

The Normal State of the Spirit No. 1

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I don't know if you've thought ever about how alike we all become in our society, and we really do. I mean, the old commercials don't help the matter much, but our schools probably don't help the matter much either. We learn to recognize the kind of behavior, and the kind of character that is appreciated, and we learn it seems to me, even in circles like our own circle here tonight, we learn the kinds of things that other people approve of. And it's not long before we're really not only a 'mutual adulation society' but we're a 'mutual please each other society'.

I don't know if you've ever thought in some clear moments what little actors we can all become. And I wonder have you ever sat back at certain moments of clarity and realized, "Really I'm not being myself at all in this situation. I'm kind of reacting as they expect me to react," or, "I'm even responding the way people I respect expect me to respond." And I think that's a very subtle danger too, isn't it? It's easy for us all to love each other a lot here, but to get the idea that therefore what somebody that we love praises, or the way that somebody else is, that's exactly the way we are to be.

I don't think any of us would quarrel that imitation is a very vital principle in education and without imitation none of us would be here. We wouldn't have been able to learn to ride bicycles or drive cars if we hadn't followed through that principle of imitation. But it does seem loved ones, that there comes a time in your life when imitation becomes a real bind and really brings about almost your own death. And sometimes I think many of us here talk so enthusiastically about spiritual regeneration, and about coming alive and being born again, and sometimes I think we haven't a clue what we're talking about. Because often we're talking about being born again in that we start doing the things that a whole group of supposedly born again people do. And we start reading our Bible, and we start praying, and we start going to meetings, and we start talking the way they talk, and we tend to call that at times, being born again. All it really is is joining another club whose character we begin to take on.

Really, the truth is to be born again is to discover yourself as you really are in God for the first time ever. I wonder how many of you see it as that. How many of you see it as a release into what you really are rather than an enslavement into certain patterns of behavior that other people praise, and laud, and even preach? Loved ones, yet that's what it is really. Being born again is you being what you really are in God. And I think some of you even now, think, "Oh yeah, that's the out for me, in God. Yes, you mean, yes I'm going to be a praying kind of animal, and I'm going to be a praising kind of animal, and a Bible reading kind of animal. That's what you mean in God." No, I just said in God because it's only in his Spirit that we can escape from the conformity that we fall into here in society. Truly, it is.

If you try to get out of brushing your teeth with sex appeal, or if you try to get rid of the shakiness by drinking a certain kind of brand of non-caffeine coffee, if you live in that kind of conformed world and you try to get out of that by your own effort, well it was the kind of thing, you remember, we found in the days of the hippie movement. You remember, we all decided we'd be different so we all grew beards, and we all wore jeans, and all the girls wore certain kinds of gypsy dresses, but we all did the same thing and we all grew our hair long. And really, we all just

continued to look the same just different from what we used to be.

That's what happens when you try to burst into what you really are under your own steam and by your own power. It seems impossible for us to discover who we really are, or to discover the original people that we are made by our own power. It does loved ones. All the attempts that you and I have made of it are usually pretty ugly. I remember one dear soul, he became unbearable to live with but he was being his real self you see, he was just letting it all hang out. When you let all hang out that is in there instead of having it transformed, and changed, and renewed, and rearranged as it was meant to be by God's Spirit then you just let hang out all your ugliness, and all your selfishness.

But loved ones, in God through his Spirit, through the free Spirit of his dear son who is alive in this world and is alive here in this room, it is possible for you to discover the real person that you are. It is. It's possible for you to be yourself at last, and to be the fresh, new, free person that you are. And I would pray that all of us in this room would realize that that's what we're talking about when we're talking about any of those terms: being born of the Spirit, or being filled with the Spirit, or being renewed, or regenerated, or being released, or being baptized with the Spirit, honestly loved ones, what we're talking about is you as you really are inside your very heart at last being able to show yourself. That's what it is, that's why God talks about your spirit because that's the real you.

Inside all of us, everyone, the person sitting next to you, the person sitting behind you, me, everyone of us are interesting, original persons full of life, and full of new ideas, and full of creative life. That's true, you are. Really it's just that we don't grasp that in our hearts but we've been dominated by trying to please everybody else in the outside world that has made all our minds so boring. Really, if you look at all our little souls, our psychological parts, our minds, and emotions, and our wills, they've all been triggered to react to certain reflex responses like old Pavlov's dogs.

Really, inside us there is a real person that is different from everybody else in this room, but our souls have been trained by our bodies so that all our minds are brainwashed to think the same thing. All people who believe the Bible think this way about politics. All people who believe the Bible think this way about art. All the people who claim to be filled with the Spirit worship this way. Really, I think, the angel's go to sleep with boredom. Really, because heaven itself is not at all like that but I think many of us have failed to realize how freeing the new birth is in our whole lives and our personalities.

Loved ones, that's our whole purpose here in Jesus. It's for you, and for me, to be our real selves in God, the people that we were made to be. I know I've often shared with you that when I came into the place where I was at last ready to die to all the things that I thought I had to have, and where I was ready to join my dear Savior on the cross, I at last became myself. I really did. And I know a lot of you wonder, "Oh will you lose your personality?" You gain it. You lose your life and you find your life. You at last find out the real personality you are.

I know with me, I was brought up in Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland I don't know why it is whether it's the siege mentality or what it is, but we are very, very, in turned reserved people, more so, much more so than the English, or the Scots, or the Welsh. We're just quiet little mice that don't want to be seen by anybody, we really are. My wife and I were in Dublin, oh I think four or five years ago, but we went into a restaurant and she tapped me on the shoulder to look across

and there I saw (I had a brother who was two years younger than me) and there we saw two little fellows 11 and 9, little Irish guys with their mum and dad in the restaurant, and really they were just like I was. They were like little mice just – they didn't want to do anything wrong that would offend anybody else and they didn't want anybody to look at them. And that's really the way we were brought up.

And you can see what a change comes over you in Jesus, because I could never imagine being what I am now in the light of my upbringing. And I think that many of us are like that, many of us have personalities that are filled with life and filled with creativity that God has planned will come forth and will delight and enrich his world. But, we ourselves are still held down by all kinds of things that we think other people want from us.

Oh I would encourage you with all my heart, just as I saw John here playing, I would encourage you when I think of the early days when we first started as a body, I would encourage you to see that Jesus' Spirit is a free spirit and that his desire is that we burst out in all the newness, and in all the difference, and in all the many faceted characters that we have. I would encourage you to do that. One of the beautiful things about a strong body is don't be afraid you won't wreck the place, you won't. You won't wreck it, you won't pull the place down, and you won't disturb everybody but you can have the confidence that there's a strong enough body of lovers of Jesus here who are themselves so that you can afford to be yourself.

It's so good I suppose, to know that you have people who will love you and who will not take advantage of you when you fall on your face trying to be yourself. And you have loved ones that will encourage you and not hold you back. Loved ones, I would encourage you to do that, to see that the new birth and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a glorious pilgrimage into what you yourself really are. And oh, if you're sitting there tonight with all kinds of feelings, "Well yes, but I don't – I'm afraid to do this. And I know that you expect us to do that, and my friend sitting beside me hopes I'll be this way." Forget it! Blow it out of the water. I'd just ignore it. Really, I'd just say to it, "Get thee behind me Satan." I would. I would just treat it as Satan because that's a lot of stupid lies and deception and I would instead start dealing with your dear Father and start saying to him, "Dear Father, I want to know the real person I am, and I want to know the person you've made me to be. And I know I'm starting back a bit now, I have 15, 20, 30, 40 years over me and it will take a bit of doing, but Father I want to before I die, find out what it's like to be me, and to be my real self as you made me to be."

Loved ones; honestly if you say that to your dear Father he will help you by his Holy Spirit, He will begin to deal with you and will begin to guide you and move in you. And I would encourage you to respond to it. I would. Even when he prompts you to do things that are very unusual for you, I would do them. And so what if you fall on your face, you get up again and you go again. But I would encourage you to move out as God's Spirit guides you. I want you to understand I'm not just talking about doing things because not all of us are singers, not all of us are artists, not all of us are writers, but just in your ordinary everyday life to start breathing deep breaths in the morning when you get out into that dear world and start enjoying that world, and seeing that you're a unique person in it and that the Father has made it for you and that he has unique things for you to do in it each day.

Oh loved ones, there'll come just a depth of freedom and liberty in you that will begin honestly, to make your relationship with your Father the dearest one. Because actually, here's the interesting thing, there isn't one of us in this room however kind we are, or however much we want for you,

there isn't one of us who can release you. And there isn't one of you that can release us. We can't. We can't release each other. It's such a fine thing that only the dear original Father that made us can actually release us. In fact, he's the only one who knows what we are to be.

So I would ask you to spend time with him. Really, some of it should be on our knees but a lot of it can be just walking along talking with him. A lot of it is in those moments of reality when we suddenly realize he's there. Something like what Scott was talking about earlier on, there comes moments, maybe in a prayer time, maybe on a bus, maybe just before you're going to have supper, there become moments you know, moments of revelation, moments of reality, moments of truth when suddenly you realize, "He's there." Well, that's a good moment. The supper might get a bit cold, but wait for a minute and have a little talk with him at that moment. But don't rush on, don't become a little machine that has to brush its teeth at a certain time, get its supper at a certain time, and get up to bed at a certain time. No, don't be that.

But when those moments of reality or truth come, then spend time with your dear Creator and listen to him, and think through what he is saying, and be brave. Begin to move out on those things. Do, be brave, and begin to move out on them. And it doesn't matter if you tumble, and it doesn't matter if at times you're awkward in it, but at least you're beginning to be yourself as God really made you. And that's part of what it means to walk after the Spirit. It really does. That's what it is. It's walking according to that part of you inside that is the real you, that's your spirit. What God wants you to discover is what your real spirit is like, and he wants that spirit to come out and to change your soul, and your mind, and your emotions, and to start touching your friends.

I don't know how many husbands and wives here get bored with each other. I think we get bored with each other or roommates, or colleagues at work, I think we get bored with each other because we don't do this. We're not being renewed day-by-day in this dear Spirit of God but we're getting old, and worn. I don't know if you feel that at times, but if you feel, "Ah it's the same old day, the same person, the same office, the same job, the same thing." Loved ones, see that unless we're being renewed every day, unless we're discovering new bits of ourselves every day, it's going to be like that and you're going to get middle aged before you're 30, and you'll be worn out before you're 40, and you'll be ready for the grave before you're 45.

Really, that's how people die, do you know that? Do you know how people die? People die before they die, did you know that? They do. People die long before they die. Oh, there are countless older loved ones that I know that have lived way beyond what they should have been living physically because they wanted to live, and life was exciting, and there was plenty to be done. But I've seen other loved ones, who weren't nearly as ill at all die before they were 60 because they was nothing more that they much wanted to do. And to tell you the truth they were just – well, it's interesting, George Sanders was a well known film actor if you remember him, fairly smooth, suave Englishman. I always like to tell my wife that's what I'm like, but I'm not I'm afraid so we joke about being George Sanders.

But George Sanders was that kind of suave sophisticated Englishman and yet his death was tragic. Do you know why? Somebody asked him what he was thinking and he said, "I'm just terribly bored with it all." That's what kills people, when life ceases to have any interest. And I think that happens loved ones when you bury the real person that you are. That's true. You bury the real person that you are under all kinds of conformities that you have learned from your very earliest school teacher who dear love her, or dear love him, was trying to give you guidelines but all he meant was it would be a guideline. But what we became was little stereotype robots that did nothing but fit into the

guidelines.

That's why, I think, many of us find our daily jobs and our daily lives very boring and very uninteresting. Actually, do you know that no job is interesting? Do you know that? Do you know that it doesn't matter what job you are in, there is no capacity inherent in any job to keep us interested, there isn't. It doesn't matter how interesting the job is, eventually the job itself is just a job, and it's just actions that you go through. The interest in life is coming from within you. If you are becoming the person that God made you to be, which is infinitely varied and infinitely interesting, if you're becoming that person your job is interesting.

I don't know if many of you have met happy old comedians that do the most miserably boring jobs day after day, and you meet them there and they're putting on the same old tires, and the same old wheels, but they're full of life, and full of joking, and full of activity and interest in their own mental life. Now loved ones, that's what God wants us to be and that's what you can be. I think, often what happens with many of us is we get so used to conforming to what everybody thinks we should do, and we get so caught up with what everybody thinks we ought to do, that we actually lose the sense that we have come from the same hand as Jerry Lewis (American comedian). That we have come from the same hand as Schweitzer (French missionary doctor), that we have come from the same hand as Jesus and we begin to get the idea, "Well, I'm just not a very interesting person. I'm kind of boring really. That's about how you'd describe my character, I'm kind of a boring character." We kind of get that idea and we feel, "Oh yeah, well if I was interesting, I mean, I could see this happening but I'm just not. I mean, there are some people who are interesting and some people who aren't."

But loved ones, it's not true. You came from the same dear Father and he hadn't a down on you. He made you with the same capabilities and the same interest as he made his own son Jesus, but it is a matter of beginning to be acquainted with your dear Father, really, being acquainted with him. I don't know how many of you say your prayers. Maybe that's what you do, you say your prayers, but you don't really ever touch the heart of God. You don't ever really converse with your Father. You don't ever get any new thoughts from your Father.

Could I ask you that? Your new ideas that you get, the new little inspirations that you get, do you usually find they come from books like Oswald Chambers, or from sermons, or from somebody else? Or, do you find that they're coming from somewhere else? And do you know that you can get new thoughts, and new ideas, and new lights from your Father from conversing with him? I think a lot of us make a mistake here. I understand what we all mean when we say that certain ones of us have gift of prophecy or gift of preaching God's word. I see that, I understand that God gives to some of us sufficient light to do it every Sunday for instance, or to do it every day; I see that.

But loved ones, do you not think you're pushing that rather far when you imply that those are the only people that get new light directly from God? Do you not think that they are just the men or the women that are appointed by God to maybe preach in a body, or to maybe teach? But that all of us are meant to experience, to some extent, the gift of prophecy, that is the gift of being able to speak God's word, or the gift of knowledge, the gift of knowing what God is saying in his heart to us. Is that not the normal life of a Christian?

Loved ones, I think it is true that if you're getting your new ideas only from the books, or only from other people, it's possible that all you're doing is saying your prayers. It is. It's possible that all you're doing is not very different from the little guy with his prayer wheel just

whipping it around and then jumping into bed, instead of beginning to get to know the heart of your Father. And I would encourage you to do that. I don't know it's interesting that Scott shared that earlier on because that is what God wants for us. God wants us to receive revelation in our own hearts so that we see ourselves more clearly, so that we see things in which we can be freer than we are, and we respond to them and move into new territory of liberty. That's God's will for us. And that's his plan for the normal prayer life of a child of his. And I would encourage you to do that, really.

Now, your spirit, your spirit is the part of you that will bring that renewal. Your spirit is the part of you that will bring that renewal. And all I'd like to share with you is the Holy Spirit will keep your spirit bubbling if you simply believe that you have been buried with Christ and have been raised with him and sit at the right hand of the Father. You fix your mind on that. You submit your will to the things that God reveals to you are normal in that position. And as you walk in belief and obedience or trust and obey, or you walk in faith, the Holy Spirit will keep your spirit inside you being renewed day-by-day, and being freshened, and being changed. And he'll keep your personality growing, and he'll keep revealing to you more and more things about yourself that you never knew. That's true.

If you do those things, if you walk in faith, and I just want you to see clearly that faith is not just the believing you have been crucified with Christ and raised together with him and sit at the right hand of God but, it is also the will submitting to what he shows you is normal behavior for a person in that position. So if you believe and you obey, or your trust and obey, then the Holy Spirit will work on your spirit. Now you see, that's what makes it different from the sensitivity group approach, or the psychoanalytical approach, or the manage yourself kind of approach. See, many people today know that they should try to be individuals so we fall into that trap of all growing beards, all wearing certain kinds of clothes. That's what happens when you try a do it yourself job because, in fact, all you can do is change your mind, and emotions, and your will, and make them follow certain habits but you can't actually change and freshen the inner spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can do that so you have to trust him to do that, you see. You have to have faith that the Holy Spirit will begin to renew your spirit.

So you know, maybe you're sitting here tonight and you're saying, "Well, yeah I see some of it and I think it sounds good, and I would like to go into it a bit but I don't really see – I feel so dead inside and I feel so bound inside the prison that I am that I can't really see how I'll get out of it." Well loved ones, you don't really need to work out how to get out of it, you simply have to believe and obey, and the Holy Spirit will begin to stir up your spirit within you, and he'll begin to renew it, and he'll begin to give you light about it.

Don't be afraid if you say, "Oh well, how do I know I'm not just way out there in left field?" Because of course it is true that there are evil spirits and there are all kinds of deceptive spirits that can get in and say, "Oh yes, this is what you should do to be your real self." And that's what that loved one did, you remember, that I told you about. I mean, it was unbearable to live with him but he was letting everything hang out. You know, if he thought of a thing he'd just say it whether it tore a person apart or not.

Now, how can you be sure that you're not involving yourself in that kind of thing? Well, basically by faith. Basically, by the belief in obedience that's the first thing. Basically, by believing and being willing to be in Jesus and be raised with him to God's right hand and basically, by submitting your will to what God shows you is normal for a person in that position. But, it's also

true loved ones that the Bible does tell us what a normal spirit will be like.

Now, what's very important for you to remember as we begin just a few of these studies tonight is don't read these things and say, "That's what I would be if I were a good boy and a good girl." Don't do that, that's killing you every time, you know. Stop that stuff where you take the free dear word of God and you beat yourself over the head with it as a kind of how to be good book. Don't do that, just listen to these things that his dear word says and commit them to the Holy Spirit. You can commit them to your memory, the actual verses, but then just look to the Holy Spirit and say, "Holy Spirit, as I walk through this week will you just reveal these things to me? If this is something that has something to do with me then will you bring it to my mind at the right moment so that I can see it, and I can know that it's from you, and I can begin to submit my will to you in this area?"

So do that loved ones, please. Don't take these dear words of God and make them a law unto yourself. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that's the only law we live under. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus means the act of the spirit that is in Jesus bringing life to us as we dwell in him by faith. That's the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. But, there is no other law needed. Indeed, if you abide in that law you'll be free and able to fulfill all other law without effort.

So loved ones, let's look just at a few. We'll only be able to look at a few of these, but maybe you'd look at Isaiah 57:15. The normal state of a spirit that is healthy in God, or of a person you could say who is healthy in God. Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'" Normal healthy spirit is contrite.

I don't know if you've got the clear distinction between conscious sin and unconscious sin. God frees us through our crucifixion with Christ from the need to disobey him consciously. Now, I'm not laying that on you as a law, I'm saying that's a great privilege. We can come to the point in Jesus where we are free from conscious knowing sin. That is we can come to the place in our crucifixion or our resurrection in Jesus where we see and know that we should not lose our temper and we don't lose our temper. That's it. We're able to avoid sins that we know are sins and that's what we mean by conscious sin.

Now, that doesn't mean that we don't at times do things involuntary and the moment after they're done, oh we know we've done it. "I'm sorry." And you didn't determine to do them, it wasn't through bad temper, it wasn't through lack of control, the thing was done almost in a moment almost by an oversight and you know, "Well it's an involuntary sin it's not something that I willed. I didn't rebel against God and determine, 'No, if I'm going to lose comfort by not doing this thing then I'm going to do it.'" It's not that kind of thing, it's something you've done it, it's done, it's an involuntary thing.

There are also things that you do that you don't know are sins. You do them – there was a brother this morning was asking me about something which I felt God had shown me to be a sin in my life but he hadn't shown it to him and so he did this thing, he didn't see it as a sin. It was, you could say, an unconscious sin because it was still a lack of conformity to God's perfect standard but it wasn't something that he regarded or knew to be a sin. So your life will have involuntary things that you do, that you've done them and as soon as you realize you're sorry, you have no sense of

guilt from God, it's just, "Lord, I'm sorry I really apologize." That's it. But there are these other things, unconscious sins that you do, you don't know about them. When God shows it then you have to take action.

There are also loved ones, inexpedient acts in our lives. There are times when we really talk harshly to someone. We don't hate them, we don't despise them, we don't intend to hurt them but we talk harshly. Or, we say something to someone that just at that moment is like a dagger in their dear heart, they don't need that, they can't bear that at that moment. It's not something that you know is wrong; indeed in certain context it wouldn't be wrong. It's a raising of the voice at the wrong moment, or it's the making a joke at the wrong moment, it's something that isn't appropriate and brings pain to them, those inexpediencies. Now, do you see that certainly we should not require to be in continual contrition for known sins? But you can see there's a fair volume of other things that we can be in contrition about daily.

I would encourage you to see that it is consistent with victory in your life to walk with a contrite spirit. To walk with a spirit that is not caught up in a, "I'm going to prove that I'm in victory. Can you show me where I've sinned? No, not that wasn't a sin that was an inexpediency." Don't get yourself into that kind of defensive stuff. God has said to us that there's victory for us but he's said to us plainly that he dwells with people who are of a contrite spirit. Walk with a contrite and a soft spirit before God and be always open and willing to be sorry for anything that you did sin or not, who cares. If it hurt somebody else be sorry for it, apologize for it. But, walk with a contrite spirit don't walk with a proud spirit. Don't walk with a spirit that is always trying to prove its right. Don't walk with a spirit that is carrying its theology on its back and has to defend it at every moment. No, walk with a contrite spirit that is soft towards God that is very ready to repent of sin as soon as you see it. And walk with a humble spirit. God dwells with a humble spirit, a person who is continually humble before him.

You remember, it's said that Moses was a meek man. Above every man that was upon the earth he was meek. And of course, you have to think, "Well meek? Meek? The guy who threw the tablets of stone down and who rebuked the children of Israel? That man was meek?" And of course, the Bible makes it clear that it was meek towards God. He walked with a meekness towards his Maker and a humility before his Maker that was able to be humility before men when it was necessary but, at the same time, was able to be confident, and stable, and righteous before men when it was needed.

So loved ones, a contrite and a humble spirit is not inconsistent with a life that on the whole walks above sin, and I think we need to see that. And boy we need to see it's more important to be contrite in spirit than to be trying to hold on to some doctrine of victory over sin that prevents you being real and honest in your own life with God. So, the Father says, "He dwells with a contrite and a humble spirit."

Just one more loved ones, that we could look at tonight because the time is going, Psalms 51:17. "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." I could tell you what put me off evangelical Christianity in Ireland and put me off it here in America too. I'm sure the loved ones are doing it their way, but it was that kind of Bible thumping evangelical that had everything set out, you know. It was all hard, "I believe this about Jimmy Carter (former president of the United States); I believe this about Goldwater (American politician); I believe this about the homosexuals; I believe this about abortion;" that hard, hard spirit that came forth from them. I was more conscious of what they were believing than of any lightness to the gentle spirit of Jesus.

I don't know what your spirit is like, but I think it's very easy for us in our tradition, even though our tradition is slightly different it's very easy for us to have a hard spirit in our tradition. I remember the first time one guy giving a testimony in one of our fellowships on a Wednesday night said, "Oh yeah, yeah, this girl came up to me with that plastic Christian smile." And that was the first time I thought, "Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's true we can put on a plastic smile." And it ties up a wee bit again, in fact, with what you were talking about earlier in the service because unless your spirit is being broken and is in a state of brokenness, that is unless you are coming into more and more revelation day-by-day before God which stuns you, shatters you, and shows you that you have little of God in your life, unless you are shattered by him pretty continuously so that you have to grab for him and you have to just throw yourself before him and say, "Lord Jesus, if you don't live your life in me nobody will ever see your life." Unless you have that kind of attitude loved ones, in fact, your spirit however soft it may appear compared with that old Bible belt thing that I instanced, your spirit will be just as hard and it will be just as difficult for people to touch you.

I don't know how many conversations you've had at work, or how many conversations you've had here even where you feel well, the person hasn't really touched you and you really haven't touched them, you've just passed some small talk, or you've passed on some neat little gold nuggets from Oswald Chambers or Watchman Nee, but you haven't really touched each other. You haven't really, if you'll excuse me saying, you haven't really had intercourse with each other, your spirits have not really meshed. And really the reason is, because your spirit is hard it's not a broken spirit. It's a hard spirit that is kind of confident in itself and that thinks it is everything organized. And so you don't walk around among your colleagues and your friends at work as an approachable person, or as a person who perhaps could think some new thoughts, or as a person who could possibly understand where they're coming from. You rather strike them as somebody who has got it all together and just is pretty compact and low to the ground. That's it.

A broken spirit is not like that. A broken spirit means that a person has magnificent and as perfect as Jesus can make a tax gatherer like Zacchaeus feel at home talking with him, can enable a woman who is caught in adultery to actually look into his eyes. A broken spirit enables you to be that approachable to others and of course, it's the only thing that enables you to transmit anything to other people. You probably realize that.

I don't know how long it is since you led somebody to Jesus. How long is it since you led somebody to Jesus? Well actually, it's connected up not with your witnessing technique which is probably pretty good but it's connected up with the brokenness of your spirit. When you've a broken spirit that is always before God, always moving into new light, always being shattered again by the revelation of his truth so that you cry with Paul, "I am the greatest of sinners," and you grab for that person who came to save sinners, and you grab in the process some of the fresh life of his spirit, when you do that then your spirit speaks to other people. It's incredible, but actually if you could see the spiritual world you would see a big sign right up, "Come, I can help you," that sticks up from broken spirits.

Most spirits you would see are like steel tanks that are absolutely unapproachable and look unapproachable, and are unapproachable, and when anybody touches them they kind of ring hard and solid and nobody can get into them. So loved ones, it's perhaps just good to see that it's all connected up with how really you are you. That's it. How really you are being you in Jesus. How really you are you with God. And that's what it's all about, you know. It's not all about this

conformity and all of us wearing the right badges, and saying the right things, and shaking hands the right way. It's not that stuff at all. It's a beautiful new freshness that is deep down.

"There's the greatest freshness deep down things." Gerard Manley Hopkins said. He was an English priest who wrote poetry, "There's the dearest freshness deep down things." And it was his abbreviated language that he invented in those years to express how fresh things are underneath God's good soil. "There's the dearest freshness deep down things. " That's what there is in you. There is. There is. You're not the hard old dried up shell that you think you are. There's the dearest freshness deep down in you if you will just open yourself to your dear God and say, "Lord, it's time I found out who Bill is," or, "Who Romaine is," or, "Who Ernest is." "It's time I found how who John is," or, "Who Sarah is." "It's time I found out who Becky is. It's time I found out who I am Lord. Will you help me to start being myself in you as you made me?" And boy, I'll tell you this will be an exciting place really. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we sense that you would not make all the daffodils different, all the beach trees different, and all the little flies different in some way without making us all different. We're the crown of creation, the dearest thing your heart conceived so Father, we know full well that all of us are beautifully different and that there's a beauty and an interest that you put into each one of us that is to come forth to enliven others and make them aware of what individual life can be.

Oh Father, I would pray for my brothers and sisters and we would pray for each other, and we would love each other and encourage each other to come out and be the real selves that you've made us. We ask that this would happen, because we know that then Jesus will be glorified. Not by a lot of people bowing down before him in conformity to a pattern, but by his coming alive in thousands of different beautiful personalities.

Lord, we know that that is the real glory that will delight your heart. And oh we pray that you will see the beauty of your son in each one of us, not just this coming week, but throughout the rest of our lives.

And now the grace of our Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and ever more. Amen.