

God's Kindness

Romans 8:32b

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

"Do you use mountain-grown coffee? You know it's the richest kind!" [quote from a popular TV commercial for coffee] I've often imagined what I would feel like if I were a woman and that miserable creature of a husband curls up his mouth and looks down at my coffee -- I think I'd just lift the pot and pour it right over his head! Let him go and marry Mrs. Olsen if he wants.

And I think all of us feel much that way when we reflect upon the thing, but somehow most of us will probably have to admit those wretched commercials get to us. There's something inside us that wants to be as good, if not better, than everybody else. And there's something in us that makes us want to please our husbands and we want to be as good a wife as everybody else. We want to ride off into the sunset with the most beautiful girl in the class and we're ready to buy whatever will bring that about. We find ourselves again and again with part of our personalities responding to these silly TV commercials.

And of course the fact that the commercials are continuing to be shown shows that they are very effective. Obviously a lot of people are motivated either by accusation or by false guilt to try to be as brilliant as the actor in that commercial is. And there are many fiancés who want to be as kind to their loved one as everybody else who deals with Goodman Jewelers. There's something in us that feels, "Maybe he is right; if his name isn't on my car maybe I did pay too much for it." There's a thing inside us that wants to get as much as we can for as little as we can. There's something inside us that makes us want to grab as much happiness as we feel the Constitution says we're to pursue and we have a right to. There's something that makes us want to be as good as everybody else and that's, of course, what all the commercials depend on.

And it's funny up to the point where you eventually extend yourself too far financially because of these strong urges inside you. Or you find that this desire to be better than every other husband brings its own trail of nervous exhaustion and irritability into your home. Or your desire to have your wife better than everybody else brings into your marital relationship a kind of critical spirit that begins to destroy the home. And then you begin to realize that this is not just a way of selling things, this thing inside me that responds to these commercials is also the same thing that begins to spoil my happiness, and my friendship, and my marriage.

And of course many of us have looked at that thing inside us and tried all kinds of psychological techniques to get rid of it. We really have seen that you can carry ambition too far and this desire to be as good as everybody else and to be better than everybody else eventually brings you under slavery to people's opinions and begins to enslave you as a prisoner to what everybody else thinks you should do. This desire to have all the happiness you can possibly get your hands on, eventually makes you utterly resentful to any event that comes into your life that is at all inconvenient to you.

You begin to find that these things are inside you and somehow they won't change. So you try the psychological techniques and the power of positive thinking methods and you try all the systems you can and yet none of them seem to be capable of changing this reaction that your personality has. Loved ones, I think many of us find ourselves in that situation -- we just are baffled and really

don't know what to do. Then it is that many of us at last discover that that's what Calvary is all about. That what God did was take that twisted, perverted personality that keeps on responding in those ways and he put it into Jesus and destroyed it there. And any of us who believe that and submit to the Spirit of Jesus is able to be free from it.

Many of us here walk free from those things, but I think many of us here are under them. I think many of you have your life dominated by what somebody will think of you, by what either your boss will think of you, or what your friends will think of you, or what your parents think of you. Many of us are dominated by a desire, "We must have as nice a house as that other person has, who graduated with me from school." Many of us here have a great desire to have things under control, we must have everything under control and if there's anything that slips out of our control, we get mad and irritated about it.

Many of us, loved ones, I think you'd admit, find ourselves with a personality that is exactly suited to responding to those silly carrots that the commercials and everybody else holds in front of us. And if that were all, it wouldn't be so bad, but we find that that same personality, twisted and perverted as it is, is also the thing that makes it impossible for us to do what we know is right in the world. And so really it's a relief for many of us to find that that's what Calvary is about. God took that twisted, perverted personality, put it into his son Jesus and destroyed it there. And because of that, it is possible to be delivered from it by the Spirit of Jesus.

Now what we saw last Sunday was that that was a hideous experience for Jesus himself -- an unbelievable, macabre experience for him to go through. And it's referred to, loved ones, in Romans 8:3, "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh." Now sin in the flesh is just the independent life inside each one of us that wants to substitute our friend's approval for God's approval. Sin in the flesh is that. It's that tendency of all our personalities to want to substitute everybody else's approval and acknowledgment for God's approval and acknowledgment, so that we don't have to deal with God.

Now that sin in the flesh is an unmanageable trait in each one of our personalities. It's a trait that you with all your psychological techniques cannot control. Now God took that trait and put it into his son Jesus and destroyed it there. That's what it means when it says, "God condemned sin in the flesh." He took the trait in you that wants so badly to ride off into the sunset with the most beautiful girl in the whole school, he took that trait and he put it into Jesus and he destroyed it there. And because of that it is possible for you to be free from it.

Part of it really is this: in Colossians it says, "You died with Christ." And the fact is that after each one of us here in this auditorium is physically dead, you couldn't care less about anyone else's opinion. They won't matter -- they can cut down whoever they want but you don't care -- you don't care about who gets the most beautiful girl in the class. Once you're physically dead, those things aren't important.

Now the truth is that God took you and put you into his son Jesus, and destroyed you there so that you can experience the same freedom that you will have in physical death through dying with Christ right there. Really, that's it.

Now, loved ones, some of us here live in that freedom, honestly. Some of us live here as if we have died physically and we have been delivered from those tremendous desires that seem to govern us and

dictate to us while we're alive. Now that's what it means when it says, "God condemned that sin in the flesh." He actually condemned it to destruction -- he destroyed it. It meant incredible pain for Jesus, you know. There's a verse in the Bible that says, "God made him to be sin who knew no sin." Jesus himself was willing to be regarded as worse than everybody else. But he took that tremendous sense of irritation, and discontent, and restlessness that you and I have often felt when we found someone else being praised more than we were, he has taken that tremendous sense of restlessness, and irritability, and discontent and he put it into Jesus. Even though Jesus himself never had that feeling himself, God put it into Jesus and destroyed it there.

The terrible sense of loneliness and abandonment that you and I have felt after we've had one of our bouts of self-centeredness or our bouts of selfishness, God took that tremendous sense of desolation and loneliness and abandonment that you and I experienced, and even though Jesus had never experienced that himself, God put it into his son Jesus and Jesus experienced it there. That tremendous sense of discontent that you haven't enough happiness, and that you're not as happy as so and so is -- that tremendous sense of discontent, that tremendous sense of frustration that you felt, God put into his son Jesus and destroyed it there. In other words, loved ones, everything that you and I have ever experienced, Jesus took into himself for us and took it through death.

And, of course, that's part of the problem when we first become Christians. We receive into ourselves this dear Spirit of Jesus, this dear Spirit of this man from Nazareth who was willing to be despised and regarded as an absolute criminal, who was willing to be absolutely unhappy in order to make everybody else happy, who was willing to have nothing and to have what he had taken away from him. We have this dear, gentle, beautiful spirit of Jesus come into us and it comes into this roaring lion -- this wild personality of ours that wants all the happiness it can get, that wants to be better than everybody else, that wants to have its own way whatever it costs everybody else -- and that's the conflict that many Christians feel. They feel the Spirit inside them of this dear Jesus struggling against this personality that they have. Now loved ones, the truth is that God took that personality of yours that is so miserable and he put it into his son Jesus and he destroyed it there. And you don't need to live under that, you don't need to live a slave to that.

And it's important to see that God did it not just for the whole world. Here's the verse that we're studying today, which says, "God gave up his son for us all." And it's vital for you as you sit there to see that God did not do that for the fellow beside you, or the girl beside you, and not for you. God did not do this with a great satanic power of evil that you found exhibited in Hitler or in Joe Stalin -- God has done it for you. God took your personality, that miserable little dried up thing that is such a burden to you, and that is such a burden to all your friends, he took that, loved ones, and he put it into his son Jesus, and he destroyed it there.

You want to know what it cost? Would you let your son pay a \$500 fine if it would free some of us here? Now, would you let your son serve a year's prison sentence if it would free one of us here? Now, would you let your son experience the consequences of the venereal disease gonorrhea, if it would cure one of us here? Now, the last is the nearest to the truth, the last intensified a billion, trillion times is what Jesus endured for you and me. Loved ones, the very worst that you have ever produced, God put into his son, Jesus, who was not like that at all, himself, and destroyed it in death so that you could be free from it.

And was it just Jesus? It wasn't. If a Father and son were close together, it was Jesus and the Father. Your father and my father, they're poor copies of what the Father in heaven is. You

remember Jesus said, "I and my Father are one. I can't do anything apart from my Father." You remember the Father himself said, "This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased; this is really the apple of my eye." And we need to see that it was the Father who was sacrificing, it was the Father who loved, that gave a son for this purpose.

I think some of us wonder, well what is love? I think some of us who have husbands, and wives, and fiancés, and lovers, and friends, we'll often think, "Oh, you're giving me gifts and you're giving me things, but they're things, things, things -- love is giving yourself to me." I think we feel that, don't we? There are many people who are friends and they'll give us things, but you know a person loves you when they really give themselves to you -- and that's why we talk about God's love. God gave us the rain and the trees and these clothes and this building and the bodies that you and I all have, but the greatest thing was -- when it came down to the crunch -- he reached into the innermost depths of his own intimate family and he destroyed all the uninterrupted peace and harmony that he had with his Son and he allowed the dearest being in the whole world, the only being that really has the same nature as him, to be torn out from his arms and to become the first creature who would die absolutely alone in the dark.

That's the kind of love that our Creator has and that's the kind of love that he has for you. And loved ones, nobody else has loved you to that extent. Nobody else has loved you even to dying, let alone taking all the worst that you have ever had in the world bearing down on you so that you have to cry out, "My God, my God, why has God forsaken me?" Nobody has ever gone to hell for you but this dear one, Jesus. And it was so that you could be free from it.

I'd like to share with you the last part of the verse, loved ones. It's Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" The first part is for love, you see -- it's giving yourself because he didn't spare his own son, but gave him up for us. And the second part is kindness -- will he not also give us all things? Love is giving yourself and kindness is giving things and that's what God says this morning to all of us, "Listen, if I was willing to destroy my own family, if I was willing to take part of myself, my own son, and put into him all the worst that you ever thought and said and did, and allowed him to be destroyed and to go to hell for you -- if I love you that much, don't you see that I'll certainly be kind to you. If I love you that much, I'm certainly going to give you what things you need." And really that's it. Surely the Father who gave himself and his own son for us, surely he's going to give to all of us all the things we need.

You know, some of us are pretending today. We say, "Yeah, but sometimes he hasn't come through for me." And it's important to see what that verse in Philippians 4:19 says, "That my God will supply all your needs from his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Loved ones, if this dear Father loves you as much as this, you have to trust him to judge what you need. You have to trust that he really does love you and that he is judging what your needs are and knows them better than you. He knows when you need to have a happy time, he knows when you have to have a sad time. He knows when you have to lie in green pastures. He knows when you have to walk beside still waters. He knows when you have to go through the valley of the shadow of death. He knows what is needed to make you like his son, Jesus. Loved ones, God loves you so much that he gave his son for you -- he certainly is going to be kind and give you what you need -- but when you trust him to judge your needs. Will you stop crying like little babies and saying, "You're not giving what I need" when you see that he loves you more than you love yourself. God surely will be kind to you. He surely will give you what you need.

I think some of us say, "Yeah, well he's come through for me but what makes me uncertain about depending on him is obviously some things I should work for myself and some things I should trust him for. I mean I obviously shouldn't lie back in my arm chair or my recliner and pray for a double dip of chocolate chip and just expect it to come down." And I think a lot of us feel that way, "Well yeah I see that if he loves me this much, he wants to give me what I need, but I have trouble seeing what I should trust him for, and what I should work for myself."

Loved ones, there's a piece in Mark that talks about a woman that sold ointment; who took ointment that she had and put it on Jesus' feet. Then there's another woman who has the same kind of attitude but gave the one mite that she had into the offering plate for the poor. And then the line of the scripture goes, "She did what she could." You're to do what you can. You're to work as hard as you can, we're to study as hard as we can, we're to plan the finances as wisely as we can, we're to do everything we can to ensure that the children have the right upbringing, we're to do all we can to keep the car in running order. But after we've done all that we can, we're to remember, "My Father is watching and he loves me so much that he split up his own family for me. He loves me so much that he took the worst that I ever had in my heart and put it into his dear Son's pure heart. My Father is going to come through for whatever I can't meet."

Loved ones, after you've done it all, you have to go to bed quiet and free from anxiety and worry. Sure you have to work, but you've not to be anxious; you have to work but you've not to worry, because this God who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us with him all things? The truth is, he will. Your Father won't let you down. Your Father, who gave you this body, won't let you down. How does your heart keep beating, can you tell? You're a genius if you can because no medical person can tell why the heart keeps beating. Nobody can tell why it keeps beating. Can you tell how all the protons and neutrons in your body hold together? You're a genius if you can because nobody else can tell. Can you see that what you and I are at this moment is totally dependent on somebody else's love? We can't even explain what we have at this moment.

Loved ones, will he not give you everything that you need? And the truth is, he will. The truth is, he will. He loves you as much as he's done in his Son, he loves you enough to supply you with what you need day-by-day and he expects you to trust him for it -- I would say that. Somebody here is troubled with a bank account, somebody here is troubled about a sickness that they just don't know how to deal with, somebody else here is troubled about what they are going to do with that son of theirs.

Loved ones, is it not true that this dear Father who started the whole thing at the very beginning and has demonstrated his love so clearly to us in his Son, is it not true, that it's in his interest to preserve his investment? He's already invested so much in us that he has no intention of letting us go without. Then I'd ask you, have you had all your needs met? We're all alive here, we're all breathing, we've all clothes on our backs -- what's his record like? Is it good or bad? Have you found yourself in hideous situations which you weren't able to come through? Or, how did you get here this morning? All of us have come through, because the Father calculates everything carefully and supplies just what we need to make us like his Son. He's just a good God.

Let's pray. Dear Father, we thank you for such a plain statement backed up by the world's history and by our own personal history that you, who did not spare your own son but gave him up for us all, you will also give us all things with him. Thank you, Father. We apologize, Father, for the nights we've been restless in bed with worry. We apologize, Father, for the nervousness and the anxiety that we've had. Lord, we thank you for this beautiful world. We thank you for your love. We thank

you that you are not a God that just gives us things, things, things, but you've given us your very own Son and we thank you, Lord. We intend to live this week in peace -- like people who have a loving, trusting Father looking after us. And 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 throughout this coming week. Amen.