

Putting Our Faith in God

Romans 13:8a

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever thought that there are two ways to do your job day-by-day? There are two ways to carry on your work. One way is to see your job as the only means you have of making the money that you need to keep yourself alive and to keep your family alive. That's the first way to see your work and your job, as the only means that you have of getting the necessary money that is needed to keep yourself alive and to keep your wife and your children alive. And of course, if you have that attitude to your work, then you know that if you're late for work or if you do something wrong at work, fear goes through your heart that you won't be able to pay your bills and to keep body and soul together.

On the other hand, if you get a promotion or you do something well, your heart is kind of exhilarated. You feel, "Boy, I've managed to win a little bit more security for myself." And you feel just that little bit more stable. That's one way to regard your job and your daily work.

The second way is to really believe that you didn't occur here by chance, but that a God has made you. And that he really is the kind of Father that Jesus said he was. He feeds all the birds of the air and he clothes all the grass of the fields. He loves you personally and he has put you here knowing full well that he is your Father. He is responsible for you and he is a good Father. He will not let you go without food and without clothing. He will take care of you. The job that you have is just the work that he has fitted you to do to bring his world into order under his will. That's the other way to regard your job and your work.

In other words, it's really a matter of whether you do your work by faith in God or by fear of man. It's really a question of whether you have your faith in your job and your work for getting what you need in this life to keep you alive and to meet your material necessities -- or whether you actually have your faith in God to do those things. You see your work as something that God has given you talent or ability to do to bring His world more into order under his will.

It really is a matter of whether you regard work as a commission from God or as a penalty for sin. I don't know if you know it, but a lot of people regard work as a penalty for sin. I'll show you how they get that, if you look at Genesis 3, loved ones, you'll see it there in that record of the distrust that man showed towards God in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:19, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return." And people read that verse and they say, "There it is. In the sweat of your face. That's work because I get sweaty when I work. 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground.' There! That's what God condemned man to after man had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and had failed to trust God as his Father. That's why work is the penalty of sin, and you can't make work enjoyable. It is a sweaty, miserable, worrisome task, and there's no other way to do it. It's a condemnation from God. It isn't God's best for us." Of course, that's wrong.

God gave us the commission to work long before the Garden of Eden -- long before the fall. I'll show you where He gave it, right in Genesis 1:28, "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be

fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God gave us the commission to work and bring the earth into order long before we rebelled against Him.

What makes work a delight and a joy and what makes it miserable? Just the two things we talked about at the beginning. If you put your faith in your work to meet your material needs, you'll do it by the sweat of your brow. You'll be filled with anxiety and worry when it seems to be going wrong -- or when you seem to be losing your job because you'll feel, "If I lose this job, I lose my very survival and my ability to survive in this world. I won't have these needs met that I have."

So if you look at your work and put your faith in your work instead of in God for your survival, your work will be a constant worry and anxiety. Every time the boss looks at you strangely, every time the economy wavers, you'll go down. Or you can look at your work as something that God has given you to do to help Him complete His creation, and that He will provide your needs for you by all kinds of visible and invisible ways. Sometimes it's by the paycheck, sometimes beyond the paychecks, sometimes by manipulating the way the bills come, sometimes by working the cash flow, sometimes by gifts where you didn't expect gifts, sometimes by cutting down your own needs without you knowing that you've cut them down -- all kinds of ways.

Miraculously, God has a thousand million permutations that He can work. If you put your faith in Him for your material needs instead of in your job, your job and your work can be a delight and a joy. Of course the tragedy is that most of us work under the curse, don't we? I mean, we do! Most of us work under the curse. You know as you sit there listening to me, your heart goes into your boots if the company is beginning to tremble or hesitate.

Your heart goes. Oh you almost tremble. You almost get paralyzed when you think, "I could lose my job, especially as the years go on." Isn't that so? The steadier you get in a position, the more dependent you get into it, and the more dependent you are on it. The more panicky you get when you think, "I am going to lose that job", or, "I am going to have to change my career."

So, a great number of us here live under that curse that is given there. It's interesting. It's not that we don't believe in God, sure it isn't! We believe in God. We believe in God but we don't count on him for anything. Isn't that a fact? It's amazing. We believe in God. We believe he is nice, and we believe he is kind, and he made us, and all that. And actually, in certain desperate situations that we get into, where the thing gets out of our control, we turn to him. We've been amazed at how well things have worked out. But then, you know what we do? We get back on our own two feet. We begin to depend again on our own competence at our job, on the level progress of the economy of the nation, on the money that is coming in week by week. And before you know it, we're up on our hind legs again. And we're independent of God.

We actually don't count on him for anything. We count entirely on our job and on our own ability to so manipulate things there that will keep the money coming in and will keep ourselves and our families alive. In other words, we really have our faith in our job -- not in our God.

I was brought up in Northern Ireland. We're as work-ethic as you are. It was, "Stand up yourself." I remember my parents saying, "Get a good education. Get a good job because nobody else will look after you if you don't look after yourself." So, most of us were brought up the same way. The tragedy is that even though it's good to work hard and it is good to stand up and be counted, and it

is good to be responsible -- yet, it is a lie that the job supplies your needs.

It is God, who in His magnificent wisdom, has created all these jobs and has created all these economies. He has created all the coal and the oil that we have on the earth, and has then said to us, "Now, look. Don't be dumb. I am the one that's giving the gifts. Now, don't start looking to the gifts and having your faith in the gifts, because they come and they go. I have all kinds of gifts that I haven't shown you yet. So keep your trust in me. Don't be silly, now. Don't get your trust onto the gifts. Don't get it onto the job that you have. Don't get it on to the money that you've got. That all can go like that in a moment." And of course, how well we all know that? It can go in a moment. "You have your faith in me and I will supply every need of yours from my riches in glory in Christ Jesus".

Now loved ones, actually, we do the same with government. We were talking about that, you remember, for weeks there in the summertime. We do the same with government as we do with our jobs. We look to our jobs to provide us with our material needs instead of looking to God. We do the same with the government, don't we?

We really put our faith in the government. We kind of respect God, but we put our faith in the government to maintain peace and order in our world and in our nation. We end up of course, expecting too much from the government because the government can't actually do that. It is only God, himself, who can maintain sufficient order and peace in our world. That's why he said, "Pray that you may be peacefully governed."

It's only Him that can do that. But, we do the same with the government that we do with our jobs. We look to our jobs for peace of mind instead of putting our faith in God. We look to the government for peace and order in our society instead of putting our faith in God. So, we do the same as we do with our jobs. We expect too much from our jobs. We expect too much from the government.

That's what we do. That's why you can never feel utterly safe when you have your faith in your job. Your job can't create that kind of deep peace that God the Father can create. God the Father holds the Pacific Ocean in its present spot. He could snap his fingers and the protons and neutrons would all disintegrate, and the Pacific Ocean would spread over the whole continent.

He holds that whole ocean in place. Only someone like him can give you the stability that you were made for. That's why you don't feel that stability when you put it in silly things like companies that come and go or employers that will die in 70 years -- just as we will. Now, how can you tell which faith you live by: whether you live by faith in God day-by-day or whether you're living by faith in the job or the government?

Well, we're studying some verses in Romans loved ones, that I think will help you to see your own situation more clearly and we've got in our studies to Romans 13:8a, "Owe no one anything." Of course, that's applied first to the government. Paul had been talking about the government officials and all the people who govern the country.

You see it first in Romans 13:7 "Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due." That's first of all, what he means. Give respect to the government officials. Of course, you can't do it if you have faith in them to preserve the peace and order of the nation. You can't, because as soon as you see

Reagan making a wrong move, you'll want to dissect him and put him together again the way you want him.

So actually, you can't respect the poor guy. You're always engaged in telling him the way he should run the country. It's the same with all the other government officials. You can't actually do what God has commanded you to do, "Owe no one anything." Owe respect to them. Pay respect to them. He says, don't owe it to them. Don't leave it as something unpaid.

You can't actually do that if you have your faith in them for the peace and order of the nation because every time you see something going a little haywire, you want to get on their backs and make them do it the way you want them to do it. But if you have faith in God who has appointed them with all their faults and all their weaknesses, if you have faith in God that he will so overrule affairs and so govern things that peace and order will continue as long as he wants it to be in this nation of ours -- then suddenly, you're free to give respect to Reagan and give respect to the others without pulling them apart.

So that's one way you can tell if you have faith in God for our country. What's your attitude to the government officials? Is it one of respect and love? Prayer for them? Writing to them? Telling them what you think in a calm way? Or, is it a panicky thing? "We have to get them out! We have to get rid of them! We have to change them!" Well it shows where your faith is -- and you know that fine well.

If you have faith in God, you're not rocked when something ridiculous happens in the government. You're concerned but you're not in panic. You take the steps to make your views known but you put your trust in the Father. You pray that he will overrule the situation.

Now the reason for that is that he is the only one who can do anything about it. Do you realize that the troubles we have in our society are due to all kinds of subtle, psychic powers and supernatural currents of misunderstanding, deception, real rebellion and real hatred that run underneath our society? Do you realize that?

The things that happen politically, or that happen in government, are not just things that happen on the surface. They are the result of all kinds of subtle, spiritual powers that work in our society; all kinds of misunderstanding where men expect too much from each other on one side and then they condemn each other on the other; all kinds of lies and deceptions that create the unrest and the chaos in our society.

Now there is only one who has done anything about that. I'll show you, loved ones, where that is. It's in Colossians 2:15. God, here, is talking through Paul about Jesus' death which, of course, took place in 29 A.D. here, but took place in eternity before that again.

Colossians 2:15, He [that is, Jesus] disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him." Jesus disarmed those principalities and powers. Therefore God is the only one who can do anything about them in our society. He has disarmed them.

You know the way people go on strike and they hardly know why they're on strike? England was brought, you remember, to virtually a standstill by people who wanted to go to work, but a strike had been called. Haven't we found ourselves increasingly in situations in the nation where something happens that we can't understand? We don't want it, but it's happening. It's as if some

power of some kind is taking the thing and running with it, and we can't get hold of it again. Loved ones, that's the "principalities and powers". It's a wild deception of all kinds of supernatural, elemental spirits of the universe that God alone can hold in check.

The dear ones in the government are even part of the victims of it. They hardly understand what's happening. So that's one way. If you have faith in God for the peace and order of our nation, then your heart is at peace. It isn't filled with panic when things seem to be going wrong.

Now there's another way you can tell. Look at that verse, Romans 13:8, because there is another clear interpretation of it. Paul is just connecting it up with the previous discussion of the government but now he is going on to something else. He is saying that you can tell if you have faith in God or faith in the world by the way you relate to the government powers. Then, you can tell by the way you relate to other people in the secular world. That's what he is going on to.

He says, "Owe no one anything." It doesn't mean don't have credit cards. It doesn't mean don't take out consumer loans because those have payment schedules, and the money is not due until that necessary date, and if you meet that date, then you're still not owing anyone anything.

Moreover, if he had meant don't have any consumer loans, then he would have been contradicting someone very important in Matthew 5:42. It is Jesus, of course, who is speaking. "Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you." So, if Jesus is saying, "You should be willing to lend," he is certainly not saying that getting loans is wrong. But when that due date comes and you don't meet it, then you need to look at your situation and see where your faith is. The Greek word for "owe no man anything" is "ofeilete". It's the present tense and it means, "do not be owing".

So, if you come to the due date and you can't pay it, and then see, "Now this is a situation that should not continue." You can't just up today and change it all. That'll create more chaos. But, you think, "I ought not to be owing like this." Why? Because you are reaching for something that God is not giving you the money to supply. He is saying to you that you're looking to that something for what he alone can give you.

You're reaching for something, a car, or the stereo, or the house, or something else. You're reaching for something that God is obviously not giving you the money to supply. So he is saying gently to you, "You don't need that. You don't need that. In fact, you're so desperate for what you think that thing can give you that it's a kind of idol to you. Look! It's something that I alone can give you so you don't need it."

So get out of the situation. Don't go on owing because that's plain evidence that you're actually looking to that thing. You're so desperate to have it that you're prepared to disobey God's word. And that means you're looking to that thing for something that God only can give you.

So loved ones, that helps you to know whether you're putting your faith in the world or whether you're putting your faith in God. Another important truth of course is, if you continue to reach for that thing that God is not supplying you the money to get, then you actually begin very quickly to come into the elemental spirits of the universe that will enslave you and that run the whole financial system of the world. You'll very quickly come into a situation where your life is utterly dominated and overwhelmed by your debts and your indebtedness, rather than by your ease and love of God. So that's what happens.

I don't know if you're like that, but it's incredible. How many of us give up our freedom in order to try to get things that God doesn't actually want us to have? He doesn't want us to have them because we're trying to get something from those things that faith in him alone can give us. He is trying to stop us putting faith in something that is not Him. He is not supplying the money to meet the debts. Before you know it, you live from the 10th to the 10th, or the 15th to the 15th, or the 21st to the 21st. You find your life is motivated and dominated by the crude sense of fear that you're not going to meet your debts.

It's just the elemental spirits of the universe that begin to govern your life, and begin to destroy your family life, and your home life, and your relationships with others. It is vital that you put your faith in your dear God. I don't know about the guys here, but I thought my life would be transformed into something like the "seventh heaven" when I was at university in Ireland and was able to buy a BSA250. I thought, "Ah, to have a BSA motorcycle and to be able to lean her into the curves like that -- that would be tremendous!"

Irish roads are exciting for motorcyclists. I thought that would be heaven itself! Isn't that what we get? It's madness! They're all lies, lies, lies. But we can see it with the little guy with his kite, or the little older guy with his motorbike. "Well, a house is different, you know." It's the same game.

We're putting our faith in the world and in things to give us the security, or the happiness, or the peace that only our dear Father can give us. Loved ones, there's nothing like being able to cuddle up in the arms of the one, supreme Creator of the whole universe and call him Father. And to know that He knows you, and that he knows your name, and that He won't drop you. That's worth everything. Maybe that's a good place to stop. Will you think about it?

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we are so brainwashed. We just know we are. We are so brainwashed, we can hardly hear what you're saying. But we do recognize Lord, that our jobs certainly have often let us down, and our governments have often let us down. And yet Father, it seems as if we don't know where else to put our faith and yet we see how foolish that is because you have said to us, "Look at the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?" [Mt 6:28-30]

Father, we would say, "Yes". It's just that we're so used to getting through the paychecks. Or we're so used to getting it by what we think is the strength of our own right arm. Father, we ask your forgiveness, Lord. We ask your forgiveness for the way we've built up our whole lives putting our faith in this world -- in its jobs and in its money. It has never ever given us real peace of mind.

Father we want to turn around to you this morning. We want to change that this very moment. Father, we want to put our faith in you and begin to trust you as our dear God. Father, we bring before you the things that are in our lives at this present time -- all kinds of things -- some of them are right and some of them are wrong -- our jobs, our loans, our purchases and our plans for our lives.

Father, we want to bring the whole thing before you now and say, "Lord, what do you think of all this? Where have I made mistakes and errors here? Where have I my faith in the world instead of in you? Lord, I'll confess it now and I'll turn from that, and I now put my faith in you, God. I call you my dear Father. I ask you now to begin to take over my life and to provide for it."

"Father I am willing to work. I am willing to do the job, what you've planned for me to do here on earth. But Father, I am not going to think any longer that that lie is true: that it's the boss that pays me. Father, I put my life in your hands. Father, will you take it over and will you provide for it? I'll do what you tell me, not because I earn my money, but because I obey you and you give me the money I need. Father, thank you."

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for making it all possible. Thank you that you've changed me this very moment and you are now in me. You are able to trust your Father through me and teach me how to do it myself. Thank you, Lord." Amen.