to try to produce the reality of Jesus' existence somewhere in our psychological beings. And, brothers and sisters, we will fail continually because we're thinking all the time in terms of human experience. We're thinking of a greater intensity of a human experience that we've already had in regard to some other person or some other thing.

So, many of us are still thinking in terms of relating to the principles of Jesus. Brothers and sisters, do you not see that it is a miracle? It is something that is deeper than your mind or emotions. There is only one answer to every "how" question. Mary says, "How can this be?" The answer is a supernatural answer and it's in Luke 1:35. "And the angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you.'" Every time you ask "how" in Christian experience, the answer God gives is the Holy Spirit. How can I tackle this? – By the Holy Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, don't you see it's a supernatural experience? It's a supernatural work that God does in your spirits. That's why when Jesus comes into your spirit it's a more comprehensive

experience than the latest philosophical notion. That's why when Jesus comes into your spirit, it's a deeper peace than the withdrawal from the world that eastern meditation produces inside you. That's why when Jesus comes into your spirit, it's a more permanent exultation and exhilaration than you get from drugs.

It's because it's a Spirit of Christ coming into your spirits deeper than your mind and your emotions. It's a work that God's Spirit does inside you. That's why it's such a miracle. Loved ones, Jesus will never become real in you unless you really do come to the point where you see that it's God doing something inside you that is supernatural. It's something deeper than you or I can produce inside ourselves.

All we can do is to fulfill the conditions for it. A mother has to fulfill certain conditions for the baby to be born. But the baby being born is a miracle. Do you see that? There was no man to put the sperm inside Mary's womb. Do you see that the Holy Spirit did it? Out of nothing, he put something inside her. Now that's what he'll do in you. Inside, in your spirit, there's a place where God can work a miracle. You cannot touch that place. Mary couldn't touch her womb. She couldn't govern what went on in the womb. The thing had to happen almost apart from her. She fulfilled certain conditions but then it was a miracle work inside. Now that is so with you and me.

You can't touch your spirits. You can touch your mind by meditation. You can touch your emotions by feeling. You can touch your body. But you can't touch your spirit. In that place, only God can do the work and it's there that he creates Jesus inside you. All you and I can do is to fulfill the conditions. The conditions are plain there if you'd like to look at them in Luke 1:38.

Luke 1:38, "And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.'" All we can really do is say what she said. "Behold Lord, I am your servant. I am your subject. I want Jesus so badly that I will do whatever you want me to do in my life or with my life, if you will only bring him alive inside my spirit. Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Behold I am your servant. Whatever you want me to do, I'll do. I'll stop the things that you want me to stop."

Brothers and sisters, a lot of us will miss Jesus' birth this Christmas because we're still wanting certain things that we want and we won't give them up. We need to fulfill the conditions and say, "Lord, I'll do whatever you tell me to do." And then you see what she says, "Be it unto me according to your word." We need to believe what God has promised. He will send the Spirit of his Son into your heart if you really submit yourself to the Father. You need to believe that. Then you need to behave as if you carry the Christ child inside you. That's really it, loved ones.

You know all the excitement of today and tomorrow. You know all the preoccupation with the Christmas tree and the food. But do you see that it will only be a mental, emotional experience of happiness that we transmit to one another and that will end on Tuesday morning? Unless -- we begin to come before God and say, "Lord, I want your Son alive inside me. I don't want any of this historical society stuff. I don't want any of this looking back to a figure in history and worshipping a myth. I want your Son alive inside me. Now, what do you want me to do in my life to make that possible? I believe you can do it by your Holy Spirit. Now, will you show me?"

Really brothers and sisters, that's what we need to do. That's what I need to do in my home and that's what you need to do in yours. Then you'll find that a beautiful experience takes place, just like Mary. He comes in so quietly. The baby is suddenly inside you and you're hardly aware yourself.

But other people see and other people can tell that there is somebody different inside you. Jesus comes as quietly as that into anyone who is prepared to fulfill the conditions.

So will you look into your own heart and see really if you do believe in Jesus or if you just believe in Jesus. See whether you really believe INTO Him or whether you just believe IN Him. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we would trust you to give us revelation about this. Father, we know that there is gruffness and harshness in our voices. We know that there is often impatience and irritability in our actions. We know that there is often selfishness dominating our thoughts. All of these things show plainly that we are not only kings in our own world but that Jesus has little or nothing in us.

Oh Father, we trust you this Christmas to lead each one of us into such knowledge of our own kingship that we will at last be willing to give it up and to submit our lives completely to you so that you can work this miracle inside us as you worked it in Mary. On Tuesday morning we can be different people -- people in whom the Son of the Most High God lives and works, speaks and thinks.

Lord Jesus, we trust you to come into each one of us at this time and to stay with us. We ask this for your glory in our lives and for our experience of the purpose for which you made us. Amen.