

Your Unique Life

Romans 12:4

Sermon Transcript by Reverend Ernest O'Neill

This morning I would like to introduce you to my right hand. My right hand is made for shaking hands with other hands, for waving and for signaling. That's my right hand.

[Right hand speaking] "I want a kiss."

"You want what? You want a kiss? You aren't made for kissing. You are made for holding and shaking and waving and signaling, not for kissing. You still want a kiss? OK. Did you enjoy it? No, you didn't really, and you didn't do a very good job of it."

You know it is stupid. It doesn't realize that hands are made for shaking and waving and not for kissing. It doesn't ever get anything out of kissing.

I would like to introduce you to my tongue. My tongue is for licking stamps and for licking lollipops and for licking single dip chocolate-chip ice cream cones.

[Tongue speaking] "I want to turn over a page."

"You what?"

[Tongue speaking] "I want to turn over a page."

"You are not made to turn over pages."

[Tongue speaking] "Well, I want to."

"OK, turn over a page. Look, you got the page wet."

[Tongue speaking] "I know, I know."

"It didn't taste very good, did it?"

[Tongue speaking] "No, it didn't."

The tongue is unique. It can't do what fingers can do, but it can do all kinds of things that fingers can't do. The hand can do all kinds of things that the feet can't do. And so all the rest--the ears, the mouth, the legs and the toes--are all unique. They all can do things that the others can't do.

Loved ones, that is what our dear Creator is saying to us in Romans 12:4. "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function." Most of us tend to say, "That's obvious. We all know our body has different limbs and they all do different things, and there are some things that they can't do that the others can do. We know that. Obviously the whole body is not an eye and the whole body is not a hand. Obviously if we had a mouth without a stomach, what a mess there would be. If we had hands and no feet our body wouldn't get anywhere." Yet, you and I do not live in the truth of that in regard to our function here in this world. We say we understand that in regard to the limbs in our body, and yet we ourselves do not live in the peace and relaxation that our hand or our eye lives in, in regard to our functions or our jobs, in regard to our vocations or our avocations, in regard to our positions in our family or our home or our community.

Loved ones, the tragedy is we don't live in the peace of that truth. This hand is not sweating like mad because it can't lick chocolate chip ice cream. This hand is satisfied and content and fulfilled because it does what it is made to do. You must admit, you don't find your tongue popping out of your mouth every time you want to turn a page. It knows its place is inside your mouth. Your tongue isn't fretting itself trying to do what your fingers can do. But not us, loved ones.

It would probably surprise all of us if I asked everyone to stand in your place, everyone who is uncertain about their present jobs. I'd ask everyone who isn't sure that they are doing what they should be doing with their lives. I'd ask everyone to stand who isn't sure that they would like to be doing what they are doing now for the rest of their lives. It might surprise us to see how many people are standing. Because the fact is, many of us are pretty restless about our functions. Many of us are pretty doubtful about what we are actually doing here. We say, "Anybody could do the job I do. There is nothing particularly unique about me and my job."

Indeed, it would surprise us how many of us would say, "I would exchange my job tomorrow with anybody. I wouldn't care." It would surprise us how many would say, "I would love to be John McEnroe" or "I would like to be Chris Evert" or "I would like to be Ronald Reagan" or "I would like to be Pete Rose" or "If I could just be one of those guys who have made a big dollar deal. I would be anybody but myself. I have ideas of all kinds of people I would like to be." That is tragic. Do you know that? That is tragic.

This right hand isn't saying, "I wish I was a left hand." This finger isn't saying I wish I was a tongue. But many of us say, "Yeah, my position in my office or factory, my co-workers would miss me for two days maximum. After a week or two someone else would be in my spot and they would have forgotten about me. My home and community would notice that I was gone but it wouldn't be long before someone else took my place. I don't feel I have a very good function at all. With regards to the results of our lives, that's true enough. I mean the work you are building up day after day in your job, believe me, in two years time, some happy idiot will come along and destroy it all. It will all be changed. The company that you work for or the business that you are involved in for 50 years, once the wrecking ball hits it, it will destroy the whole thing. So it is sensible in regards to your function. But loved ones, it is tragically wrong and untrue as far as your actual function in this life is concerned.

What is your function? Look with me at a verse in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." Each one of us are limbs in his body. What does that mean? Look at the kinds of things he did when he was here in his own physical body here on earth. Luke 5:24, "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- he said to the man who was paralysed -- 'I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home.' And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen strange things today.'" That's the kind of thing Jesus did. He healed the paralysed body. Jesus died and about six weeks later, his disembodied spirit entered into people like you and me.

This is the kind of thing that happened. Acts 3:1-10, "Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. [Two people whose Jesus' disembodied spirit now lived] And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, 'Look at us.' And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, 'I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God and recognised him as the one who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him." Then you remember Jesus is pointed as the

source in verse 16, And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know; and the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all."

That's why God our Creator says to each one of us this morning, "Now you are the body of Christ. You are the body of my Son and I have designed you carefully and uniquely so that you can express a part of me and my Son to the world that no one else can express. That's why you are here and that's why you have a unique function. There is something of my Son that comes through your life that will come through no one else's life. Do you remember a very enigmatic verse in the Bible? It is the last verse in the gospel of John. It is John 21:25, "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." That is amazing, isn't it, if that is true? There are many other things Jesus did and if they were written the world itself could not contain them. Do you see that what we see in Jesus of Nazareth, of the One who made all things and without nothing was made that was made -- the thousands of sea creatures that we have never even see yet -- the One who made the neutrons and the protons, the One who made the animals and the birds and all the colors and shapes and the intricacies of our human minds--that One showed a fraction of Himself in His own body in the first century, and the rest of that magnificent, rich personality is to be seen only through you and you and you and you? That is why you were made. You must have guessed that a God Who is infinite like ours cannot be seen in one little physical body. The whole reason for your existence is that there is something of Jesus that is going to be expressed and is going to ricochet throughout the whole universe for eternity, if you will let it come through you. If you don't, it will not appear. You are unique. There is nobody exactly like you. Not a one of us here is exactly like you. Not a one of us who has ever lived in the whole universe is exactly like you. There is something, some beauty, some facet of that many-faceted personality of Jesus that is going to come through you that can come through no one else. That's true.

You can see it with some of the facets we know of his character. You remember it says that by him all things were made and without him was not anything made that was made. Jesus brought order out of chaos. Some of you can come into a chaotic living room or a chaotic bedroom, and you not only put it straight but you keep things in order because it is your nature to keep things in order. You don't have to make an effort. There is something that flows through you that brings things into order. Some of us are able to break chaos down into organized pieces with figures. Some of us are able to do it with shapes and colors. Some of us are able to do it with wood or metal. Some of us are able to do it with engines. Some of us are able to do it with electricity. There are beauties of Jesus' creative, orderly power that will be seen in the universe only if they are seen through you. The interesting thing is, it doesn't actually matter whether anybody comes along immediately after you and destroys the thing. The creative work has been seen; it has been experienced by Jesus in you. The sense of fulfillment has come to him as you have done it. It doesn't matter if somebody comes and wrecks the place the next moment. The One who made the universe has expressed himself through you. The Father has seen the Son living fully and says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." The myriads of angels have recognized and acknowledged what has been done by the Christ through your life.

Loved ones, there are things that only you can do. There are things in little corners that nobody else sees, nobody else appreciates, nobody else recognizes. There are things done in little quiet corners by Jesus in you that bring more glory and pleasure to the Father in heaven than the brightest star in the firmament. You are made for that. You are unique. You are made to do that. It doesn't matter whether they pay you well for it. That is a detail. The money will be gone in a few

years. It doesn't matter whether anybody recognized that you have done it. It doesn't matter whether you are lauded and praised. Do you see how stupid it is in the light of that for all the hands to want to be McEnroe [tennis player] or all the feet to want to be Evert [female tennis player] or all the fingers to want to be Reagan [former president of USA]? Do you see what an insult it is to your dear God who has made you different from all the rest of us?

There is a touching verse that gives you insight into our dear God that we have read before and laughed about. It is the record of the miraculous birth of the son to Abraham and Sarah. Genesis 18:11-15. "Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'"

You are behind the tent door on a thousand-different occasions when a Sarah laughs. Sometimes the Sarah laughs cynically, sometimes the Sarah laughs wishfully, hoping that it will happen, sometimes the Sarah laughs derisively, but you are there. Jesus has planned to be there in you expressing not so much through your words but through your life, "No, but you did laugh" and expressing most of all, "Nothing is too hard for the Lord." There are a thousand different occasions when you are in a situation where faith has gone out the window and everybody is talking cynically about the way things are going down. At that moment you are behind the tent door and Jesus in you can rise up and express that absolute, complete confidence and faith that God is able to do this and that our eyes are to be set on His ability and His total competence and to be turned away from the discouragement of the situation. Loved ones, you are made for that; you are made for a thousand situations like that.

Look at John 11:32, the tragic time in Lazarus' household when their dear brother had just died. "Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; and he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'" You are in a hundred different situations where the dear Son who made the world wants to put His arm around somebody who is in trouble and show his heartfelt brokenness for them, and he intends to do it through you.

Loved ones, every one of you has had a different set of difficulties from the rest of us. Do you realize that? Every one of you has had different happinesses. Every one of you understands different things about people better than the rest of us do. You are absolutely unique, different from all of us, and the Savior who made you has created you to express himself through you to somebody in the same way that he did in his own physical body in the household of Lazarus. That is why you are here. There is nobody like you.

The whole revelation of our God in the whole universe throughout eternity will be diminished if you are not what he has made you to be. That is why you are here. It doesn't matter what the rest of us think about you. You are here to do something that nobody else can do. Do you see one of the beauties of this? Only you and Jesus can find that out; only you and Jesus know how you are to live. That is such a relief, you know. The Bible says the spiritual man is judged by no one, because there was no one of the mind of the Lord that they should tell them what to do. Nobody knows what God is

saying to you; only you do. Only you and Jesus know the kind of life that you are to live today. That is such a relief. We are not all drafted into the one miserable bunch of stereotypes that all do the same thing that Christians are supposed to do. That is so boring, so unlike the beautiful world of nature. You don't see all the trees looking the same; you don't see all the branches growing the same way. So is it with us.

God has intended to have a magnificent symphony orchestra, not one great trumpet blasting out the same note for everybody. But only Jesus and you can tell. You have a masterpiece to write. You have an original poem to live that none of us can live. That is why you are here. That delivers us all from the miserable boredom of being stereotyped and drafted into a huge army of Christians or a huge army of non-Christians, a huge army of sinners or a huge army of saved sinners. Loved ones, we are not the same, thank God! So it is up to you to find out from the Person who made you how he wants to be in you, and then that is what you have to do and be. That is what the praying and thinking is all about. It is you finding out what your Jesus who made you wants to be and do and say through you.

The story is told of Sir Malcolm Sargent [29 April 1895 – 3 October 1967], a great conductor in London, England. The orchestra got to the massive, thundering crescendo of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and suddenly Sargent stopped the whole orchestra. How anybody could hear anything in that massive volume of sound that comes at that point in Beethoven's Fifth, you couldn't tell. But he stopped the whole orchestra and said, "You missed a note," and he pointed to the back where the percussion people are, to the little guy with the triangle.

God will miss the note that you miss playing. However small it appears to be to all the rest of this so-called great world, to the Creator of the universe your note is vital. You are a vital member of the Son's body that can do something that none of the rest of us can do. You are made to do it; that is why you are here. It has very little to do with whether you nail nails or weld metal or type typewriters. It has very little to do with the so-called secular expressions of your vocation. It has all to do with what you are, with who you are and with Jesus of Nazareth being able to continue his preserving and redeeming ministry in his world through you. He has no hands but your hands, and no feet but your feet.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for making us for such a high and holy purpose. Lord, we can hardly grasp it as we feel so unlike you and so ordinary. Lord Jesus we believe your Spirit lived in ordinary men like Peter and John and we believe you are able to do the same to us. Lord Jesus we thank you for that. Savior, we want to apologize here this morning for our light estimation of the precious unique personalities you have given to us. Lord, we are sorry for this stupid stuff of wanting to be somebody else or wishing we were somebody else. Lord, we see that is a direct insult to you -- that's saying to you that you shouldn't have made us. Lord Jesus, forgive us. We apologize also, Lord, for paying so much attention to what our bosses and employers think of us, or what our community thinks of us or, our friends and family thinks of us. Lord, we apologize as we see they know nothing. Only you know but you are backed by a myriad of angels, by millions of archangels, by a whole world of saints who are watching us as we run this race. Lord, we apologize.

Now Lord Jesus, we apologize for running our lives by what everyone else thinks we should do -- even by what the good books think we should do. We apologize, Lord, for making ourselves into little Christian machines instead of being the unique masterpieces that you have created. Lord, we see again that our lives are framed which you, dear Holy Spirit, want to paint a unique picture of

Jesus. Lord Jesus, we intend to give ourselves to you to talk with you more personally. We intend to walk more as Martin Luther did as his conscience told him and according to what he felt God wanted to do to him whatever the cost. Lord, we commit ourselves to that kind of life where we say, "Here I stand, I can no other." Lord Jesus, we trust you to be satisfied whether the society of men are or not. We trust you to be satisfied.

We thank you that you made us to do something else nobody else can do in this whole world. Lord, we thank you that you'll miss us if we don't. You'll miss us. Thank you, Lord, that even you that looks after the millions of stars, you'll miss us if we don't do it. Lord, thank you.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of our dear Holy Spirit be with each one of us throughout this week.