

Glorified

Romans 8:30d

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think you'll all recognize the man very quickly who wrote this poem.

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both and be one traveler,
Long I stood and looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth
Then took the other as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear.
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

Both that morning equally lay,
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day,
But knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence.
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference."

And God knew the road that Robert Frost would take before he took it. Not because he made him take it, but because he could read Frost. The moment he conceived that Frost would be born, God could read Frost and could tell what kind of a person he was and what kind of decisions he would make. It really isn't surprising, because you and I do that ourselves when we are going to give a Christmas present to a friend. We ask their nearest relative what kind of a thing they would like. Because we assume that by knowing the kind of a person you're dealing with, you can tell the kind of thing they will do and the kind of thing they will like. My wife knows fine well that if there was one plane going to Disneyland and one plane going to Mexico, she knows which one I would take.

And so it is with your loved ones. They know the kind of person you are and they can foresee the kind of decision that you will probably make. And so really loved ones, if you think of your life as a series of roads that have forks in them, what we're seeing is that God knows that when you come to this fork you will take this one, or you will take that one. God can foresee that.

The reason we have trouble with the idea that God can foresee all those contingent decisions is that we ourselves, if we could foresee that people were going to hurt us, we would stop them. And therefore we tend to keep thinking, "Oh God must be the same. If he can foresee everything that's going to happen in the whole world, if he can foresee every decision that I am going to make, then he would surely stop us if he sees we are going to hurt him."

And so we tend to say that all of God's foreknowledge must be foreordination. He must know Frost is going to take this turning and I'm going to take this turning because he made me take it. But no, loved ones, the Father actually treasures free will so much that he will not prevent us doing something that even will hurt him. We ourselves are so sure that we would not go to those lengths to preserve the right of others to have a free will that we are convinced God must be as miserable and mean as us and so surely he cannot be prepared to go to all the lengths he has gone to preserve free will in us. But he does, loved ones, he does. The Father can foresee what you are going to do or know what I am going to do but not because he makes us do it, but because he can read us, really. And that's what, you remember, Romans 8:29 states, which we have been dealing with over several weeks.

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined." And "pro-orizo" is the Greek word and it is better translated "he pre-designed their lives". "For those whom he foreknew he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren." And you remember the picture that we got of pre creation eternity in light of that. [Shows a diagram of time and eternity] Remember I pointed out that the line of eternity is the right color and that's the line of eternity. And if you think of what happened a billion, billion years ago -- and it's silly to talk in those terms because God is timeless and eternal and there you cannot talk in terms of sequence -- but if for the sake of our finite minds, you talk in terms of sequence then it means that at some point -- and even that is a contradiction when you are talking about eternity which is timelessness -- at some point God exists in love with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

At this point he conceives this plan to share that loving fellowship with other beings who will be free like him and to whom he will offer the Holy Spirit, his own life. Once he conceives of that he conceives that they will be capable of refusing the Holy Spirit and rebelling against him, especially if he makes them so they can be free. Then he conceives that they can use that freedom to refuse the Holy Spirit and rebel against him. Therefore, at that point he conceives the need to put their rebellious hearts in his son Jesus and destroy them there. And his son at once accepts the cross in his Father's heart. And this is all before God ever made an ocean or a mountain. Then God conceives that he can give the Holy Spirit only to those who accept their position in his son. Only to those who allow this selfish, carnal will to be destroyed in Jesus, only they will be able to receive his Spirit. He conceives that he must withdraw the grace of light in the penitent heart from those who refuse his Son's spirit. And then he conceives the plan for the first two free moral agents, Adam and Eve.

Then loved ones, he knows them better than they know themselves. He foreknows what decisions they will make, but refuses to compromise their free wills by preventing those decisions. Now, loved ones, that's important to see that, that God was able to foresee that. He was able to foreknow what decisions they'll make but refuses to compromise their free wills by preventing those decisions. He foreknows all the people that will be born, how they will bring up their children and how they will all respond to his Spirit. See, God must be able, with a mind that is better than any computer, he must be able to foreknow all that.

Then whom he foreknows he pre-designs to be conformed to the image of his Son. Then in Genesis 1:1, he creates the heavens and the earth. Now loved ones that's what we have been saying over the past weeks, that that is the situation, God foreknows all that. Then you remember the question we asked was, "If God knows what the outcome of your life and my life is going to be, then is there any way by which we could know that outcome? If he can foreknow who of us here will receive his Spirit and

therefore who of us he has been able to pre-design, as far as our life was concerned to make us like Jesus, is there any way we can know that?" And, we've said several times it's impossible to have an infinite mind, it's impossible to get into God's mind, but it is possible to tell which road you're on, up to this present time.

You can't tell which city you are going to eventually get to. You can't tell whether you are going to burn in your own selfishness and lust and a kind of hell forever, or whether you are going to live in harmony and love and peace in a kind of heaven forever but you can tell which way you are heading today. You can tell that loved ones. God foreknows where you are going to end up. You cannot do that, but you can tell which way you're heading today because there are certain landmarks along the road that will enable you to tell which way you're choosing with your free will. And, those landmarks, you remember, are the works that God begins to do in a person who is willing to receive his Holy Spirit and submit their lives to his Holy Spirit. And those landmarks or works are detailed in Romans 8:30. "And those whom he predestined he also called;" that's the first thing he does, he calls us. "And those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified." So you can tell which way you're choosing and which of the roads you're going down according to which of these works you are or are not experiencing.

And first you remember we talked about calling, that God calls all of us. You remember I suggested that the call really was often to some of us in the question of, is there a God? You're walking along the road and you think of all the order and design in the blood circulation of the body, and the seasons, and the way the rivers flow into the seas and the seas don't overflow, and the earth keeps going in regular orbits and you wonder, "Is there a God?" And for many of us, that's the first calling.

There you choose one road or the other. You either say, "No," in which case you are moving away from life and you have already made a decision that is taking you in that direction, or, you say "Probably there is, probably there is a God." All I'd like to point out to you is that most of us don't stop choosing at that point. For most of us the choice kind of goes on because even that can divide into another two roads because some of us say, "Sometime I'll make a final decision on this." And we say, "Probably there is a God. Well, I'll shelve this question and sometime I'm going to make a final decision on it." And some of us say, "Yes. Not just probably there is a God, yes there is a God." But even at that point loved ones, I'd point out to you that there are another two roads to be decided upon. Some of us say, "Yes, there is a God, so what if there is? My life is still my main concern." And some of us do take that view, we say, "Yeah, yeah, there is a God. But what if there is? That's okay for the theologians, or for the preachers, or for the Christians, but me, I'll get on with my own life." And some of us say, "Yeah, there is a God. Why did he put me here?"

Now loved ones, for most of us, God's calling is somewhat involved in that kind of question and that kind of answer. All I would point out to you is the very obvious one, if you think of this road [shows diagram] as always leading towards God and you think of these roads as always leading away, do you see that these all end up on the same road? You may appear to be saying, "Yes." But, eventually if you act as a practical atheist, you have in fact said, "No," back up here. You simply have bluffed yourself if you said, "Yes."

For most of us the calling goes on. And you remember I suggested last day that for most of us it intensifies, in feeling I'm not living the way I should and I can't seem to do anything about it and the calling kind of intensifies, we feel, "Yeah, I'm not living the kind of life I should, and I can't seem to do anything about it." And then there's a choice; you can go either one way or the

other. You say, "Well, nobody's perfect, I'll do the best I can. I'm not living the way I should, but after all, nobody is so I'll keep doing the best I can and try to live by the Golden Rule if I can." Or you can go the other way and say, "This nagging of my conscience must mean I'm meant to be able to live better than I am doing. This conscience is not just a higher ideal or a kind of Victorian inhibition I have, this must be a message from somewhere outside myself that I can live better than I am doing." And so, most of us make a choice, loved ones, at that point.

You remember we said last day, that the calling often intensifies even more because we begin to think, "Well with all the evidence I have heard and all the books that I have read, Jesus probably is the Creator's son. And he seems to have allowed something of my evil self to have been destroyed in his death. That seems to be true." But once you are faced with that fact, you then choose again, one road or the other. You either go this way and say, "That's good. I won't have to go to hell." And I think there are thousands of us in our churches who live that way. You know, we say, "Great. Great. Now I can enjoy myself and I won't have to go to hell." And some of us say, "What does this mean for my day-to-day failure? If Jesus has allowed part of my old self to be destroyed with him and part of the evil inside me to be destroyed, then what does this mean for my own day-to-day failure that I'm experiencing?" For most of us the thing comes down, you know, into something more particular, and God brings his call very clearly to us, some other power like the Holy Spirit is needed in my life. And many of us have come to that point.

Some of us have said, "I won't submit my whole life to a person like the Holy Spirit. I just won't. I'll get my happiness and security and significance by my own efforts." And some of us I think have listened to this, you know, Sunday after Sunday for years. And we've said, "Yeah, yeah I know. You're probably right what you are saying, there probably is a power like the Holy Spirit but in order for him to be in my life and to make it what it should be, I would have to submit my life to him. I'm not going to do that. I want to run my own life. I want to get my own happiness, and my own security, my own significance the way I want." And some of us choose the other and say, "I'm willing to let my old self, with its lust for happiness, and security, and significance be destroyed with Jesus. Holy Spirit, you rule my life as you want."

So really, loved ones, in the area of calling there are many choices as far as the roads are concerned. And you can tell, you are no fools, you can tell which ones you have chosen so far. I think it is true, loved ones, that you can go back, but it takes a very definite determination to go back and to take some of the right turnings. I'd ask you which way you have chosen to turn up until this present time. What we said of course is, when a person turns this way [indicating diagram] there comes to them a great sense of peace. They aren't made perfect, but suddenly they know deep down in their hearts, "I'm not perfect but I am turning the way my Maker wanted me to. I'm willing to let this miserable old self of mine be destroyed with Jesus. Holy Spirit show me, show me what more of it has to be destroyed, show me and I'll go that way." And there comes to us a great sense, "I'm doing what my Maker wants me to do, so he's satisfied with me." And we have begun to feel that we are justified in our Maker's eyes. We begin to feel, "He feels happy with us." We're not perfect saints but at least we're accepting the diagnosis of our problem and the remedy for it that he wants us to accept. And we have a real sense of being justified in being here in the world and a real sense of being put right with God.

Now, the others of us who turn the other way, have the completely opposite experience. Those of us who are still caught up with the naive optimism that has ruled the educational system for the past 30 years, that naive optimism that says, "We are inherently good people. We are really good people, all we have to do is let the good come out." And you know that's the theory, that's the theory.

Those of us who believe, "I'm okay. You're okay." We end up the rest of our lives trying to prove that that's so. We do. We end up the rest of our lives trying to justify that claim. And we're always trying to prove that we're right, trying to prove that we are right in other people's eyes, in our own eyes, in our friend's eyes, in our professor's eyes. We live lives bent on establishing our own self righteousness. Because we will not accept God's declaration, "You're evil inside. And what I did in Jesus was to destroy that evil."

We will not accept that. We keep saying, "No, no, we're not evil. I'm Okay, you're okay. We're all inherently good people. All we have to do is let it out." And we keep barking our shins on the evil core of Old Self inside us. And we keep tripping over the fact that we are not inherently good. And so we end up in lives of self justification.

So, loved ones, that's what Romans 8:30 means when it says that those who accept God's diagnosis and remedy of this problem of not being able to do the good that you want, those of us that accept that remedy, we find we sense that we're justified and we're put right with our Maker. Those of us who don't accept it and are continually trying to prove that we don't need that remedy or that we're good on our own, we spend our lives justifying ourselves in everybody's eyes. And of course it brings its toll, you know. It brings its pain. We find ourselves trying to prove to our employers that we're right, that we're worth something, we're worth respecting. We don't have that sense of being approved of by our Maker. We don't have a sense that we are worth a lot in our Maker's eyes and so we're always trying to use our jobs to establish our worth, or we're using our school career to establish our worth.

So suddenly our job no longer is something our Maker has given us to do and that we joyfully do because he's told us to do it. Suddenly our job, or our school career, our degree ceases to be something that our Maker wants us to do and therefore we do it and enjoy doing it. Suddenly the job or the career become means of establishing our value in our employer's eyes, or our professor's eyes, or our parents' eyes. And everything begins to be used by us to justify ourselves.

It brings tremendous strain, because every partial failure -- like a reproof at work, or a low grade on a test at school, or every disastrous failure like being dismissed from the job, or failing the final exam completely -- every failure becomes a cause of strain inside us because we feel, "I'm not worth anything and they don't think I'm worth anything. I'm not succeeding in justifying myself."

And tremors of tremendous insecurity and insignificance begin to go through our whole personality. And, of course, through the emotions of anxiety and worry and fear, that is translated into all kinds of tension in our muscles--all kinds of tension in our arteries that stops the free flow of blood through our bodies so that we begin to experience the headaches, and the heart trouble, and the arterioscleroses, and the ulcers that take the beautiful people that God made us to be and convert us through a series of emotional and physical deterioration as the years pass, into stunted, decrepit little pygmies who are worn out with tension and sickness and disease. The very opposite, loved ones, of the glory God had in mind for us. The very opposite of the beautiful people that God had in mind. We fall far short of the glory the Father had for us.

Now if we accept the justification that God has given us, if we accept we are rotten, "And, Lord Jesus, I am willing to let that rottenness be destroyed in you. And, Holy Spirit, will you make this real in my life today? Will you make this cosmic miracle real in me? Holy Spirit, I'll do whatever you tell me to do." Suddenly, loved ones, there comes into our lives a sense of free justification. The failure on the exam is not the disaster that it is to the other person. The loss of the job is

not the disaster that it is to the other person. We know we're right in our Father's eyes. We may not be right in anybody else's eye, but the Creator of the universe thinks the world of us and there comes into us a great sense of relaxation, a great sense of being justified.

The old blood flows freely through the body. There is no tension in the muscles, there are no ulcers in the stomach and instead of the body deteriorating as the years pass, even though it grows old because God has planned for age to be part of our present creation, yet the body itself does not grow sick. It does not become worn out with tension. In fact, the emotions and the intellects of people who live like this actually grow younger as the years pass. And it seems to them themselves that the older they get in a sense the younger they feel and the freer they feel. And then when their dear body goes into the grave, the spirit of Jesus that has already been working in transforming them comes into the grave also and takes that body that appears to be physically dead and raises it up and brings it back into the glory that God had put into Jesus himself. And they find themselves glorified completely. Partially being glorified as this life proceeds, but glorified completely at the resurrection.

And I think that, loved ones, is part of what God means in Romans 8:30. And you at this moment are choosing, you're choosing. You can even tell at this moment by the degree of glory you are experiencing or the degree of deterioration that you are experiencing. You can tell now which way you are choosing.

So really all I'm saying to you is, would you look at it and will you do something about it while you still have the ability to see? Because the incredible thing about this is, the more you choose the wrong road at every fork, the blinder you get and the more impossible it becomes to see that you are choosing the wrong road any longer. So, loved ones, will you think about it? Because there is a beauty and a glory in life that is the Father's will. The Father intended us to die well, not to die sick, to die well. We look at those old men in the Old Testament and we say, "120, 130, ah they were just counting differently." We'll do anything, you know, to prove that the miracle can't be true. Ah, loved ones, God wants us to live well and to die well. And we can do it, if we accept his explanation of our present situation. I pray that somebody today will start turning the right way, if you recognize you've been going wrong. Let us pray.

Father, I thank you for my brothers and sisters here. And Lord, I ask you to give each one of us light. Help us to see Father which way we are going with our lives. Help us to see that we do have free will, we do have the ability to make a right choice. We can choose, Lord, whether to go on trying to establish this self-righteousness of ours, whether to go on justifying ourselves again and again to everybody, to try to justify ourselves to ourselves, or we can accept that you looked upon us and saw we were incorrigibly evil, incorrigibly selfish and you put us into your son Jesus and you destroyed all that selfishness there and that through the Holy Spirit, you are able to make that real in us. And, Oh Holy Spirit, I would pray that some loved one here would start a partnership with you this morning. And would say to you, Holy Spirit, "I don't understand all of this but I ask you to begin to lead me and guide me into this kind of life." Father we would pray that for each other this morning, and thank you for each other. Thank you, Lord. Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and evermore. Amen.