

Are You Willing to be Sent?

Romans 10:15

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Until recently millions of people throughout the world lived in fear of a terrifying disease that pitted the face with pock marks. It disfigured and destroyed the looks of thousands of men and women, young and old. It was a deadly disease and wiped out towns of people. Do you know what it was? Most of us know it was smallpox.

Just recently the World Health Organization made a statement that would seem like an impossible miracle to the thousands of loved ones who died of smallpox. It declared that smallpox had been eliminated from our world.

How did it happen? Smallpox was as feared as cancer. It wiped out populations. They were unable to do anything to stop the disease once it began to work its horror in a community.

In the late 1700's a country doctor in Britain noticed that milk maids who worked with cows did not seem to suffer from smallpox. He injected a milk maid with some cowpox and was amazed to see that she became immune to smallpox.

That first vaccination, by Edward Jenner, was almost two hundred years ago. In the last hundred years we have seen doctors and nurses traveling throughout the world, to every corner of the earth, vaccinating thousands of men and women, young and old. They have vaccinated in Africa, Asia, and Europe with the cure to this dreaded disease. Today we have declared it eliminated from our world.

Now, what would you have said if Jenner, this country doctor in Britain who discovered the cure, had told no one about it? What would you think of all the doctors and nurses who have traveled to all corners of the earth with the vaccination if they had determined to stay home? What would you think if they had determined to stay in America to develop prosperous practices, forgetting the smallpox-ridden world around them?

Well, you know what we would all think. We would all say that either they didn't have the cure for the disease, or that they were the most selfish monsters that ever lived on this earth for despising their fellow man.

You know that is what we would say about any group of people who claimed to have the cure for some world-wide ill or evil but refused to share it. If they did not give their whole lives to share this cure, we would say that either they did not believe in the cure, or that they were the most selfish monsters for despising their fellow man.

That is why we are reading Romans 10:15: "And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!'"

How can men preach unless they are sent?

Stalin's selfish egotism destroyed more millions than smallpox during his lifetime. Hitler's selfish egotism destroyed as many millions during his lifetime as did yellow fever. Mao's selfish

egotism destroyed as many millions as did cancer during his lifetime.

Selfish egotism runs the huge oil corporations and the industrial conglomerates. It does this all over the world in a very subtle way, through the simple fear of little executives who fear for their own positions.

Selfish egotism is destroying capitalism. It destroys every political and economic system. The incurable disease of selfishness has utterly destroyed the happiness of many homes here in America. The incurable disease of selfishness has brought Britain to its knees economically, at this moment. This incurable disease brings tears to the eyes of many a wife, through the insensitivity of husband or children.

This disease is incurable by human methods; yet it is wreaking more havoc in our world than any physical disease.

Islam has tackled it the same way as Communism. They use civil law and harsh punishments. You can see that with the Pakistani politician Bhutto's hanging this past week. Yet, Islam -- like Communism -- ends up producing vengeful dictators, who are themselves dominated by selfish egotism.

Hinduism tries to tackle it in a different way. Islam tries to tackle it with harsh punishments under civil law. Hinduism approaches it through the impassivity that is produced by the old karma or reincarnation myth. That is all Hinduism does. It produces an impassivity or a submission to selfish egotism, but not a victory over it. Buddhism produces an inhuman insensitivity by trying to eliminate the personality -- instead of the selfishness.

And yet, all of the world religions find what they were looking and groping for in the death of Jesus.

The reason you cannot cure selfish egotism by man-made religions or methods is because selfish egotism is not an attitude. Selfish egotism is a radical perversion of our personality. It has taken place over thousands and thousands of years as human beings lived depending upon themselves for their own safety and security.

Thinking that you are the only one who can protect yourself produces a twisting and perversion of your own personality. It prevents you from trusting in a God, even if you know there is a God who exists.

Selfish egotism is a radical perversion of the personality. This is what Jesus' death is all about -- God, our Creator, taking our selfish, perverted personalities and destroying and remaking them anew in his Son. That is what happened to all of us -- everyone in India; every angry personality; everyone in Africa; every proud, ambitious, selfish, little personality.

Everyone in South America was remade anew in Jesus. There is a personality that they can experience at this moment, through simply believing that and being willing to live that kind of life.

That is the only cure for selfish egotism. It has taken place in Jesus. Christ "died for all; therefore all have died." (2 Corinthians 5:14) That is finally the only cure for selfish egotism.

Now, what would you think if there were hundreds of people who knew that -- and yet did not give

their lives to sharing that cure and remedy for the world's greatest evil and ill throughout the whole world? What would you say? Would you not say, "They do not believe it is the cure. Either they do not believe it's the cure, or they are the most selfish monsters to despise their fellow human beings."

Indeed, wouldn't you say that? If they do not spend their whole lives sharing this with the rest of the world, it is proof positive they have not experienced the cure themselves. It is only words.

Loved ones, here are the facts: At the moment there are three and a half billion of us, at least three and a half billion of us here in this world. Twenty five percent of us are nominally Christian; that is, we know some of the facts about Jesus. But, only one percent of us live a life that is delivered from selfish egotism by his death and resurrection. Only one percent of us in the whole world! Three quarters of that one percent live together here in America, rejoicing in their deliverance from selfish egotism.

Well, do you wonder? Do you wonder what they are rejoicing at? Do you see that all of our pathetic protests look pitiful in the light of these facts? It just looks pitiful!

You know the old one, "America needs saving too!" Well, yes it does. But -- if you work out the statistics, you will find that every American meets fifty cured Christians during his lifetime. He meets fifty victorious, delivered, cured Christians who are free from selfish egotism. Working out these statistics, you will find that every American meets fifty such people for every one person that anyone else in the rest of the world has a chance of meeting.

In other words, in terms of shipwreck, every one of us here in America has fifty life belts thrown to us -- to one that is thrown to an African or Indian.

Is that equal opportunity? It doesn't seem like it. You know the other argument that we theologians use: We say, "Now wait a minute! Going abroad to live your life for God before other people is not just a matter of mathematical proportions, you know! It's not just a matter of need. That truth is written into the very words of the verse in Romans 10:15: 'And how can men preach unless they are sent?'".

And so, many of us say, "Now wait a minute! I mean, your facts are right and are very persuasive. But, I have to wait till I am sent. I can't just decide to go because I am persuaded by the mathematics of it."

But, loved ones, we are not just talking about life belts here. We are not just talking about smallpox here. We are not just talking about disease. Do you see that we are talking about the agony that Jesus suffered on the cross? What we are saying is, that agony did not come from swords, the spears, or the insults. That agony came from the cosmic, supra-spatial destruction that he suffered, that destruction of every perverted personality in the whole world.

In other words, he was suffering there the destruction and complete renewal by his Father's Holy Spirit of every perverted personality of all the billions of people that ever lived in our world. That is the agony he was suffering.

In light of the fact that the Son's agony was caused by all the billions of people that have ever lived in the world, is it likely that his Father would send fifty people to contact each person in a

small six percent of the world's population? Would he send only one person to contact each one of the rest of the ninety-four percent of the world's population? I just put it to you, is it likely?!

We know that our God is wise and balanced. He has always been fair in his dealings with us. Is it likely that he would choose a select six percent in America and would send fifty people to contact everyone who did not know about his Son's death? Would he send only one person to contact each of the other ninety-four percent throughout the world about his Son's death?

Is it not more likely that our dear Father allowed his Son to be destroyed for all of us because he loves all of us equally? Isn't it so that our dear Father does in fact want to send fifty times more of us abroad than are at the moment going? But, he can only send those who are willing to be sent.

Have you ever thought of how God sends you abroad? You know that it isn't a matter of some of us being called to the ministry and all that stuff. Really, we are talking about ordinary people like ourselves, who are involved in business and the professions. We are the people who have to go abroad. The time for professional missionaries is past. It is time for ordinary people to speak to ordinary people.

Have you ever thought of how God does send you abroad? Look at two examples in the Bible. Look at Revelation 3:20: "'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.'"

That is the way God calls. Pascal has said that God is a hidden God and will only be found by those who seek him with all their hearts. That is true. God is a God who only reveals himself to those who cannot do without him. He reveals his will to those who will not act apart from his will.

It is the same with that verse Isaiah 6:8: "'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'" Isaiah then says, "Here am I! Send me." Where was Isaiah when those words came to him? Where was he when he had that vision? He was in God's house, hungering to know how he could share and where he could share the news of what God has done for mankind.

In other words, God does not hit us over the head, drag us, and say, "You are going to China!" He doesn't. Loved ones, God will not work that way. Don't expect him to work that way. Some of us have a feeling, "Oh, wait a minute. Look what he did with Paul! He awakened him one night. Then there was that guy in Macedonia yelling at him, saying to come over and help. Boy, if I had that kind of a revelation, I would be off like a shot!"

Loved ones, let us look at that. It is in Acts 16:9-10: "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

But what was Paul doing? Was he sitting at home planning the next promotion, or the next new car, or planning how the next ten years of his life was going to develop professionally or materially? Look in verse 6: "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas."

Paul was involved in what he wanted to be found doing when Jesus comes. So, the visions come when you are already using every power that you have to do what you believe God wants you to do. It is not putting your mind to sleep, not ignoring the mathematical facts, and not ignoring the realities of the world around you. It is using every power that you have -- your head, your emotions, your will, your body, your spirit. It is using everything to set your life on the line -- everything you think would be best and most used by God.

In the course of that, then, maybe you will get visions. Maybe you won't. Most of us have not had visions. Most of us have used our good common sense. We see that there are six percent of us here in America, and there are ninety-four percent in the rest of the world. There are fifty people to witness to every one here. There is only one abroad. Most of us have just worked the thing out, used our common sense, and begun to set our steps in that direction.

In other words, are you willing to be sent? Have you ever thought about that? God will not overrule your will. He will not force you against your own wishes. You not only have to be willing to go, but you have to want to be sent.

That is amazing, but that is so. Our dear Father is a lover. He does not push people. He will be the last one to thrust it upon you. If you do not want him and what he wants, and if you have not a heart sympathy with his dear Son, and if you do not have a sense of the pain that he suffered for all of the loved ones who don't know about it -- then you will never be sent.

Watchman Nee tells this story: There was a father out working in the garden. He wanted his son to do something for him. So he called to him and asked him to come over to where he was working. The little boy yelled back, "Wait, Dad. I've something in my hands!"

Have you anything in your hands? If you have, you will not hear his call. You really will not. If you have something in your hands or in your heart that you are set on, your dear Maker will never get through to you on the plan that he has for your life.

Loved ones, I am sharing this with you as a guy who felt the same as you. I looked forward to spending my life in Ireland. I had my plans made in the ministry, in the Methodist ministry. They were good plans. I know how you feel, and I felt the same way. But do you see what beautiful surprises God has for you, if we would be willing to leave the things that we have in our hands! If we would leave the plans for our own lives, the plans for our own professions, the plans for our own families, and if we would be open -- maybe God would be able to send you where he wants you to go.

You must admit that the facts of the case suggest that there is something wrong. There is something wrong! Either God is not fair and does not love everybody equally, or some of us have something in our hands and cannot hear his call.

I ask you to be honest, loved ones. I know it's hard. I know it's difficult. But I can tell you that "there is nothing else worth doing in this passing world of sin; our lives should tell for Jesus and give some account to him. Let us, then, be up and doing, strong in faith, scorning fear; and trusting him to keep us faithful in his service here." Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we see that you are not even calling us necessarily to bleed from our hands and our feet. You are simply asking us to tell others that you so bled. It is but a little thing to ask --

especially when we see the limitless results that can take place in our brothers' and sisters' lives -- in India, China, Africa, Russia, Europe, and South America -- if we would leave our own things out of our hands and be about our Father's business.

Lord, we would deal with you honestly this morning and in the coming days, and lay our lives out in such a way that we will be glad when we hear your coming. Because we know you'll find us doing what you sent us to do. We give ourselves to you for this purpose. Amen.