

The Normal State of the Spirit No. 2

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I'd just remind you, loved ones, of the things we've been talking about the past few weeks. And maybe a good place to begin is with the 'me generation' which we are all known as. We're the 'me generation'. And you have the magazine, you remember, called "Self", that was seen on the newsstands. And yet it's amazing and ironic that this generation that is known as the 'me generation', has the greatest trouble finding it's 'me'. And isn't that -- I think that's right, that all of us probably feel the same way. We probably feel, "Yeah, that's right. Call it the 'me generation'. I'm sure we are terrible, and we are selfish, and all that stuff." And yet deep, deep down in our dear little hearts we can't find 'me'. Because we seem to be so stereotyped, and we seem to be so regulated by all the things that everybody else thinks we should be. And that's a little what we talked about last Sunday.

It is interesting if you read the magazine called "Self", it is amazing how it tries to regulate us all into certain ways to develop ourselves. And that's what happens every time we human beings try to free ourselves. We seem to actually end up imprisoned in still more laws, or more habits, or more standards, or more external obligations that somehow prevent us being ourselves. And what we've shared the past few weeks is, you really are different from me. And I am different from you. And you're different from the person beside you. And you're different from the people behind you. And you're actually different from everybody else in the world. There is just not any other person like you.

And the truth is that you're probably miserable at times, because you aren't being what God made you to be. And some of the reason you feel -- you remember, I told you about that title of a book, "Sometimes I Feel Like a Blob". Well the reason you feel like a blob at times is because, you yourself, as you really are, are almost dead. I know it sounds strange to you, loved ones, but that is the truth. And that's really the truth that lies behind the things that we've shared for years. It's just to some of you it sounds odd. It sounds strange, but it's always been a liberating message if we could see it in its true light.

But honestly there is your great big body [Draws a big round circle on the display and labels it 'Body'.] that does all that all the others do, uses the right toothpaste, and uses the right talcum, and shampoo, and everything, and is like everybody else's body. And there is your great soul [Draws inside the 'Body' circle another smaller circle labeled 'Soul', and writes 'Mind', 'Emotions', and 'Will' inside the 'Soul' circle.] with its mind, and its emotions, and its will. And they fall into the same patterns as all the other minds, and emotions, and wills that are in the world. And they're all manipulating like mad, and getting as much fun as possible, and trying to dominate other people and get them to do what you want them. So they're doing -- the body and soul is all the same as all the other little bodies and souls all around. And that's why you feel sometimes that there's a space in there, [Points with his pen to the center of the 'Soul'.] that there's a blob in the middle that should be there because inside is a little tiny shrunken spirit. [He draws a very small circle in the center of the 'Soul' circle.] And that's the real you. And that spirit is almost dead.

And it's almost dead because you probably, ever from you were a little baby, have exercised it very

little. Very soon after you were born you began to receive messages from outside, from other human beings, "This is what you should do if you want me to approve of you." "This is what you should do if you want to be happy." "This is what all the other people in your little class are doing." "This is what all the people are doing in your high school." "This is what you should do to be popular and to be successful." And really we were fed with all that stuff from outside, [Draws arrows into the 'Body' circle] and we just fell into it. We didn't - - we had little twinges in here [indicates the spirit] at times. We felt at times, "Ah, but wouldn't it be good to do what I really think I should do?" But we didn't respond to that.

And so the spirit remained shrunken inside us. And we never really realized it because we were deceived by all the things that Satan told us, "Don't bother about your spirit. That's what the old boring Sunday school teachers talk about, or the ministers talk about, or the Bible talks about." And we didn't really realize that the spirit was us, it was the real 'us', and it was God's desire that that should grow, and it should begin to govern our whole lives. But we just ignored that.

And we continued to operate from the pressures outside, [Shows arrows into the Body] a little like -- as I shared this morning -- until the time came when we were 18, 19. And we were just the puppets of all these pressures outside. I mean, we just immediately got worried when somebody called us, immediately got elated if somebody else smiled at us, immediately got sad if somebody else told us something else. We became just the play thing of the outside world.

And that I honestly would ask you to look again at yourself and see to what extent you even still are that. Have you ever thought -- sometimes I wakened up in past years and I thought, "Waken up, are you just a play thing? Are you just in the hands of these people who tell you, 'Do you know what so and so is staying about you?'" And of course it would set your whole stomach going in knots. And I began to think at times, "Am I just a play thing of what anybody wants to feed me from outside?"

And loved ones, I think that's the way the majority of us have lived for years. And of course, when we start trying to get free it's almost impossible. And usually we end up really rebelling against everything and trying to be ourselves. And we end up being huge monsters, grotesque monsters that just don't want to do anything with anybody. And of course, therefore we can't get on with anybody. And then it's not long before we fall flat on our faces and say, "Well that was dumb. That isn't the way." So we get back to this kind of life here. [Shows drawing with all the arrows coming in from outside.]

Except that many of us do it, by coming into what we think is a kind of religious group. And then we come into this religious group and we do all the things they do. Okay, so we sing that way, so we'll sing that way. And we smile this way, smile! And we laugh this way, and we speak this way. And we do the things this religious group wants us to do. And so many of us end up so called Christians, but really we're no more Christian than the man in the moon, because we're just doing again what external pressures prompt us to do. And most of us have little tiny spirits that are still shrunken. And that's why many of us find little satisfaction in the Christian life, because our spirits haven't come really alive; they haven't really grown; we're not really acting from within; we're still acting from without.

And you know how often I shared with you that you cannot do anything about that, and that God knows you can't. And that's why Calvary. And there's no other way, loved ones. Calvary was the death of the race. It was. Calvary was the death of the human race, the death of the old, fallen, human

race. And I can't explain it any more than Einstein could explain that timelessness is the final reality. But it is true that God was able to foresee the way your life would develop, was able to foresee the way you'd be -- you remember, like Gulliver? You remember, Gulliver in "Gulliver's Travels" where he lay down, I think, to sleep. And then all the little men, you remember, tied him to the earth with great stakes. And you remember, he wakened up and he was tied, and all these little dwarfs were crawling all over him.

God foresaw that you would be like that. You'd be tied to the earth in half a dozen or a thousand different ways. God knew that. And he put you into his son, Jesus, and he broke those ties. He broke the powers, the elemental spirits that control you, and bind you, and fetter you, and chain you. He broke all those things. And he lifted you in his son, Jesus, as Jesus rose from the dead. And he raised you up with Jesus, and he made you new, able at last to move from absolute rest, to move from a peaceful closeness to him as a person, that would give you at last a sense of direction and a sense of stability in your life.

And loved ones, you can enter into that, actually this very moment as I am speaking. You can enter into it by believing, by coming to a point where you say, "Yes, I believe that. I believe that, 'That we who were dead in our trespasses and sins, God has raised up, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, far above every rule, and authority, and dominion, and power.' And that means me. I believe that. I believe that by faith." And faith loved ones, comes in a moment like that. It is an instantaneous thing. And the moment you grasp that, you at that time have entered into reality. And then, it is possible for this dear little spirit to begin to grow and grow. [He indicates that little center circle on his diagram.] And do you know how it grows? It's what you prayed in the prayer, Bill. It grows by at last regarding Jesus as a person, regarding him as a dear person, yearning for him, and wanting him, and talking with him, and treating him as a person. Loved ones, that's it! That's it!

I said to one brother coming up the stairs -- I met him on the stairs this evening, and I said, "You know, it does seem to me that everything that God has given us and promised, comes in Jesus, that you actually don't need to worry a lot about the baptism of the spirit, or sanctification, or victory over sin, or this thing or that thing. Everything comes with Jesus. You actually don't need to propel yourself into the position at the right hand of God. You simply take Jesus for real. You receive him into your life by faith. You treat him for real, and he lifts you up into that position. He brings all those things with him."

It is a miracle loved ones. And you don't need to strive for it. It is by faith. You believe, "Lord Jesus, I believe you're real. I'm going to start talking to you, and loving you, and listening to you, however long." And that's Bill, why you -- what you prayed was good. It's waiting on you, "I'm going to wait until I hear you. I'm going to wait in this bedroom until I hear you. I'm not going to say my prayers and turn my little prayer wheel, and then get going. I'm going to wait until you speak to me." Loved ones, honestly that's it. It's Jesus as a person. It's him that brings all that reality with him.

And then you remember, we shared that your spirit begins to be the dominating feature in your life. And you begin to have direction. And you see, I think that's the problem. If you sit in your room on your own, it's not long before you feel like a blob, because you feel nothing. There's just nothing. "Well, do I feel a little twitch? No, nothing!" And many of us just go into depression because there's nothing. And very often that's why we start the old wheel all over again. We say, "Well we can't feel anything. Well there must be nothing. Well I'll turn on the TV." And I turn

on the TV, and then we see something on TV that stimulates the mind, and the mind responds. And we're off again on the old business of being governed by the things that come from outside. Well the reason you sit at times in your room and feel nothing is because Jesus is in reality, in there if you would look to him, and respect him, and acknowledge him. But you insist on not believing that. You insist on sitting in your room quiet and thinking, "Well there's nobody but me and the dog, or me and the book, or me and the room." And that's it.

That's not faith. Faith is believing that Jesus is where God put him, around you, and inside you, and all about you. And the moment you begin to exercise faith in that, the moment you begin to treat him for real -- it takes a little while and it may take a waiting upon him -- but loved ones, you'll begin to sense there is a spirit there beginning to act upon you. And that, of course, transforms everything, because at last you sense a direction coming from inside. You sense there are some things that you should do. There are some things that Jesus wants to do in you, and then once you begin to respond to that your spirit grows and grows. But loved ones, that's the key.

And that's why I had emphasized to you, religious people -- religion doesn't do anything for us. It just puts us to hell in a more respectable kind of way. But it really doesn't do anything for us, that is religion that is a practice of external laws, and regulations, and standards which we think will endear us to some group of people or some dear parents. It doesn't. The only thing that frees you and liberates you is Jesus as a real person that you respect, that you acknowledge, and that you walk with and you respond to. And loved ones, that's the way we're meant to walk until we get to heaven.

Now you may say, "Well, can you trust that Spirit?" Yes, you can. And you remember -- I shared with you last Sunday -- that you can tell the kind of life that Jesus within you will produce. In other words, you can be safe from the fear that is an evil spirit, or the elemental spirits of the universe, because the Bible outlines a certain description of the normal state of the spirit.

And we shared you remember, a little of that last day. And I'd just like to go a little further today, if you would, because I think there is some truth in them. Proverbs 16:19, the normal state of our own spirits: "It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud." And some of us, I think, feel that if Jesus is within us, then our spirit is always strong, and stable, and steady, and just absolutely confident.

Well yes, Jesus is confident. But his Spirit is confident in a quiet way, in a lowly way. Not that you look down on yourself, but really that you don't look on yourself at all. And that's the secret of walking in a balanced place with God and in life itself. Not looking upon yourself, but keeping your eyes on your Savior, being filled with his thoughts, keeping your eyes on his face so that you don't even think of yourself at all. And you remember, I shared with you before, I learned a little how to be a model. Not that I could be a model or I want to be a model. But when those dear girls are walking down that elevated platform with the Christian Dior dresses on, and everybody is looking up to them, often they have real trouble being steady or stable, especially in those high heels that they wear, with everybody watching. And it's very easy to think, "Oh, everybody's watching me!" And this girl -- oh years ago I read it -- she said, "What they teach us to do is the moment we step onto that platform, with everybody looking at us, we fix our eyes on some person in the back of the room and we just look at that person. And then we can walk without any nervousness or any trouble at all, because we're preoccupied with them rather than with ourselves." Now that's what it is.

The normal state of our spirits is lowly, not because we're looking down on ourselves and think

we're rotten and pitiful, but because our eyes are on Jesus. And then, you see, his lowly spirit imparts that lowliness to our spirits. And of course it's that too, that keeps us from being arrogant or willful. A lowly spirit is one that is easily changed and that is easily entreated. And don't you agree, that there are many people who call themselves Christians who really would put you off, because of their unapproachability? I think we shared it before. They aren't approachable and they cannot be questioned. And if you dream of suggesting that they are wrong at all, they almost shout louder in order to prove that they're right.

And oh we used to -- I think I told you -- we used to preach in the open air when we were at seminary. And we used to joke each other, "Shout loud! Your argument is weak. And I think that's what you feel with many loved ones, who say they're Christian. They almost are -- there's some uncertainty inside, so if you ever question them, they almost become more violent and more vehement.

Now when your eyes are on Jesus, you're at ease. You're at peace. You don't need to defend yourself. You don't need to defend your opinions. You don't need to defend your position or your state. Your eyes are on Jesus, you know that if you're going to be saved it's because of this dear Lord that has his arms around about you. You know your eyes are on him and that's the secret of your salvation. And so his Spirit fills you with a lowliness of spirit that is willing to question itself and is willing to think it might be wrong.

I don't know if you've found it, but some of you have said to me, "Well, what about guidance? Are you always sure?" And you remember, I've responded to you the only way I could that, "It seems to me now, I'm surer than ever of what God wants me to do." And yet I'm more willing -- when I see the thing happen -- I'm more willing to admit, "Yeah, I was completely wrong." It's interesting. It's ironic, but as you walk with Jesus he gives you more certainty of what you're to do. But if you ever miss the way, somehow you're more ready than ever before to say, "Sure, I was wrong. I was wrong."

And loved ones, that's because our confidence is not in ourselves, but in our Lord. And our confidence is in our eyes being on Jesus. And I would remind you again, don't say to yourself, "Good, lowliness! Okay, I'm going to be lowly, lowly, lowly!" Don't! Don't, because that -- you're going to get into the legalism all over again. Look to Jesus. You're in Jesus! God has placed you there. He has broken the bonds that bind you to the pride of the world, and the false certainty of the world. And he has freed you in himself at the right hand of God, and you are his. And you belong to him, and he is yours. And he will go to heaven and you will go with him. And that's the basis of all our peace. So it's 'eyes on Jesus'. That's one of the marks.

Loved ones, another one is in Matthew 5:3, in the Beatitudes, you remember. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And we normally think, "Oh no! If you're filled with the Spirit you're rich in spirit." But do you see that we're always empty, that we're always empty.

There is only one who has the fullness of the Spirit, and where he dwells the fullness of the Spirit dwells. But we ourselves possess nothing. In fact, that's what the Bible says, "We live possessing actually nothing inside." And somebody who is poor in spirit is always one who goes to God saying, "Lord, I don't have what you have. You have to give it to me."

In fact, it was one of the old saints that said that, "Those who are in Jesus are beggars who expect to live off the wealth of God." They are beggars who expect to live off the wealth of God. And oh, one brother shared with me maybe two weeks ago. He said, "No, I don't want to be able to prove that I have the gift of knowledge, or that I can discern spirits, or that I have this gift or that gift,

or that I have this understanding, or I can explain this difficult point of the Bible. No, I have many things lacking in my life, but God has all this wisdom. And he will give to me what he wants me to have. And if he wants me to admit to someone, 'I don't know,' it can only be for my good and for my up-building in Jesus. So, no! I don't want to be a great mover in spiritual affairs. I don't want to be in the position where I have to be proving myself to somebody else that I have this depth of spirituality. No, I have nothing. Jesus has everything."

I don't know if that hits you. But it hit me that many of us who think of ourselves as alive spiritually are always trying to grab on to any little thing that looks vaguely like a gift of a spirit and to claim it. "Yeah! Oh, yeah! Yeah I've moved in the gifts, you know, yeah, yeah. Every day I'm moving in the gifts." But it's so opposite to the spirit of the saints, and so opposite to the Spirit of Jesus who always said that he could do nothing of himself, that everything he had came from the Father. And of course as Jesus is to the Father, we are to Jesus. We're poor in spirit.

You remember, it was the very opposite of that, that Jesus found as the Holy Spirit -- in the churches in Revelation, if you look at it. Revelation 3:14, "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.'" And then here was why they were lukewarm, "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing." And then Jesus points out the reality, "Not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

And it is so different, isn't it, to what we're taught? We're taught to be big in our profession even if we're small in our possession. And Jesus seems to show the opposite. He says, "Be content to admit that you're poor, that you're wretched, you're blind, you're pitiable." And many of us, you see, think, "Oh, but if we do that we won't have any part in ministry!" Yes, you will. That's when you have part in ministry. Every time you see a new poverty in yourself and you grab out for Jesus, as you grab for him, he comes in in fullness and overflows to some other people. That's the way it works. But when you think you have everything, then you don't grab for him, and so you pass on to somebody what you think is rich, but what is actually poor because it's yourself.

And loved ones, that carries on. And I'd just like to mention this last thing. It's in Galatians 6:1. But you'll see a wholeness about the normal state of the spirit, because all of these descriptions are linked together. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." And Jesus brings to you a spirit of gentleness. And the Greek word is "praus", and it really has the meaning of a spirit that is easily turned in God's hand, that easily moves this way and that. Phillip is found on a certain road. The Spirit catches him up and moves him elsewhere. He finishes that work -- sometimes just half finishes it -- the Spirit catches him up and moves him elsewhere.

But a spirit that grieves the gentle Spirit of Jesus, is one that is moved to work and then says, "I have to finish that work. No, no, I'm not moving. I'm not moving until I finish this." But a spirit that is Jesus' spirit of gentleness is willing to be moved this way and that, whether the

work seems half finished or not, he does as much as God wants him to do and then he yields, and he moves on. In other words, Jesus is ever the lamb! Jesus is ever the lamb!

And you remember, in that dear book of Hession's, Roy Hession -- "The Calvary Road", it's called. And you remember, how he says that, "Only something as gentle as a lamb will allow something as light and as fragile as a dove to light upon it." And you remember, of course, the dove lit upon Jesus' head at the baptism. And the Holy Spirit was in the shape of a dove. And of course Hession says that that's the only kind of spirit that the dove of the Holy Spirit will dwell upon and abide upon, the gentle spirit of a lamb.

If you'd just be patient, I just think the words are so good. He says, "Look at Jesus for a moment as the lamb. He was the simple lamb. A lamb is the simplest of God's creatures. It has no schemes or plans for helping itself. It exists in helplessness and simplicity. Jesus made himself as nothing for us and became the simple lamb. He had no strength of his own or wisdom of his own. No schemes to get himself out of difficulties, just simple dependence on the Father all the time. 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.'"

So good if we would say, "I can do nothing of myself, but what I see Jesus doing."

[Reads from "The Calvary Road"] "What schemes we have had of helping ourselves and of getting ourselves out of difficulties? What efforts of our own we have resorted to, to live the Christian life and to do God's works, as if we were something and could do something? The dove had to take its flight, at least as far as the conscious blessing of his presence was concerned, because we were not willing to be simple lambs."

I don't know if you can see that, but that's why we lose liveliness at times, because we drive away the dove. That's it, loved ones. Most of the ways we drive him away are not all these outward things, though they certainly are symptoms that we've already driven him away. But we drive him away by our 'inside independence' of the Savior who is within us, wanting to show us and guide us what to say or do. That's it. And we become coarse and insensitive to his voice, and we start getting used to trying to follow him on our own by our own efforts. And that's how we drive the dove of the Holy Spirit away.

And really the truth is that Jesus is in you. And you are in him. God has done that work. He has done that for all of us, so the only thing that you have to do is either exercise your faith that that is so and accept it, or not exercise it and reject it, but you don't have to bring it about. You don't have to put yourself into Jesus. You don't have to bring Jesus into you. God says he has already done that. He has put us all into his Son, and crucified us all there, and buried us all there, and resurrected it all to his right hand. And we simply have to have faith that that is so and then begin to talk with our dear Lord, or we have to simply reject that and ignore him. And that's why the dove of the Holy Spirit is driven away, loved ones.

And Hession -- oh I just share with you, [Reads from "The Calvary Road"] "He was the silent lamb, 'As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' Facing the calumnies of men, we read, 'He answered nothing.' He never defended himself, nor explained himself."

We're always at it. We're always explaining ourselves. Sometimes we should probably ask, "Are we explaining ourselves so that they really understand Jesus, or are we thrusting ourselves forward as people who make sense?"

[Reads from "The Calvary Road"] "Our voices have been loud in self-defense and self-vindication, and there has been anger in our voices. We have excused ourselves when we should have admitted frankly our wrong. On every such occasion the dove had to take his flight and withdraw his peace and blessing from our hearts because we were not willing to be the silent lamb."

Well that's it. There is only one dear being that will go into heaven, only one. There is only one person that will go into heaven. Do you realize that? There is only one. And only the people who are in him will go in with him. And God has put you in him. And you have him in your heart, in the center of your spirit. And he will surely guide you in this life if you'll acknowledge him.

Now I would encourage you tonight, when you go up to your bedroom, I'd encourage you not to say your prayers. Not to say your prayers, but to say, "Lord Jesus, are you here? Lord, are you here? Are you here Lord? Lord, are you alive? Lord, are you somehow so big that you can be at the Father's right hand, and yet you can be right here, and that I am in you?" That's it, loved ones. That's it. Ask any husband or wife what's the dearest thing as the years pass by. Well at the beginning they have nothing but each other. At the end they have all kinds of things, all kinds of things. They have sons and daughters; they have houses; they have cars; they have money. And a real husband and wife will answer you at the end, "What have we?" "Each other!" That's what we have, Jesus, only Jesus. However many years we walk with him, however many things he may do through us, at the end we only have Jesus. And you have him. And he is pleading with you to look to him and to let him be your Lord, your present Lord, and your friend now. I pray that you will.

Let us pray. Dear Lord Jesus, we get so coarse. We're so anxious to be good Christians. And Lord we see that that's not what you're asking, but you're asking us to acknowledge you, believe in you, and treat you for real, and listen to you, and let you tell us things, and love you. And to continue to do that until you start speaking back to us, and you begin to give us that sense of direction that is personal, so that we are at last the individuals that our Father made us to be.

Lord Jesus, thank you, that you have a life to live in each one of us that is different from what you live in anybody else. And oh Lord, we wouldn't miss that for the worlds. Thank you Lord.

Dear Lord, thank you.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us and abide with us throughout this week. Amen.