

## God of Renewal

Romans 15:5a

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

The Thames is the river on which London is situated in England and some of you may have known that over the years, since the industrial revolution that river has received probably more effluent and more poisonous chemicals into it than any other river in the whole world because that was virtually the origin of the location of the industrial revolution. And it got to such a point that about 30 or 40 years ago the London County Council began to decide we must do something about this because the river was absolutely dead. There were not only no fish in it, but it was absolutely a threat to ordinary human life, even though virtually all we used it for, was to bring the large boats up into the Thames Basin and into the Port of London. And so about 30 years ago, the London authorities began to act to prevent, effluence being poured into the river Thames and gradually they just stopped doing what they had been doing for years. They stopped pouring all these poisons into the river but they all said to each other, "There is no chance that this river will ever come back, it has been so polluted now over the years, that there is just no possibility that we'll ever see any fish in it, at all."

Today, there are 82 different kinds of fish in the river Thames. There are fish living in the Thames that they haven't seen there for two or hundred years. The whole river has come back to life and is full of freshness and full of the creatures that it used to have in it, years ago. Now that is the amazing thing, about our world. It seems to have in it, a power or a force that begins to lift it, if you give it a chance. It seems that there is something in even our natural world that moves always towards life. I mean you must admit, it is amazing, you slice that with a knife. And if you give it enough time and just actually keep the dirt out of it, it zips itself up. I mean it just zips itself up. Well, the old medical men you remember said, "Heal, we don't heal a thing, we just sew the wound up and the skin just joins itself together."

There seems in all the world of nature to be a power that lifts and lifts you up. I once taught English literature and one of the outstanding modern poets is called Hopkins. Some of you who have read some English literature may know that Gerard Manley Hopkins was probably one of the foremost innovators in modern poetry, so, some of it, you won't understand but you'll get I think the feel of it. He has a poem that he calls the 'Grandeur of God' and it expresses this:

    "The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.  
And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings. “

He's saying that, however much we do to blear and smear the whole place with our trade and our oil and our soil yet, God seems to have put something fresh, deep down in the earth that keeps rising up. And loved ones, that's the same spirit, you get in this book. It's the same feeling you get in this book about God himself. He is always the one who is saying, "Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice. Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication; let your request be made known to God."

He is always saying, "Whatsoever things are true and lovely and of good report, think on these things." He is always saying, "Commit your way unto the lord, and He will act. Trust in Him and you will enjoy security in the land." The Father is always encouraging us. He is always lifting us up. There is a power in the world that is always moving to lift us and to resurrect us. You know, it's incredible, you look at that ground out there and it looks as hard as iron, and yet give it a few months, and there will be the most beautiful things coming up from it, things that we can't recreate with all our science. And you look at a little baby, a little baby being born. And it's so fresh and new and it brings freshness and newness in, doesn't it? I mean its so--that's the good thing about children. They have a brightness and a freshness and a newness about them that really gives you the feeling, you are getting a message from the creator.

Now loved ones, that's what the world is like. There is a power in this world that is always lifting us and encouraging us. And I'd like you to just look at the verse that we looked at last Sunday that describes why that is so. It's in Romans chapter 15 and its verse 5, Romans 15:5 "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement." And that's what God is. J.B. Philips was a preacher and a writer in England years ago, and he said, many of us have a God that is too small. We think of him always as the resident policeman in our lives. The guy who always says, don't, don't, don't, you are about to enjoy yourself, don't; stop it, stop it, stop it. Or he is an old gentleman living in heaven, who understands only old-fashioned things and who is pretty gloomy, most of the time. And he goes through a whole series of idols that we have about God.

I wonder what you think of God. Do you think of him, as the God of encouragement and steadfastness? Because you know he is. He's certainly been the God of steadfastness, the Greek word is 'hypomones' and it means patience and it means staying under a thing again and again and again, year after year after year. How often has he given you breath to rebel against him? How long has he been giving you breath and keeping your heart beating to do what you want and not what he wants? That's amazing patience. When you think that he kept old Brezhnev alive all through his life. He kept old Hitler's heart beating all the time. That's patience; that's a God of steadfastness.

He keeps keeping on, while there's life, there's hope. He keeps on with you continually and he is the God of encouragement. The Greek word is 'paraklesis' and it means 'para' - parallel lines, and 'klesis' as a helper - one who comes along side and helps you, kind of an advocate who comes along side and says, 'Let's do this.' And that's what God is. He is always the God of encouragement. And what we talked about last Sunday was how on earth do you and I manage to get discouraged, when God is the God of encouragement? You remember, we shared the reason we get discouraged is, because there is a power of evil in this world that tries to persuade you that God is not the God of encouragement, that he is not the God of steadfastness and that power of evil lies to you and the purpose of that power of evil is actually to murder you and destroy you. And his delight is to get you in a wonderful, beautiful world where God loves you and he is taking care of you and you kill

yourself because you think he isn't.

That's what Satan is anxious to do. He is anxious to so lie to you that you'll lose heart even in the midst of a wonderful situation, with a dear God who loves you with all his heart but your soul, feels that he doesn't do that, that you'll actually destroy yourself and Satan's desire is actually to get you to commit suicide. And last Sunday you remember, we shared one of the reasons why some of us get discouraged. Some of us do get discouraged because we live in the lie of the "might have been". We live in a tiny world, where all we can utter is, the harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved. We live in a tiny world of dashed hopes and unfulfilled ambitions and things that we think can never be what they were meant to be and we get discouraged, because we live in that mental world.

Our attention is always on the things that we wish could have been different. We live in that world of "might have been," or my marriage could have been that, or my job could have been that, or my school career could have been that, or my family could have been that, and we live in that world of dashed hopes and unfulfilled ambitions. And God is the one who says, and you better look at it loved ones, so we get it clear. It's in Revelation 21:5. "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Those of you, who can conjugate verbs, notice, "I make, I am making all things new." And your creator comes to you today, and he says, "I make the Thames absolutely new, whenever you give me a chance, whenever you turn and stop polluting it I make it absolutely new and fresh. Now, you have no world that I cannot make absolutely new. There is no area of your life that I am not, at this very moment working to make absolutely new. So, step out of that tiny unreal world of dashed hopes that you are living in and step into my world; this world is a world, where I resurrect everything. There is nothing that I cannot make new."

If you say to him, "Well some things have happened that you can't turn back." He says, "Those things don't need turning back. I don't allow anything, to get to a place where I cannot redeem it." You say, "Well, this person has died." He says, "You leave that in my hands, I am making that new too." You say, "Well, there are certain things that have happened even in my body and my mind." He says, "I allow nothing to happen that will prevent my will being fulfilled in your life. I am able to make your life absolutely abundant and completely new." And he says step out of that unreal world of yours. Loved ones step out it. Don't let Satan choke you to death, don't. That's unreal.

There is nothing that has happened in the past that the God of our life is not able to make absolutely new and he asks you, step out of that, step out of that discouragement. There is nothing that has happened in your life that I cannot redeem completely. There is nothing, however terrible that has happened in your life that will really destroy your life. Don't believe Satan, he wants you to believe that it will destroy something, it won't. I am thinking too, of some of us here who have lost loved ones, and you know how Satan gets in and says, 'If you had done this, if you had done that,' stop it, stop it. That loved one is in more merciful and kinder hands than he has ever been in, or than she has ever been in. Leave that in the Father's hands.

Satan's job is to take something that is bright and wonderful, that loved one is in God's hands. God is going to do the right thing by that loved one. Satan's job is to say to you, "No he is not; no he is not. Look at what happened, look at what you did to bring that about." Don't; that's Satan. Don't do that. Do you think the Father is bluffing us? Do you think the Father is telling us "Rejoice and again I say, rejoice" and he is back there with a thousand tragedies that he has brought about? And that he knows you are going to face? God is not a lying God. God is an honest God. When he says to you, "Rejoice" it's because he has everything organized.

Now loved ones, one of the reasons we get discouraged, is because many of us live in that tiny, insane world you remember, that G.K. Chesterton, talked about. He said, "Insane people are very logical, it's just they live in an unreal tiny world, they don't live in the big real world." Now loved ones, comes out, live in the big real world of the God that renews the river Thames. Of the God that brings springtime every year. Of the God that brings little new babies into life. Live in the whole world of the God of encouragement and steadfastness. Don't live in that murky, gloomily little world that you have created for yourself. Satan's desire is to destroy you by the sheer insanity of that world.

Another reason, we fall into discouragement -- I can show you, it's in Hebrews 12:15. "See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled." Many of us get discouraged because we allow to develop in us one of the worst poisons that Satan has in the world, a "root of bitterness". We remember something that somebody did to us, or something that happened to us, years ago and we dwell on that and dwell on it and it becomes a root of bitterness. That's why it's put in those terms in the Bible, it's a root. You know it's our root that you cannot get out of the ground, it deepens and deepens and deepens in the soil of your heart and gets such a grip there, that you cannot move it and you keep tripping over it. And even if you cut the top part of the plant off, the root is still there and it keeps growing and growing and it's a root of bitterness.

It's some resentment that you have against, it can be a mother or a father, it can be a resentment against a brother or a sister, a resentment against the husband or wife. Or against a friend, it can be a resentment against a company, it can be a resentment against the whole country, it can be a any kind of resentment. Satan doesn't care of what foolishness he gets you into, if he can get you into a position where you have a root of bitterness inside you. And it doesn't matter what anybody does, it doesn't matter how nice anybody is to you, it doesn't matter how wonderfully any thing goes in your life, you keep that root of bitterness within you and that becomes a whole area of discouragement to you. Satan gets in there and says, "There's something there that cannot be changed and will never be changed and cannot be affected by God's grace." And that root of bitterness becomes a whole source of discouragement.

Now, you can see the reason loved ones, why that's so, if you look back to the original mention of that in the Old Testament because that Hebrews reference is just a quotation of Deuteronomy chapter 29. So maybe you'd look at that, it's Deuteronomy 29:18 "Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This would lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. The Lord would not pardon him, but rather the anger of the Lord and his jealousy would smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book would settle upon him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord would single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law."

And why would God do that? Because you see of what you say in your heart, in verse 19: "One who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.'" It's saying, Lord God, I give you everything in my life, except this particular little resentment that I have an absolute and justified right to hold on to, for the rest of my life, and I will take it to the grave with me. Don't, don't do it,

don't take anything to the grave with you like that. That is hell. It doesn't matter how bad it was, it doesn't matter how terrible it was, that ends life. Do you see that? You are ending life. You are ending the possibility of life in you when you do that. Don't, nothing is worth that. Doesn't matter what your mom did, your dad did, your boss did, your husband, your wife, your friend, your brother, your sister; it doesn't matter what your son or daughter did to you. Turn from it, that root of bitterness, that is a constant source, not only a bitterness in your heart but that is a source of discouragement that Satan will use to finally destroy you.

No loved ones, never think, don't give another thought to it, you say what you do, get turned from it, you repent of it this morning, you turn it over or throw it all away, you cast it out. You confess your bitterness to God; you confess your resentment to God. If the person is dead that you resented, you confess it to God. If they are alive, you confess it to them and you turn from it today and you turn away from what is discouragement, because it's all crying out to God, "Your son never died, you never destroyed the past, the past is alive, it's what dominates me, I am yet in my sins I have not been raised with Christ, the world has not been crucified." That's what you are saying you see. You are not pitting yourself against some psychological piece of advice. You are pitting yourself against the Creator of the universe, who has said, "That I have crucified the world and all the powers of Satan in my son and I have made all things new." And you are saying, "No you haven't." You are one silly little pigmy in the world saying, "No you haven't. I am going to live in the midst to this bitterness until I die." Don't, don't do that. The only reason you'll die, is because you choose death. Don't choose death, cast the thing from you, get rid of it and the discouragement will begin to withdraw too. That's the whole lie that Satan has put in your heart. So turn from that.

Now there is a value in discouragement, there is a value in discouragement and I'll show you what it is. It's in Genesis 3, well may be it will be better to look at one of our own, falling into it. It's Luke 10, and it's a dear lady and she is very dear to all our hearts and this is the example of it. Jesus you remember had gone to his friend's home, it was in the village of Bethany really, and there he had three friends, you remember, Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead and the two sisters, Mary and Martha. And Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet and had been a good host to him and old Martha was going at it. Luke 10:40, "But Martha was distracted with much serving;" because Martha was determined to do a good job. She had their famous rabbi from Galilee and she was going to put on such a feast, but she got more and more worked up, the more involved she got in it. "But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him" (the very one that she wanted to have a good time in her home) "and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister" (my great sister has been sitting at your feet listening to your word all the time) "has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her".

One good thing about discouragement is it lets you know you are trying to play God. It lets you know you are trying to tackle things that you are never meant to tackle, and that was the verse that I was going to point out to you in Genesis. You remember that Satan said, "When you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will be like God." Whenever you get discouraged, it can be, that it's because you are trying to look after things, that God doesn't intend you to look at. In other words you are trying to take care of things that actually you can't take care of. You are trying to ensure that certain things will happen for yourself and your family that you actually can't ensure will happen. In other words, some times the Father allows Satan to bring discouragement to you, to tell you, "Back off, commit your way onto the Lord, trust in Him and He will act." You take care of

the few little things that he has given you to take care of, but stop trying to take care of the whole world.

And loved ones, some times we get discouraged because we are trying to take care of things in our lives that we can't take care of, that are beyond us, we are trying to ensure futures or we are trying to ensure certain things for our children or for our loved ones that we cannot ensure. And God is saying to you, "Look, you can only do a few things, you are just a little person, there are a lot of things that you can't do. And that's why I am here and I am going to take care of those things. The things I give to you, you can take care of, without getting discouraged." If you get discouraged trying to tackle them, it may be because you are trying to tackle too many. And usually you remember as C.S. Lewis said, "It's because, we Christians have a habit of living too much in the future." We live too much in the past in one way and we live too much in the future in another way. So, one of the values of discouragement is, it can be God allowing Satan, to bring a message to you, to show you that you are trying to tackle more than you are meant to tackle.

Now, what do you do, to combat discouragement? Oh, well that's easy. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." And most of us say, "Yeah, well that's if anyone is in Christ but I mean, well I have to get into him, so I am back where I started. I mean, I don't know whether I am in him or not. If I was in him I can see I would be a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come in, everything is right, I can see that." Well loved ones, look at verse 15. "And He died for all." And then look at verse 14. "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died." In other words, whatever your state is, you have died with Christ. You may not acknowledge it, but you have died with Christ. And the Bible says, "If you are in Christ, you are a new creation."

The first thing we do is we reflect the God of encouragement and steadfastness to each other. We start talking to each other about what has already happened. We start seeing each other as people who have been crucified in Christ and raised at the right hand of God. We start talking with each other in those terms we talk the encouragement of what God has done. We speak those words to each other. Loved ones never speak negativism to each other, never. Never, speak negativism. Never be one of those creatures that says, "Oh, look at the mess you've made of that." That's satanic. You may as well take a knife and plunge it into the girl's heart, when you say that. Don't say that.

Never speak negatively to each other never say to each other, "Well, we are never going to get this done." Don't, don't. You may as well cripple the guy. You may as well do it because you are crippling him mentally and psychologically. Never say, "We are never going to get this done." Never prophesy evil and negativism when you are in a world that is owned by a God, who has made all things new. Do you remember the things you have done, that you didn't think you could possibly do because you are with somebody that was kind of upbeat and said, "Sure, we can do it, we can do it." I remember my dad, and you must remember with your dad at times. I remember we tackled things and he said, "Sure we can do it, let's go" and we do it and I couldn't believe we'd done it. You know what an effect it has and do you see why it has that effect? You keep thinking, well, that's because of an old psychological trick. I mean the power of positive thinking will work within certain parameters, if the things are maybe possible, may be it'll be helped if I talk positively. No, no this is not the power of positive thinking it's the power of reality. In fact Christ has crucified the world in himself. In fact that wretched pipe that I know I have tried to sweat the joint on about 25 times and the beads I've soldered keep dropping down because I have not enough flux, that pipe has been soldered in Christ and has been resurrected in him and that solder is made to stick

with that flux and it will stick if I believe that the Father has already crucified that world and resurrected it. And for you dear ladies, the soufflé that appears as if it won't rise, it will rise because it has been raised in Christ and it has been made complete in him.

And when you tackle it that way, you tackle it with all the power of reality, seeing that all the power of positive thinking, all the power of reality behind it. You say to me why does the soufflé not rise? Well, not only because you've messed things up in your recipe, but also because the power of a lie, you know how I have shared with you? Poison gas, the whole room is full of poison gas, if you really believe that and hold your breath, you'll die. So, the lie will bring about its result in your life. But the power of reality is bursting to bring about its power in your life, if you will believe it.

Loved ones, never, never now I say, not never speak discouragement to each other or never speak negatively to each other, never speak unreality to each other, never speak unreality to each other, never talk to each other as if the world has not been overcome and as if the world will overcome you. No, always speak the reality of what God has done in Jesus, in every situation and then the whole spirit and power of reality works, to bring about the miracle. But actually you know you don't need to be persuaded by this. You know, you can think of endless examples in the world of sports, you can think of endless examples in the world of business, where people have recovered from impossible situations and they do it because actually nothing is finally real in this world, nothing is finally permanent or lasting in this world, except the resurrection power that has taken place in Jesus. Everything has been redeemed in him and when you believe that and you work to manifest that in time and space, then the real becomes actual here and now.

So, always speak positively to each other. We husbands and wives and those of us who live together, we need to speak encouragement to each other, to pull the psychological trick of each other? No, because that's reality. We ought always to speak encouragingly to each other. How often do you pick on the bad sides of your wife or your husband or your roommate, or your friend, or your child, or your brother, or your sister, or your father, or your mother and you point out yet again with some kind of joke, some failing they have? All you are saying is, Lord this pitiful creature that is with me, you forgot him. He was not crucified with Christ. That's what you are saying and the Father is hearing you loud and clear and has to act within the limitations of your faith.

But if you begin to believe your room mate, your husband your wife, your child, your friend has been crucified with Christ and has been raised with Jesus and is perfect and whole at God's right hand and you begin to praise them for their patience and their compassion and their gratitude and their sense of encouragement and you begin to talk to them about the good things that God has wrought in them, you are not just stroking somebody, that Satan's lie. You are not just stroking somebody; you are speaking reality to that person. You're speaking the words and the truths of the God of encouragement and steadfastness. And as soon as you begin to fill your room, in the dorm or your room in the fraternity house, or your room at home with that kind of reality, then the whole power of the God of encouragement and steadfastness begins to move in your home. And in place of a museum full of unfulfilled hopes and full of old bitterness' there begins to be born a beautiful new fresh Garden of Eden that lifts everyone that comes in to it.

Loved ones that's God, he is the God of encouragement and steadfastness and every time we speak his reality, that reality begins to lift us, ourselves. And what I would suggest is, if you have seen something this morning, if you have seen some little world of unfulfilled hopes, one of those little places where you've corralled it in and you've said, "Well, I can never do anything about that." I

want you to turn from that this morning and repent from it. If you have a root of bitterness that you have been holding in your heart for years against parents, grandparents, against your loved ones, repent of that this morning. Step out; there's a world out here, there is a world of joy and delight and beauty out here. Come on out it's great out here, come out of that narrow little cell in which Satan wants to bury you. It's a casket, get out of it, come on out, there is a world of beauty that the Father has for you.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we come before you very seriously now because many of us have lived for years overwhelmed by certain hopes that we had that we think can't be fulfilled. We've lived Lord in a narrow world of roads that were not taken and we now feel it's hopeless, we missed our chance and from now on our life can only be an anticlimax. Lord, we know that that is straight from the pit, it is throwing the blood of Jesus back in your face. Father you said that you have crucified the whole world and that you've made all things new and Lord we acknowledge that you are true and right.

And Lord there is nothing here, in this little world that we've been living in, that either has not been taken care of by you and your great wisdom now or will not be completely changed by you through our faith. So Father, we want to turn this moment, from all this sadness and discouragement and all this concentration on these hopes that we think cannot be fulfilled. All these events in our life, that we feel cannot be reversed. Lord, those that can't be reversed, we acknowledge before you in your wisdom they don't need to be reversed. And so, we accept that with joy and those that we don't think can be reversed but we now see you can change by your power, we now accept Lord, that you can make this whole world new.

Then Father, those of us who have had roots of bitterness in our lives, which we drag up day after day and week after week and month after month, in order to let Satan utterly discourage us and dishearten us, these roots of bitterness that have made us more and more cynical and hard, Lord, we would repent of those now. We gladly forgive the person that we think did something against us, because we see our resentment has done far more harm to us in whatever they originally did. We turn from that now Lord and we truly apologize to you and repent that we were ever self righteous enough to condemn them for that. We have done far worse ourselves. So Lord, we confess our self-righteousness and we turn now from our bitterness and we ask you to forgive us, Lord; and we intend to ask them, to forgive us.

And now Father, we want to move out into a new world, the world in which you dwell, the world of spring mornings, the world of the breaker's on the Hawaiian beaches, the world of clear fresh streams and the mountains, the world of sweeping swallow's, the world of the joy and delight of little babies. We want to move back into that resurrection world of springtime, and encouragement. And Father we commit ourselves to speaking to each other, words of encouragement that comes straight from your heart, that acknowledge that you have crucified the world in Christ and you've made all things right. And as we move forward in that faith, we will see that manifested in time and space, during this coming week. Amen.