

## The Holy Spirit's Burning

Romans 12:11b

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever been to a funeral? We probably assume that most of us have but I think the fact is that some of us may never have been to a funeral and what I really want to ask you is, have you ever seen a dead person? Have you ever looked at a person who has just died or who is dead?

Mind you, I think when I die I wouldn't like to have an open casket. I think I'd like you all to remember me as I really am rather than as I "seem to be" after I have left my body. But the fact is that many of us do remember looking at a dead person and it is interesting isn't it, the way they seem to be at rest? They do look like that. A dead person seems to be free from all the strains and the stresses that filled them during their lifetime.

In fact, some of us will say, "Oh look at him, you'd think he was 30 years old. He looks just the same as he did 30 years ago." But really it's all less than the truth because at that moment what we're looking at is the physical residence that they have now vacated. All we're looking at is the physical body that once housed their spirit. The fact is, they're no longer there and it's kind of silly to say, "He looks as he did 30 years ago", because he isn't there and actually you can tell he isn't there, can't you? The face has lost its animation. You can look at the face but it isn't him and I am sure those of you who had dads or moms that died remember that. You look at the face and it looks like the face that they wore but it doesn't look like them. It isn't them. You feel utterly convinced that they are nowhere near there, that they aren't anywhere near the body that they used to have because all the things that made them what they were are now gone. So there's no animation in the face. There are none of the signs of the things that moved them; the motives and the desires, the worries and the anxieties, those are all gone.

Now, what I'd like to ask you is, when that time comes for you, what will the things have been in your lifetime that animated you? What will they be? Because your face will go just the same way. What will the things have been in your lifetime that motivated you and caused your face to be the face that we all know here on earth?

In other words what are the things that really moved you in your life, that concerned you, that caused you strain or that interested you? What are the things that made you tick? Those will all be gone at that moment. So what are the things that are filling your ears now? What are the motives that govern you? What are the attitudes that drive you?

Without getting too philosophical about it, one great motivator is lunch. Lunch, that's right! Because if I ask you what you are going to do after this service, that will motivate you and animate you after this service. Most of us here will probably spend the next hour or so solving that problem; where we're going to have it, with whom are we going to have it and how we're going to get them to pay for it?

We'll talk about where we're going to have lunch and how we're going to eat lunch and that's what will animate us and concern us and in fact, here in America, where there is no free lunch, we would probably admit also that a good deal of our lives are taken up with working out how to ensure that we will be able to eat lunch each day. Probably since we left our parents' home, that has concerned

us more than most things. How do we get the things that we need to keep us alive, and the recession brings that home to us.

You begin to realize that the bottom line in job-seeking is actually how to keep yourself alive and so that whole business of just getting enough food to keep ourselves alive fills a great part of our days. You may say, "Oh no, Pastor that's just during this recession."

Well, yes I kind of agree with you that once the recession is over then the situation will be a little different; we'll have more openings available to us in our field of interest or in our field of training. But I would ask you, isn't it true that even when you have considered promotions and transfers, you have to think very carefully to decide how the idealistic factor stacks up against the money factor?

It is interesting, isn't it, how much of our concerns are connected with just getting enough to keep us alive and you might say, "Well, no I don't really care about that very much." But I would push you. What are the things that keep you awake at night or keep you from getting to sleep or what are the things that make you waken up half way through the night?

Those are the things that motivate us. Those are the things that animate us. Those are the things actually that are forming our character. Those are the things that are closest to our hearts even if we don't like the thought. And it is true, isn't it, that more often than we would like to say, "It's our job and how we pay the bills." Probably many of us would admit that the fear of losing our jobs or the desire to get a better job or the cudgeling of our brains that goes on to produce more sales if we feel we're going to lose our job, often are the things that govern great parts of our lives.

Very often of course, holding on to that job is connected for many of us with the business of having enough money to keep ourselves alive. So it might be true to say that many of us here this morning spend great portions of our lives governed and almost dominated by the need we have to meet certain physical demands that are just built into life: demands for food, demands for survival. And those things animate us, animate our faces.

What motivates us after we get over that survival level? After we get above that subsistence level, what are the things that animate us and motivate us? Probably most of us would say "When you're making enough money to keep yourself alive, you can then turn around and begin to enjoy life a little. You can begin to use a little of the extra money that you have above subsistence to buy some of the things that make you happy and helps you make other people happy, and it's surprising how much more fun you can have with surprisingly little money. You can go all the way, you can buy a \$300 canoe and go down Minnehaha Creek or you can go up to the boundary waters. Then you can buy a \$3000 boat so you can water ski or fish, you can do all kinds of things." But probably many of us would say, "Well yes, after we get about above the subsistence level, we do spend a fair bit of time working out how to enjoy life and how to help other people to enjoy it." So a surprising amount of our time is spent doing that.

Some of us here might not be even as noble as that and we say, "Well, a lot of my time is spent simply trying to do things better than the other guy does. I enjoy the mental challenge of that. I just enjoy the challenge of trying to make a bigger, better mousetrap. I enjoy trying to do something better than somebody else has done it." So many of us spend great portions of our lives animated to do that, to do something better than the other guy is doing it.

Now if I or someone else here were to remove all those motivations from your life: the need for money and food, the desire to enjoy yourself and to make others happy, the desire to achieve or to excel in some way. If I or someone else were to remove those motivations from your life, what would you have left?

You see, I think some of us might say, "What would I have left? I may as well be dead. What is there if you take those things away? That's why that dead person's face look so much at peace and at rest. All the motivations that he had in his life have now gone and so he has no need to push or to strive or to try; that's why he is dead."

That's why he is dead to the world. He is dead to the world because he has been separated from all those needs and all those things so he no longer has to meet or fulfill them so, that's why he is dead to the world. But loved ones, is there anything beyond those things?

I think some of us might ask "What point is there in life if you take those things away? I get up early in the morning because I want to keep my job, because I want to make money, because I need money to survive. That's why I go to work even when I am sick because I need to keep going, I need to survive. If you take all those things away why get up in the morning? Why even try? Why even be alive? What's the purpose and the point of life if you take those things away?"

Just the whole purpose for which you were made. There's nobody like you, nobody. It's really amazing, you know. You're such a dear person, there's nobody like you. There never has been anybody like you. There never will be in this world anybody like you. You're unique; even if you're an identical twin there's some way in which you differ from that identical twin. There's nobody like you and your dear Maker has put you here to do something of his will and to express something of his character that he cannot express or do through anybody else that has ever lived or is ever alive or will ever live. That's the whole purpose in you being here.

It's not so that you can get enough food to get through another day. It's not even so that you could enjoy life or be happy. It's not so that you can do something better than everybody else or make a better mousetrap. You are here because your Maker can do something through you here on this earth during your 70 years that he cannot do through anybody else in the world and that's why you're here.

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life", all those motivations that we talked about, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world and the world passes away and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever." (I John 2:16). And loved ones, the world passes away and the lakes go and the food goes and the temporary success in the eyes of our peers go but you are here to do something for your Maker that none of the rest of us can do.

You're unique, you're different, there's nobody like you. You and I tend to say, "Well I believe that, but how can I find that out? I can't even think what he wants me to do and if I had to tell the truth, I am driven by all the needs that I have as a little human animal; needs for superiority at times, needs for survival, needs for fun, I am driven by those needs. If I am driven so much by those needs that you ask me what I am here for, I don't even feel I have the choice. I feel I just have to do these things day after day after day because all the rest of the people seem to be doing them and if I stop doing them, I'll die. So that's it. I live this

driven life like a little robot. I don't know what I am to do. I don't even know who I am. I don't even have a sense of my own individuality or identity. I am just a consumer statistic that does what all the rest are doing. How could I find out what my Maker wants me to do here on earth?"

Loved ones, that's the whole point of Jesus coming. He said in John 16:12, "I have many things to tell you but you can't bear them now." And actually he couldn't have explained them to every one of us because we hadn't been born, but he put it that way, "I have many things to tell you why my Father put you here but you cannot bear them now but it is to your advantage that I am going away because if I go away, I will send the Counselor to you." He was talking about the Holy Spirit and that's the thing that distinguishes Jesus' religion from all other religions.

This thing that was promised when the people would ask Peter and Paul, "What will we do in the light of what you now tell us" they would respond "Repent and believe the gospel and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." That was the difference: the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." (John 16:13-15)

Loved ones, there is a Spirit that is actually in you at this moment and then on very odd occasions is able to get you to quiet down and back off the things that normally animate you and he is able to show you what you're to do in this life. None of us can. We insult God's plan when we pretend that the vocational guidance counselor or the Minnesota Multi Phasic or some other battery of tests can tell us what to do with our lives.

They may tell us how we can fit in with this production machine we have going but they can't tell us what we're to do with our lives and I can't, loved ones. Even your dear mom or your dad can't. There is nobody who can but one, and that's the dear Person who made you and put you here. And he can give you a Spirit, his Holy Spirit; not a force, not an influence, not an atmosphere but a Person.

Jesus said he will lead you into all truth. He didn't say "it" will lead you into all truth. He said, "Look, I am not going to be with you any longer but don't be afraid. It's for your advantage that I am going away because if I didn't go away, the Counselor would not come to you. But when I go away, I will send him to you and he will lead you into all truth." (John 16:13)

The Holy Spirit is able to tell you and guide you about what you've to do with this life of yours. That's why the little bit of verse that we're studying today is translated "aglow with the Spirit". It's a Greek word "zeontes" and it actually means burning, boiling, seething. Not with lust, not with desires, not with a demand that everybody attend to us, not with a desire that we be satisfied. But burning and boiling and seething like the ocean itself, like the swallows that fly through the air, like the nightingales that sing; with delight and freedom and liberty. Like the waves that plunge on the beaches, with the same life that animates God himself, the Creator.

This Spirit can animate you to do what God put you here to do so that when you come to that time in

your life when somebody is looking at you the moment after you die, they will be not be thinking, "He's lost all his animation; the animation that got him out fishing or got him to make more money or the animation that concentrated on trying to enjoy himself as much as he could." But instead, "He is without the animation that constantly moved him along the plan that his Maker had for him and strangely enough his body doesn't seem to have lost too much. It was often as peaceful and restful as that during his lifetime." And it wasn't the rest of death; it was the rest of death to the world and aliveness to his Maker.

Now, loved ones that Spirit is available to you and he's the only one that will begin to get you out of this rat race, but he can. Each one of us here has something to do and something to be for our Maker that nobody else has ever been or will ever be. And if you don't find that out, God will miss something in his world and his world will be less and his pleasure will be less.

Remember in "Chariots of Fire" the young man said, "When I run I feel the pleasure of God." Now when you do what God put you here to do, you'll feel the pleasure of God and that's better than all the money in the world, better than all the success.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we pray for each other. How many of us wear ourselves out; "another day, another dollar", we joke, but it kind of gets wearing after all. We wear ourselves out trying to prove ourselves to each other, to ourselves, to our wives, to our husbands, to our parents and all the time Lord, we seem to be taken up with the secondary's; how to get the things we need to keep getting the things we need.

Lord, we see the foolishness of it and the futility. What's the point of wearing ourselves out just to stay alive in order to wear ourselves out? Lord we've seen this often before, but Father we have not known what to do about it. So Lord, we do thank you. Lord Jesus we thank you that you, though you are at God's right hand at this moment praying for us, you have sent into our hearts your Spirit and you, dear Holy Spirit, are able to start telling us what we're here for.

Holy Spirit, we would ask you to start sending us signals in some way, even to those of us who may have known nothing of this before and may have never claimed to be Christian at all, as well as those of us who have been Christians and yet have still felt these frustrations. Holy Spirit, we ask you to start sending us signals so that we will begin to sense what our Creator put us here to do and to be, so that we can begin to feel the pleasure of God in our occupation and in our life. Lord we do thank you that this is a secret between you and each one of us and nobody else can reveal this secret to us but only you, Holy Spirit.

So we would ask you to do it so that when our day comes, our face may have the same peace that it had throughout our lifetime; the peace of doing what God sent us here to do. We ask this in your name and for your sake. Amen.