

Heir of God

Romans 8:16b

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

In 1940 I desperately wanted a goat. Yeah, a goat. For those of you who weren't born then, the Germans were bombing Belfast at that time. It's a shipyard city and we manufactured at that time oil tankers and warships. And so the Germans were bombing and we were evacuated into the country from Belfast, which is a city about the size of Minneapolis. And it was my first experience of a Fair Day, where all the farmers brought their livestock to sell and therefore it was my first view of a goat. And I conceived a ruling passion that I must have a goat. And I was six years of age, I think, six. And it was ridiculous, you know, because it was like living in the IDS tower and wanting to take a goat home with you, really. Because we were living in the city and we were city people and I wouldn't have known how to look after a goat. But that was the earliest kind of a "ruling passion" that I had; that's what Pope, the 18th Century English poet, calls it. A "ruling passion" -- something that takes up all your thoughts, so you can't think of anything else but this thing and that was my first ruling passion.

And then a few years later, I began to see the possibilities of a real mystic exhilaration if I could possibly get hold of a bicycle. I was just utterly convinced that if I had a bicycle, a whole new golden world would open out before me and so that was my next ruling passion. And then I think at sixteen, a slide rule. I just was convinced of the brilliant mathematician I could be if I just had a slide rule. And then, seventeen was a typewriter. It would just change the whole world and would produce such creative life in me that nobody could believe it possible in one person. And then a motorbike at eighteen, and you know the excitement that you get out of that. And I don't need to go on because; you're all the same aren't you? I mean, we all did the same thing. We all had certain things as we grew up that we dreamed about and we thought, "Oh if we just had those things, we would be able to do so many things."

I'd ask you just to reflect on those ruling passions for a moment. We kind of laugh at them, don't we? We laugh at them as the kind of illusions of childhood, that's the first thing. And yet when you think of it, they were really ruling passions, weren't they? I mean everything else was excluded, you thought only of that one thing. When you think of it really, it was as if some kind of a mystical force took hold of you, wasn't it? And it kind of blotted out everything else, and your mom and dad could try to interest you in all kinds of other things, but you still wanted a bicycle or you wanted a game of Chess or you wanted a kite or something else. But they were kind of ruling passions. It's interesting, isn't it? When you look back you do agree that they did seem to have a force almost of their own. They kind of took hold of you; they possessed you rather than you possessing them. And then if you think of it, don't you agree that it wasn't so much the thing itself that you wanted, but it was all the things that you thought were possible if you had that thing.

You had a whole lot of aspirations deep down in the old subconscious that you felt would be utterly satisfied if you had this thing. It wasn't just the bicycle but it was the whole world that would open up to you if you had a bicycle. It wasn't just a typewriter, but it was all the things that you would be able to do if you had a typewriter. It was as if really there were all kinds of deep aspirations inside your subconscious that actually produced the power to desire these things so strongly. And really, I think all of us are the same. It was kind of hard to disentangle those

aspirations or those motives at the beginning, especially when we were in our teens. But as we begin to look back on them and kind of finalize ourselves, we began to realize that what we wanted in the bicycle was and it would enable people to notice us and admire our bicycle and admire us because some of the glory of the bicycle rubbed off on us too.

And you think of things like the typewriter and it would just enable you to do a whole lot of things and to exercise a great deal more power than you had before. You think of the things that give you excitement. The motorbike was there because it would make life less boring, it would make it exciting and thrilling and it would bring some kind of adventure into life. It is interesting if you analyze the things that we wanted as children, they usually fall into those categories you know. If you had this, it would give you a place in the limelight, it would make you noticed, different from other people in the neighborhood. If you had this, it would give you a place in the sun, it would give you a kind of security of some kind. If you could just get that scholarship, it would just ensure that you had all the kind of security you needed and you could get all you wanted materially. If you had that other thing it would give you some enjoyment in life.

And so often those apparently harmless ruling passions that we had when we were children fell into certain categories, of deep motives inside us that kind of drove us in those days. What surprises us all of course is that so many of us here are Peter Pans. And, Peter Pan if you knew him, he was the little fellow who never grew up. And it kind of startles some of us when we realize how much we are like that. And we think back to those days and we think, "Oh yeah ruling passions, well we don't have ruling passions now." But we've kind of grown more sophisticated and psychology has familiarized us with other terms and they talk about "drives". You have certain drives within you. And where when we were children we looked upon those dream trips as kind of silly things and we were kind of glad they were over, now we adults have kind of normalized those things as part of life. And we talk about them as the incentives in life and we have dignified them with the name of "goals". And we talk about being goal oriented and we all talk about setting up our aims, that we want to achieve by age 25 and our aim we want to achieve for age 30, and our aim that we want to achieve when we are 35.

And somehow or other we're doing the same thing as we did as kids, but now we don't think it's funny and, we aren't so prepared to say that it's wrong. And yet loved ones, somehow we find that we're constantly asking each other, "What makes this person tick or what makes that person tick?" Because we kind of assume that a person can't be wholly free, they have to be driven by some external force of some kind. Of course, we partly feel that because we find we ourselves are. And we can't believe that a person could be free from being driven by this kind of thing. And really isn't it true that, we people of the 20th Century could be perhaps described that way, as a driven people.

If you've walked through the Crystal Court at lunch time or you've walked through Dayton's and it doesn't even need to be their Daisy Sale or their White Sale or their pre-Christmas sale or post-Easter sale, or you walk through the university campus, or you talk to your dear friends in the office, in the midst of all this mess, this economic mess. And it is true, isn't it; you could almost describe us as driven people. We seem to be a driven people. And we seem to be driven by the same things: a place in the limelight. It's amazing how many of us still just desperately want to be noticed, if we could only be noticed, if somebody would only notice us or recognize us if, somehow we would stand out from the crowd, and in order to do that, we are a driven people. We will manipulate and work angles, we will strive, we will do anything to get our heads somehow above the crowd. And so often our decisions on what career we'll pursue are decided by that kind of drive to be somehow in the limelight.

It's interesting if you will think of how many of us start to play the guitar with that in mind. But then it is interesting how many of us have used various talents with that in mind. Or it's the drive for a place in the sun, a place in the sun where at last we will be able to relax and we will be able to have all the food, shelter, and clothing that we need, and to that end, we strive to somehow get ourselves above the fluctuations of the stock market. We spend our lives saving for some kind of retirement somewhere in Florida or somewhere we'll be able to relax and have a place in the sun of some kind, where we will have all that we need. But we find that so much of our life is driven by that kind of desire, for a place in the sun where we will have all the warmth and the heat and the comfort that we need. Or many of us are driven by that old enjoyment thing, and we just have to enjoy ourselves and we have to get some kind of emotional excitement.

We have to somehow prove to ourselves that the world is worthwhile, that life is worth living. We want to prove that there is something worth living for. And so many of our decisions are made because of that old drive, just for some kind of emotional excitement that we thought we would get from the motorbike, but now we find we didn't get it from the bike. We thought we would get it from the new car, but we find we don't. We might get it from a wife or a husband but then we find that we don't. And we keep on hoping that somehow we will get it and we will find the emotional excitement. And yet somehow really, it never comes, and we keep using relationships and situations to try to produce it and we even use other people to try to produce that excitement. But somehow it doesn't work.

Loved ones really, I don't know that you have to describe a neurotic that way. I think that many of us, if we're really honest with ourselves would admit that we are a driven people. Driven by, it seems, a thousand demon drives inside us that keep us from having any rest and keeps us moving, and moving, and moving. And we know the line of the old Wordsworth poem, "The world is too much with us; late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers. Little we see in Nature that is ours." And for a moment many of us in the midst of the hippie movement and the Jesus movement kind of wondered, "Yeah well, I mean they are wild and their hair is long and they don't wash and all the other things -- but really I wonder what it would be like to step out and live in the caves on the West coast?" And some of us wondered, "It would be kind of nice to escape, to escape from these drives." And yet loved ones, the great majority of us are just living on a planet that seems to be a driven planet, driven by all these drives and aspirations. And in 4 BC there stepped onto this planet a dear Person who said, "Your heavenly Father knows you have need of all these things."

You know you kind of listen to that and most of us say, "Oh, I'd like to believe that." 'Your heavenly Father knows you've need of all these.' I would like to believe it." But we've so perverted our personalities into fulfilling all these needs ourselves by our own efforts, independent of anybody else, that somehow we can't possibly believe that a Creator very distant from us could actually be interested in fulfilling these things in our lives. And so many of us, I think, want to believe it, but that desire to believe it is overlaid with all kinds of other voices that say, "No, no, you've got used to doing this yourself, you've got used to trying to fulfill these aspirations yourself. Keep on going. It's the only way you can be dependent and rely for the fulfillment of these needs." And yet loved ones, you know that same person who really was an incredible person because he could not only have power over nature and disease but he actually had power over death itself. But he is speaking to each one of you this morning and he's saying, "You know really, my Father wants to adopt you as his children. He wants to incorporate you into his own family. He feels that way about you and he loves you." And he doesn't only want to incorporate you into his family but if you are willing he's prepared to send the spirit of his only begotten Son

into you this morning and he is willing to enable you to be born of his life, so that you will actually be his natural children. You won't just be his creatures to whom he owes nothing but you'll become his real children, because the spirit of his son is in you. And then you'll be his heirs. And all that he has will be yours.

It's not that he will die ever but it is that he will share all that he has with you. Everything he has -- and he owns the whole universe -- and he wants you to be his heirs. He wants you to be the people who can be sure that all he has is going to belong to you. Now loved ones, that's what that verse says this morning if you would look at it, it's Romans 8:17. It's just the first part of the verse probably today, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God," and dear ones, that is true. The Creator who made your arms, and your legs, and your voice, wants to adopt you as his own child and then wants you to receive the spirit of his Son into you so that you become a natural child of his and have, as it were, double claim to his inheritance. And then he wants you to be sure that when this short life is over you will share all that he has without any effort of your own. That's what an heir does. An heir receives everything that the father or the mother owns without any exertion of effort on their own part. They just receive it, they just live absolutely confident that it is coming to them whatever they do themselves to achieve it, it's going to come to them. And that's the Creator's plan for each one of us this morning.

In other words, we don't need to be driven by all those drives. In fact, that's the condition for him sending the spirit of his Son into us, that we would stop being driven by all those drives. That's what he is asking us to do. He's saying, "Would you become a hippie in that sense? Would you stop letting your life be driven by those things? And would you believe me that you are an heir to all that I have? That the Milky Way will be part of your playground, that you will see Mars, that you will see Jupiter, that you will see the millions of other stars that you cannot see with your most powerful radio telescopes at this moment. You will be heir to all those things." Now loved ones, that's really what he says.

I just ask you to look at the promises of the inheritance, it's Matthew 5:5. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." In other words, Jesus is going to come and clean the prostitutes out of Pigalle in Paris. He is going to come and clean the drunkenness and the gambling out of Vegas. He is going to come and clean the slums out of Tokyo and then we will inherit the renewed earth. Those of us who will allow the spirit of his son to come in and rule their lives here in these short seventy years, that's what it means that "The meek will inherit the earth." "The meek" is the Greek word "praus" -- meaning "gentle". Those who will stop striving for supremacy here, those of you who will be willing to stop trying to keep your head above the water at all costs. Those of you who will stop trying to manipulate and strive to get half an acre of land when you are going to be heirs to the whole earth with all the acreage that is there. Those of you who will stop working angles in order to get a little bit of yard for yourself. If you'll stop striving to always be on top or always to have one over on the other person, or always to keep your head somehow above the crowd, if you are willing to let the gentle spirit of Jesus, God's son to come into you and be himself in you then after these short 70 years you will be heir to everything you see around you.

Loved ones you see how the Father thinks of us when he sees us striving for our half-acre or our acre or our apartment. It just seems such foolishness to him when he looks down and says, "Oh if you'd be willing to stop that kind of drive dominating your life, if you'd be willing to die to being continually above everybody else, if you'd be willing to stop manipulating your way through your life then even though you may go right down under in this present life, even though you may end up poverty stricken, I tell you, after these 70 years you will be my heir. My heir -- and I promise

you that.” Now loved ones that’s what he’s saying. And all the other it just goes on but maybe you would look at Matthew 19:29. He’s just so anxious that we won’t misunderstand it. “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”

If you’re willing to let the spirit of his Son come in. And that means being willing to step out of the rat race for the mortgages. That means being willing to step out of the rat race to ensure that you have something tucked away. That means being willing to do without family Christmas if that’s what he wants for you. Being willing if necessary not to have a wife, not to have a husband, not to have children, not to have brothers and sisters, to be in some other country where nobody else knows you, to be willing not to have family Christmas’, to be willing not to have company for your old age if that’s what he wants. To step out of being driven by that drive that, “I must somehow get a wife, I must somehow get a husband. It doesn’t matter who it is, I must have somebody to stay with me in my old age.” To be like Jesus and to be willing to step out of that kind of rat race. And he promises, “If you do that, even if you die lonely, even if you die without anybody who knows your name, I promise you that right on the other side you will inherit brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers, a hundredfold, and houses and lands that you have been willing to do without during these 70 years. If you’ll only do what I’ve put you here to do, find out what I put you here to do and do that with all your heart and stop letting your life be driven by these other things.” And that’s really what he’s saying.

Matthew 25:34. “Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.’”

“If you’re willing to let the spirit of my son come into you and spend your life comforting instead of being comforted. If you’re willing to spend your life making other people happy, instead of using other people to make you happy. If you’re willing to spend your life in the way my Son spent his, and wants to spend it again in you, giving other people joy and not getting enjoyment yourself. If you are willing to die to your right to enjoy life. If you are willing to stop trying to grab as much enjoyment on the way past as you can because you know life will soon be over. If you are willing to do that, I’ll make you my heir. And the moment after death you will enter into such bliss, and such friendship, and such love, and such joy you never imagined.” And that’s the promise.

Our Creator is willing to make you his son and his daughter if you’re willing to let the spirit of his Son come in and rule your life and face some of the negative consequences that that will bring about. Then if you are willing, you will be his heirs after these 70 years. Really that’s the choice. You can live a driven life, for the rest of the 50 or 60 years that you have, or you can accept the spirit of Jesus, God’s son, into your life this morning and you can let him live the kind of hippie life, hippie in some ways, and its disdain for being goal oriented and its disdain for getting yourself above the crowd by hook or by crook. If you are willing to let his Son come in and do in this world what he wants to do through you, irrespective of the consequences. Then you immediately become heirs of God. God’s own heirs. And what he really wants is to meet you on that day a moment after you breathe your last breath and say to you, “Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours.” And that’s really what he wants to say. Let us pray.

Father we would ask you to nail it into our hearts that this is true and that you are really like that and that you want most of all, for us to let the spirit of Jesus come into our lives and allow

him to be the one drive. Not security, not enjoyment, not significance, but just Jesus, his spirit alive in us. And that if we are willing to let him come in and take over, and willing to obey him then we immediately become your children and if children then heirs, heirs of God. Father, teach each one of us this morning that we're not here to get. You will give us all we need when we need it, we're here to be, to be your children. Thank you for such a privilege. Thank you for such a peace that you promise us. Thank you for such a rest in our lives that we can enter by simply being your children. Thank you Lord.

Amen.