Real Life is Found Only in Jesus

John 5:39

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I felt I should speak on something a little different, loved ones, than what's in the bulletin. So. I'd just like to talk very briefly about this problem.

Many of us are very anxious to have a relationship with God and many of you may have tried to have one and may have tried to go through the motions and somehow nothing seems real. Now that's what I'd like to speak to, on the basis of words of Jesus in John 5:39.

John 5:39, "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." And Jesus said to the Jewish scholars of that day, "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; but you refuse to come to me that you may have life." And I am saying to you, could it be that you search the books and you read the books, you read Schaeffer and you read Murray and you read Nee and you read Chambers. You search the books because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness to Jesus but you will not come to Jesus that you might have life.

Each of us would need to answer that question ourselves, because it is obviously good to read books, we all know that, but you know what God is suggesting this morning. Could it be that some of the unreality that pervades your relationship with him comes because you are searching the books to try to find eternal life, but you're not coming to Jesus himself?

Or, could it be that you're going through the motions but you're not coming to Jesus himself? I think a lot of us come under conviction of sin. If we come to Sundays like this, where God's Word is being preached, you come under conviction of sin. And many of us get annoyed with that and think, "Oh, why am I feeling so depressed and so terrible? And why am I feeling that I am bad?" And we deal with the thing as if it's some psychological problem that we're having and we're hoping that maybe the next sermon will be an uplifting one that will overwhelm us with a sense of God's love.

But do you know what conviction of sin is? It's you saying, "My hand is so sore, my hand is so sore, I hope next day they do something that will make my hand feel better." But there's a dear Savior who is saying, "Your hand is sore because you're beating me with it, you're beating me with it. That's why it's sore." So I wonder, could it be that we have a tendency to think of a thing like conviction of sin as if it's some wrong psychological experience through which we're passing? When it is simply your dear Father witnessing to you in a way that you can understand that you're killing his Son. And that the soreness in your hand is nothing compared with the welts that you're leaving on his heart. But I think at times you know we have a tendency to think of this as if it's some reforming psychological experience that we're passing through. And so somebody should come along next week and smooth it over for us.

Well, it's really the Son of God saying to you, these things that are in your life are killing me. They are the things that destroyed me on Calvary and they're killing me at this moment, this sin that is in your life. It isn't, loved ones, just some irritating depression that you're feeling or some wrong guilt, it isn't. There is false guilt, but guilt about things that you know God does not want you to do -- that is the human reflection of the divine pain in God's

heart. When you're complaining and crying about the pain in your hand, realize that there is a Savior at the other end of things that is not complaining but is bleeding from your striking hand.

Some of us say, "Well, oh the first step is confession, I ought to confess" but loved ones, confess to whom? I think there is a tendency in many of us to think, "Oh well, as long as I confess it. Well, I confess it to my mother if I have been doing her harm or I confess it to my wife if I have been hurting her. Or I confess it to my employer if I have been dishonest in our business. Or I confess it to the IRS people if I have been dishonest with them" but I confess. That's the first thing you've to do. If you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, but confess to whom?

I wonder if there are any of us here who make a kind of thing out of confession and we feel "Oh, if there's any problem in my relationship with God it's because I haven't confessed the sins that I committed against different people." Well, the psalmist said it, you know, "Against thee, and thee only have I sinned and done this wrong." Confession, loved ones is going to our Savior Jesus and confessing to him. It's saying, "Lord Jesus I didn't know that this was destroying you, I didn't know this was crucifying you again, I didn't know that every time I was sarcastic with my wife, it was like a whip lash across your face, I didn't know that. I didn't know Lord that when I swore, that that was like a sword in your side, I am sorry. I confess this. I did not know it. I agree with you Lord, I see that this is what makes it impossible for you to be real in me. Every time you rise up inside me, I crucify you again and destroy you, I confess that to you."

Loved ones, could it be that you "search conviction" because you think that in that you have eternal life? Could it be that you search confession because you think that in that you have eternal life but you will not come to him that you might have life?

Confessing sins is confessing personally to Jesus, the Son of God, the one by whom you were made, that's who Jesus is. By him, all things were made and without him was not anything made that was made. It's confessing to him that you have been crucifying him again in your life.

Then some of us talk about repentance. We say, "Oh yes, you have to repent, you know, if you're going to be saved or you're going to become a Christian or you're going to know God, you have to repent", and so we get all caught up in this business of repentance. Well, repentance is making restitution. I have to give back everything that I have taken from anybody dishonestly. I have to make apologies to people that I've hurt or offended. I have to make things right with everybody. That's what repentance is. It isn't just feeling sorry or feeling remorse, it's making things right.

But, first of all it's taking the sword out of the side of the one who has born it for you, that's the first thing. Repentance is not "Lord, I realize that my unclean actions and my unclean thoughts were a sword into your side, and I am going to do my best to stop that from this time on." That's not repentance. That's mockery. That's saying, "Lord, I am going to try to stop doing this next week. If I can, I am going to try to stop doing it."

Loved ones, repentance is saying to Jesus, "Lord Jesus, I realize that you have borne these sins in your own body and I am not going to make you bear this one any longer. I am stopping this. I am laying my sword down today whatever the cost to me, it's nothing compared with the cost to you of not laying it down."

So, it's a personal thing, you see. It's saying that to Jesus personally. It's you and him as persons. It's a dear friend who has given his life for you. Repentance is telling him that you're not going to ever do it again by his grace. Then receiving Jesus -

- you know so often we use some of the formula and we say, "Oh, we pray to receive Jesus" as if accepting Christ is accepting a bundle of principles or a way of life or a philosophy. But loved ones, receiving Jesus is receiving a dear person into your heart and into your life and letting him live inside you as a whole real person that you can talk to at night and in the morning.

Receiving Jesus is receiving a dear person, a friend, a person who is alive. Do you realize that? One thing that I realize, should have known it long ago but I only realized it in a long discussion we had in one class about five years ago, that Jesus is forever human. Have you ever thought of that?

I often thought, well he took our humanity upon him but as soon as he leaves the earth, well, he becomes kind of some effervescent mass of spirit. But do you realize that Jesus will always be recognizable? When you and I see him, he'll be recognizable, he'll be a real person and when you receive him, you don't receive some vague effervescent spirit, you receive a person. He is standing here this morning asking you to let him come into your life and he comes in as a real person.

Then, you know how many of us try to live like him after we've received him. And we begin to come into that old, defeated life where "The good that we would, we cannot do and the evil we hate is the very thing we do", and that we want to come free of that. There's a loved one who talked with me last week. And I am sure she'll laugh too, and excuse me if I tell you part of the conversation. Because many of us at that point say when I ask you, "Well, you're not looking very happy?" and you say, "Well no, I am not. Oh well, I am trying to die to self."

Now do you know what that's like? That's like you and Jesus: you're walking along together and he has his arm around you because you're his friend and you've received him into your life.

And he has his arm around you and you trip an odd time and you pick yourself up. And you trip an odd time and then he looks at you and you have this miserable sour face on. And he says, "What's wrong?" And you say, "I am trying to die to self", and he says, "You're what?" And you say, "I am trying to die to self", and he says, "Really? I thought I did that." And you say, "Yes, yes but I am trying to do it." And he says, "Why do we both need to do it? I mean, I did it for you, didn't I?" And you say, "Yes, yes but for it to be real in me, I have to make it real myself." And he puts his arm around you and says, "My son, my daughter, I died to self for you. Now come close to me, come close to me here on this Cross. Just stay close to me and I'll show you all that that involves and I'll reveal it to you bit by bit in a way that you're able to bear it. But stop trying to do it yourself. Stop trying to enter into some technique that will deliver you from the power of self, keep your arm around me, I have my arm around you, come on, up here, up here on the Cross. I'll show you; now it doesn't feel so bad, does it?" "Oh yeah, it feels a little bit sore" -- "Well, it was a wee bit sore for me too, but just now there, is that all right?" Then you have a tendency to say, "But what about this other bit?" He says, "Forget that other bit, I am just giving you the bits that you can take at this moment."

And that's the way it goes, loved ones. It's not something you do or I do. "The baptism" -- isn't that a terrible name? "The baptism" -- that's what we call our dear Savior, our dear friend laying his hands upon us and giving us his own life and his feelings, we call that "the baptism". It's like "the marriage". Are you enjoying "the marriage"? If you're like me, you hate marriage but you love living with your loved one that you love, but the marriage itself is pretty impersonal. It's so with Jesus.

The baptism, who could enter "the baptism"? Who could enter death to self? But, can you stay with your Savior? Can you stay close to him? Can you hug him to yourself in your prayer times

and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to come into everything that you achieved for me," and He'll say, "My son, my daughter, that's what I want. So, just trust me and I'll show you bit by bit what it means. And it will mean some little hard things but I'll have my arm around you, so let's go together." And then you look up and your old sour face goes, and you look up into your Savior's eyes and you walk along and he'll show you -- and that's it, loved ones.

It's you and a dear person who has given his life for you and who loves you and knows your name and that's what it is. And we pitiful souls here on earth, we try to tell each other what He is doing, but we always mess it up. He alone really can make it all real to you. And He'll make it real as long as you continue to regard Him as a dear person and a dear friend and not as an 'it' that has done something for you but somebody who loves you, who loves each one of us here in this room. Let us pray.

Dear Lord Jesus, we do apologize to you for the difficulties that we create and the way we make things hard for ourselves. O Lord Jesus, we do see that we were put somehow into you miraculously by our Father and we're part of you and we're closer to you than our own breath. Lord, that has been done and that's real and we can't change that. All we can do is ignore it and live in misery but Lord Jesus we see how dumb that is.

We see that if our great Creator has remade us by placing us in yourself, then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation and we are new, we're new creations, each one of us in this room this morning. We're new because our Father has put us into you and Lord Jesus thank you. Thank you for dying for us. And thank you for allowing us to rise up with you in your resurrection. And thank you Lord that all we need to do is draw closer to you day by day and talk to you as a real person and stop this silly business of practicing some Buddhist or Christian technique.

Lord Jesus, we would turn from all our techniques and our systems and we would thank you that after everything is said and done, salvation is a person, the person of Jesus, you Lord Jesus, inside us as our dear friend. Lord, we thank you that we each know you in a way that nobody else knows you because you adapt yourself to each one of us and treat us all differently and individually. So Lord Jesus we thank you that we can each one approach you this morning as our own personal friend and our own personal Savior and ask you to take us off and make us more like yourself day by day.

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