

The Kingdom of Rest

Romans 14:17b

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I don't know if you have ever thought of it this way, but we are really like fish in a fish bowl. We really are. None of us has been out of the fish bowl, so we don't really know what's outside there. Now a few of us have claimed to say they do know. But we know fine well we don't. A little fish called Buddha said, "Yeah I know, I know" but we knew fine well he'd never been out of the fishbowl. He'd never been off this planet and he didn't know any more than the rest of us what was out there. Another little fish called Mohammed said "I know, I know I can tell you", but we knew he too had never been out of the fish bowl. He didn't know any more than we knew really, even though a lot of us listen to him. And those little fish that claim to tell us what was outside the fish bowl, they died the same as the rest and they are lying at the bottom of the fish bowl with all the dead ones, just like everybody else.

And then a remarkable fish came into the fish bowl. He talked as if he actually had come from outside. He actually said, "You know I am breathing the same poor oxygen as you're getting out of the water in this fish bowl, but actually I could stay alive even without this. And the truth is, that all of you came from me. I am really your father. And you really had my life in you, originally. But you all got disconnected from me and now you are making do with this old water and the oxygen that you can get out of it. And, of course, this water and this food and this fish bowl is deteriorating daily. And you are all trying to live off it, and really you were never meant to live off it. You were just meant to get started that way and then to live by the same life as I have.

That's why many of you are so kind of bleary-eyed, if you catch a glimpse of yourself reflected in the side of the fish bowl. Or, if you look at some of the other fish around, you can see they look pretty burdened at times and pretty worn out and pretty weary too. It's because you are living off the water in this fish bowl, you are living off the life that is in this fish bowl and it's not sufficient. And it's deteriorating all the time. And to prove to you that this is the case, I tell you what I am going to do; I am going to die. I'll die and I'll just disappear out of this fish bowl, you won't see me. Then I'll come back and I'll live here for about a month and I'll just leave this fish bowl completely. I won't come back until I reform this fish bowl completely and transform it, and make it like it was meant to be. And I want to tell you an amazing secret. My father has actually seen all of you making do with the life that you can get inside this fish bowl. And he has performed another cosmic miracle and he has taken each one of you -- with all your old weaknesses and all your decrepit attitudes and all your sicknesses -- and he has actually replaced you in me and has remade you so that if you want, you can live by the life that I have. So you'll still swim around here, you'll appear to get your oxygen out of this water, but in actual fact you'll be living off my life, the way I live. That's my promise to you."

And his name was Jesus. And that's what he said was the situation. And when he was describing how he would come back again and utterly transform the fish bowl, he used certain words that are illustrated by that little analogy. And I will show you the words, they are in Revelation 11:15. "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.'" And what Jesus was saying was that the water and the food in this fish bowl, that's the

kingdom of the world. And it is run by the prince of this world, and he called him Satan. He explained that all it was, was the dregs of his original life that he had placed in the world to start it off at the beginning.

And he made the point to us, if you look even at the little baby fish, they are kind of flashing around with their tails and with their bright little eyes all happy compared with you older fish. The fact is that they still have more of my life at the beginning in them and then gradually they switch over to the kingdom of this world and they live more and more off the life of the kingdom of this world and the artificial support system that is in this world, and as they do they get weary and weary and weary and worn. Jesus said, "The kingdom of this world is passing away and it's deteriorating fast. And eventually it will be completely transformed by my kingdom."

And then he said something else. It's an amazing thing. He said, "Actually my kingdom is present here. Since I entered your fish bowl, my kingdom has been present." And to prove that to us, he began to impart this superseding life to a body that had got leprosy. And the leprosy was healed, and the body became like new. Then to prove to us that this kingdom of life that he had brought was here permanently, he imparted the same ability to his disciples so that even after he had left the fish bowl, his disciples did the same thing. They imparted that life to people who had lame legs, or had blind eyes, or who even were dead. And this kingdom of life recreated them and transformed them. And the truth is, that right alongside the kingdom of this world, the kingdom of Christ exists and operates, and it's all around us.

It's all around us and we can slip into it in a moment, by faith, and that's what he said. And that's why, loved ones, Jesus said to us, "You can live directly from the oxygen of the Holy Spirit that is in me. What you are draining out of the world is the last dregs of that oxygen. It's of poor quality. It's very lifeless and you are draining it out, and eventually you will die because of it." Of course he could have said, even your scientists say this. With the laws of thermodynamic, the scientists say the same thing. The First Law of Thermodynamics says the energy in the universe will never increase; just stays the same, never increases. And then the Second Law says the process is running down all the time, it's deteriorating, it's developing more and more towards dissolution, it's passing away into more and more chaos, and into a weaker and weaker, and less ordered form.

And that's what Jesus said to us. That the kingdom of this world is deteriorating and while you are living off it, you yourself are deteriorating. That's why, you remember, he said those words that we're studying these few Sundays. "The kingdom of God is not food and drink." That's really part of the water and the food in the fish bowl, it's not food and drink. That's not abstaining from this food; or abstaining from that drink. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And loved ones, your life depends on what kingdom you live in, what kingdom you are living in. That determines how much peace there is in your life, whether you are receiving life from the kingdom of this world with all its counterfeit, artificial life support system, or whether you are receiving life from the kingdom into which you have been transferred by God's mighty miracle, which he performed in Calvary. Where he actually took each one of you and me, and he put us into Jesus and he wiped us out there, and recreated us in the kingdom of God with all the power and the life of that kingdom.

I'll give you an example of it. Do you remember all the interest there was in the TV program, "Roots" [about an African slave and his descendants]? I think there was a book and you remember the author of the book had gone back to Africa and had traced back his roots to the people that seemed to be his relatives before he or his forebears were sent over as slaves to America. And, you might

remember, that all of us suddenly found that there was within us a latent desire to find our roots. And everybody got interested in their roots.

Of course, the reason is that we all kind of feel we've been separated from our origins. Now, the kingdom of this world takes advantage of that great desire in each of us to have roots. The kingdom of this world sweeps in upon us and begins to get us to emphasize our roots and gives us the same lies as the Pharisees believed. You'll see that lie, if you look back in John 8:39: "They answered him, 'Abraham is our father.'" That's the lie that the kingdom of this world passes on to us when we want to know our roots. My father was Ernest O'Neill, or your father was John Stephenson, or your grandfather was Tom Stephenson. The kingdom of this world sweeps in upon us through the psychologists and the teachers and even our own families and says, "You come from your father and his father before him and his father before him -- that's your root." And we believe that lie, because it is a lie.

And we come under the bondage and the powers of the kingdom of this world, because we become utterly enslaved to the past. Either to the things we have done in the past and we allow that guilt to constantly destroy us in the present, or we are enslaved to the habits and the attitudes and the aptitudes of our fathers and our mothers and our grandfathers and our grandmothers and their grandparents and their great, great grandparents and the whole trail of humanity down through the ages. And we are utterly convinced that that is our root and that's where we came from and we can't do anything about it, and so we live under the bondage of the attitudes of our fathers. We even say that to one another, "Well you know I am my father's son, well I am my mother's daughter, that's what my mother used to do, and that's what my grandparents used to do, well that's what so and so used to do." And we absolutely believe the lie that those are our roots, and that we can never escape from them.

And so many of us live under all kinds of dis-peace that is mysterious to us, you know it. You do things and you don't know why you do them. You've attitudes that you know are binding you like iron and steel, but you don't know why. And you are bound by invisible chains by this lie that you believe, that your roots are really your parents and your grandparents and great grandparents and all before who have lived dependent more or less on the kingdom of this world, and so the kingdom of this world floods into you. The kingdom is the domain of a king. It's a kingdom, which is ruled by Satan, and Satan uses that lie to lash you, to lash you with the wrong attitudes of your mums, the wrong attitudes of your dads, the wrong attitudes of your grandparents. He uses that lie, you give ground to him by that belief, and he feeds into you again and again so that you even say, "Well, I'm not surprised, that's what my father used to do." So, that he almost makes you not only monkeys but willing slaves of the lie. Why is it a lie? Because your root is not your father or your mother, your root is not your great grandfather, your root is not your great grandparents. Your root is Jesus.

You came from a clean, pure whole person, you came from a perfect person. Your root is Jesus. If you ever doubt that, or doubt that he said what I suggested the fish said, then just loved ones, once with me at John, it's John 1:3-4, "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that was made." All things were made through Jesus, and without Jesus was not anything made that was made. In him was life and you remember the meaning of that in the footnote, "That which has been made was life in Him." You were made, you were life in Jesus, you are life in Jesus, you are part of His life, He made you with His own life, He is your root. If you don't believe that, then you put yourself under the kingdom of this world, and there, there is an immutable law that operates upon you.

I will show you what the law is. It's Exodus 20:5. "You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me." And if you believe that your real root is your father or your mother or your great grandparents then you put yourself under the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of this world enforces that an immutable spiritual law and the sins of the parents are visited on to the third and fourth generation, and you live in the midst of an entanglement of aptitudes and habits and wrong thinking that has been in your family for generations.

The real truth is that your root is Jesus and the greater truth is that you can be freed this morning from all the past, and I will tell you why. 2nd Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ controls us; because we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

Loved ones, I want you to look at the logic of it, so that you're clear, in verse 14, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all have died." Jesus has died for you, you're part of "all", therefore you have died, because you're part of that "all". And then in verse 17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, and you are certainly in Christ, because He died for you, and you died with Him, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come." Believe that Jesus has destroyed the past forever in your life. He has cut you off from the umbilical cord that ties you to all your parents and your great grandparents. He has destroyed that, there is not even a yesterday for those of us who are in Jesus. You say why? Because the Calvary death is eternal in history and it is applied at every moment miraculously to any person who believes it. So, each moment you believe it, that moment you are effectively cut off from the kingdom of the world that connects you with the past and connects you with the weaknesses of your fathers and mothers and your great grandparents, and you are a new creation.

Actually not even yesterday exists any longer; there is no past for those of us in Jesus, there is no past. Your dear mind does not need to be cluttered with the past, you don't need to even think of yesterday. You don't even need to think of the things that happened yesterday. Those are wiped out as far as the East is from the West, as far as our God is concerned. It no longer is an existence, it no longer has any power over your life, unless you believe the great lie that that past is your roots. It isn't. You have been placed into Jesus, you have been cut off from any past, and you're new in him. Brothers and sisters I speak especially to those of you who are lying under attitudes or aptitudes or habits of thought, that you feel you have inherited from your fathers and mothers. It's a mirage, it's a lie, you haven't. Your root is Jesus, and not only that, but the interim parents that he gave you -- because your original root is Jesus, he allowed you to be born into this world through parents your interim parents that have wiped out by his death on Calvary.

And if you say to me, "Oh yeah but, I am my mother's daughter, I am bound to be like that", that's a lie, that's a mirage. The old has passed away, the new has come, yesterday is gone forever, you are cut off from it as far as the East is from the West, so far that has been removed from it. Stand up, stand up and in faith today and realize you are whole and new and free from the past. And the strange thing is, in Jesus you aren't your father's son, you aren't your mother's daughter, even the good things that they had. You are Jesus, you belong to him. And you are being renewed in him

completely and the moment you believe that, you enter into the kingdom of God and a whole new life flows into you from the kingdom of God, that's why this verse says, the kingdom of God is peace. It brings a whole peace to your dear heart, a whole freedom from the restlessness that you have inherited from the past. If there is anything that disturbs our peace more than the past, it's fear about the future. I will tell you how the kingdom of this world gets us into that entanglement. You will find it in Genesis 3:1. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" That's it. That's the way the prince of this world destroys your peace about the future.

He says now, did God say that there was any tree you shouldn't eat of? Is there anything that God has not provided for you? Is there anything that maybe might not work out right? Can you think of anything that could go wrong in the future? Can you think of anything that could go wrong tomorrow? Can you think of anything that could go wrong next week? Can you think of anything that could go wrong next year? Only a thousand million things? And that's bound to be the answer. You are bound to come up with that answer. He has you in a corner, you are bound to say, once your mind goes out that way, is there anything that could go wrong in whatever reigns for my retirement? Is there anything that could go wrong in whatever reigns from my job? Is there anything that could go wrong in whatever reigns for my marriage? Only a thousand million things could go wrong? Everything could go wrong. And then the kingdom of this world, the power of Satan's kingdom, moves in upon you and gets you to take the absolutely illogical and nonsensical step of "Oh you better get down to examining all the possible things that could go wrong" and that's exactly what we do, we go to it with a will. We start thinking of all the things that could go wrong and then we start trying to calculate how we could possibly rectify them if they happen to go wrong. And it's a no end situation.

For one thing you can't get too far down the list. You still have the feeling, "Oh, I have a mass still to do." You are a few steps down the list and you are beginning to come up against some that you can't answer. And it is unbelievable, that we are really clowns. We are clowns because we give about five percent of our attention and the delight in life to this present moment, just about five percent and see as C.S. Lewis would say, "We give maybe about 30% of our attention to the past" and then he would say, "We give the rest, about 65% of our attention to the future." And so most of us, are not here at all. We are just here in a kind of passing way. We just deal with the things fast and get going because we think, "what's going to happen in the future?" and then when we really think about the future, we think, but what has happened in the past? And that's what the kingdom of this world does.

It powers in all that stupidity and all that foolishness, so that we are not enjoying ourselves at all. We spend most of our time worrying about the past and fearful about the future. God has given us an easy answer, its Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ" -- so you ain't got much future. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." That's it. You might like it, but that is it and actually you will like it if you believe it. You have been crucified with Christ and you don't have a future. A person who is crucified doesn't have a future. Or you may say, "No, no, no." But it is great, its wonderful because you have got a present. You have got a present and the future is in the hands of the One who lives within you, Jesus, and he is the one who sits up above and can see the future and the past and the present, all in one great moment and so he has it all organized and he has it all smoothed out for you.

And so, you can live just in this present moment and the glory of this present moment and loved ones, all our agony and our frustration comes from the fact that we do not believe that God has put us into His dear son and destroyed us there, destroyed all the past. And because he has destroyed us

and lives in us now himself, we have no future and we have no future to worry about or provide for and he will guide us. It's not a question of, do you have a retirement fund? You know fine well, Jesus guides you to do the right thing now to provide for the future. That isn't the agony of it, you know that fine well. It's the fact that despite the things that Jesus tells us to do, to be sensible about the future, we are utterly overwhelmed with fear about the future. And that's that has ended through our crucifixion. And that's why, God tells us "rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:4-7)

In other words, the peace of the kingdom of God will flow in upon you if you simply have no anxiety, that's it. The kingdom of God, His righteousness and peace and joy and the Holy Spirit. If you put yourself under the kingdom of God, the power and the life of that kingdom fills you with peace about the past, and peace about the future. And that can be yours today. You can decide that right this minute, and you can decide simply to stop being anxious, you can. We all are in the same boat. We have all had the same problems with it but we know fine well, you actually can stop worrying this moment, you can. You can just stop it this minute.

You can say, "Lord, I can see that you have crucified me with Christ and therefore this life is not my own and so my future is not mine to worry about, thank you Father. I am from this moment on, going to have no anxiety about anything." Now, if you said to me, it was me telling you to do that or it was some psychologist, or it was some other little fish, some other human being, then I could understand you are hesitating. But do you know that it is the Creator of the whole universe, who can see stars that our telescopes have never seen, who knows what is going to happen in a million years, it's Him that is saying confidently to you and me this morning, "have no anxiety about anything" and you feel like saying "about nothing?" and He says, "No, about anything, don't have anxiety about anything." But my exams? They are but nothing, don't have any anxiety. About my marriage. About nothing, don't have any anxiety about my finances? "No, have no anxiety about anything." That is mine. You have no power to look at the future. You have only the power to live in this present moment. I am the God, I am the one who has taken care of the past and will take care of the future. You are just a little finite human being who is to live fully this moment in light and joy." And loved ones, the moment you do that -- the kingdom of God pours in upon you His peace.

So, you can do it now, you know. And I am all with you that you haven't thought that way in the past. But, you can think that way now and you can believe God because He has in fact transferred us out of the kingdom of the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved son. You are actually there, and all you have to do is align your thoughts and your beliefs with that truth at this moment and the life and the power of that kingdom will begin to come in upon you, and begin to impart its peace to you. Your life and the peace you enjoy depend wholly on which kingdom you live in. And if you live in the kingdom of this world, you are living a lie, because it's already been destroyed and condemned to death and is on its way out, but the kingdom of God is real and eternal and has all power. Let us pray.

We thank you Father, that you have told us plainly that the kingdom of God is here, right at hand. And we thank you Father that that is where you reign and rule, and we thank you that that kingdom has a power and life of its own. And we thank you Lord that you have done all that is needed to transfer us out of the kingdom of this world. With all this emphasis on our past, and the whole pre-occupation with the future. And you have actually transferred us into the kingdom of your son

through crucifying us with Christ, so that the old has passed away and the new has come and so that this life we live, yet it's not us that lived but Christ that lived within us. And so Lord Jesus, it's your future and you are well able to take care of that future, whereas we cannot, and we thank you that we don't have one now, we simply have you and your kingdom round about us at this moment. And we simply have the joy of living this day. Lord, we thank you for this day. Lord we thank you that we don't need any more to be worried about anything that has come to us from our parents. We thank you that that old has passed away, that has been crucified with you, and the new has come. We're fresh and pristine again as we were when we came from our original roots in you Lord Jesus. We're clean and new this morning, fresh, thank You Lord. Thank you for that. Thank you Lord that we can be free of all the past training from us, all our prejudices of family and parents, even all the good things of family and parents, Lord. And now, we thank you that we have been grafted into you Lord Jesus and you are our roots and what we are -- we are because of you -- whole and new, thank you. And then we thank you Lord, that we have been crucified with you and we accept that and we accept that the future is not ours -- but is yours. So Lord, we now turn from having any anxiety about it. We stop worrying this very moment. We stop being anxious and Lord we are not going to drain away our lives and our energies any longer, giving only five percent to the present, thirty percent to the past, sixty five percent to the future. Lord we are going to give a hundred percent of our attention and our joy and the light and happiness to this present moment, and we thank you Lord for such a life. Thank you, thank You that we are free, free to live this moment fully in the kingdom of God. Lord, pour into us the life of that kingdom upon us now, and rule in our hearts.