A New Start - 1975

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think we all thank God for the gifts that he's given to the whole body, but Colleen really has a gift that Jesus has given her of writing songs, you know, and it's just a blessing and I think you feel the same. And I think we should trust Jesus to multiply that creative life among us. And he respects us really, to produce a creativity that will bring to the world life. So, we need to trust Jesus for that, for all of us, whatever our particular abilities are. Loved ones, trust Jesus to do something new through you, you know, really do.

Many of us have come here Sunday-after-Sunday now for some years and probably most of us here believe there is a God. And perhaps most of us believe that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. What I would like to do this morning, very simply, is to tell you what Jesus' ideas are about your life so that you may know what he thinks you should do. And then I would ask you just to do it at the end of the service, really. So that's it.

First of all, Jesus says you aren't going to last long. You just aren't made to last long. There are millions of cells dying in your body during this present minute and there'll be millions more dying the next minute. So in a real sense, most of us here are at least at that stage in our lives where there are more millions of cells dying than are being renewed, so in a real way loved ones, all of us here in this auditorium, probably maybe the youngest might be what 15, 16, 17? All of us in this auditorium are really dying me and women in that sense, you know.

The physical and mental life that we have will certainly not last much longer than at least our grandparents, 70 or 80 years. And Jesus says that to us this morning. That which is born of the

flesh is flesh. The physical and the mental life that you have is just not going to last very long and so in a real way your days are numbered. And secondly Jesus says you won't believe that. You won't believe that. That's the way he put it to some people who refused to believe him. He said, "They will not believe. They don't want to believe and therefore they will not believe." He says, you think you were made for more than that, for better things than that. You think you were made to do more than to go out like a light after 70 years here on earth." And he says, "That's why you keep trying to parlay the attributes of physical and mental life you have into the qualities of infinity that you would like to have, because there's something inside you that keeps saying, 'All this surely was not created just to end like that after 70 years in nothingness.'" And so you keep trying to avoid the limitations of the created life that you have, and you keep trying to escape from the bonds of this earthbound existence at catching at some of the equalities of infinity. And you will not believe that what you've got at the moment is not going to take you beyond this finite world.

So really what you do is you feel you were made for stability and safety, and security. And isn't that true? There's something inside all of us that makes us feel we were made for stability, we ought to have stability. That's why we're so much in trouble at a time of depression or at a time of war, we feel we were made for a secure, stable, safe life. And so what most of us are doing is trying to use the cleverness, and the shrewdness of our minds to ensure that kind of life, and to catch at that stability that is only possible in infinity. So we educate in order to survive, and we get the education that will help us to survive, because that's our first battle. Then we trade in the degree for the best kind of financial reward we can get, and so we continue to live our finite lives trying to produce the security and stability that we again, and again feel isn't possible.

So we keep trading up the cars, and trading up the houses with the thought in the back of our minds that we can probably never trade them into absolute certainty but at least we should keep trying, we should keep using the old mind to try and make ourselves secure and stable. And so we use our mind at work to try to edge ourselves into a position of security in relationship to our colleagues or in relationship to our rivals. And we keep trying to improve our investments to the point where we somehow will get that security or stability. And we keep trying to build as cast iron life insurance and medical insurance package as we possibly can. And yet all the time a fella like Howard Hughes haunts us because there we see a fella that has built up more than we could possibly ever hope to build up and yet he keeps himself in seclusion so that he can avoid the possibility of any kind of disease or bacteria that would kill him.

And so we sense in the midst of all this using our minds to try and ensure the security, and stability of infinite life, we still kind of feel like we can't get it. And we kind of sense that we were made for the serene peace and yet the overwhelming interest that you would be able to have, in we always think of it as some fancy island which would be a combination of Walden Pond and the Arabian Knights. And we kind of think, "Yeah, somewhere in this life we're supposed to experience not only complete serenity and peace because that in itself will be boring, but it's supposed to be combined with a tremendous exhilaration and excitement that would keep our lives continually satisfying." And we kind of feel yeah, we were made for that, and so of course we try to produce it and we try to use every experience, and every relationship we possibly can to produce this combination of serene peace and overwhelming excitement. And yet somehow, however many people we use and however many circumstances we try to manipulate for our own purposes we find that we don't have that serene peace, or that overwhelming excitement.

In fact, in some ways we find that we're utterly frustrated about those things. And again, and again we experience not serene peace and overwhelming excitement but even times like Thanksgiving day when we find ourselves with the dear ones that we want to be with most, we find often that there comes a sense of loneliness or a sense of desolation, a sense of not all that conviviality and excitement of that relationship you felt you should have throughout your life. And it's the same loved ones you know with really what Milton used to talk about. Milton used to say, "I am born for some great purpose," and I don't know that there's any of us here however ambitionless we are that hasn't felt at some time, "Yeah, we were born for something special. We were put here for some special purpose. We weren't put here just to have our name on a gravestone. We weren't put here just to pass like a ship in the night through this world and nobody noticed that we were ever here. We weren't put here just to be a number, we were put here to be significant in some way. Somebody, some way, somewhere, somehow must know we're here, must see that we're achieving something. We're not just one of a mass of billions and billions of people."

And so you know we work ourselves to death trying to will ourselves into some position of importance and so we throw our weight around in the office, and we throw our weight around at home, and we throw our weight around in school hoping that somehow we'll will ourselves into a place where people can't just ignore us, they have to recognize us and appreciate us." And yet at the end of the day we're just startled by the few people that remember Jack Benney, and he died just this past year. And if it weren't for the commission that keeps on bringing up the morbid business of how he died, really how many think of John F. Kennedy? And we're amazed at how the Picassos and the Roosevelt's, and the Jack Benney's of this world can pass off the face of the earth and it's amazing how few people think of them afterwards.

And loved ones, Jesus says to us, “That’s because what is born of the flesh is flesh,” and what you’re trying to do is take the finite, limited attributes of your created physical and mental life and you’re trying to produce all the liberty of eternity, all the freedom of an infinite life even though all that you’ve got is a limited finite life. A physical and mental life that can never imitate anything but that life. And so Jesus says, “Really, you can never be anything different from what you are because the life that you possess is what ties you down to that and all that you’re becoming with all your efforts is a little monster because you’re trying to bring everything and everybody to the place where you somehow can experience the infinite happiness, and serenity, and peace, and exhilaration, the tremendous since of significance, the great sense of security and stability, that you could only experience if you had an infinite life inside you. And you’re really using everybody to try and create this and so you’re becoming a massive, hedonistic, manipulating, domineering, ruling monster and that’s really what you’ve become.

An egotistical monster that is trying to manipulate all this created life around you so that somehow you will experience some of the qualities of an infinite life and Jesus says it cannot be and yet he really does bring us good news loved ones because he says those yearnings that you have inside you for serenity and peace, for exhilaration and excitement, those yearnings that you have inside you to have some eternal significance, those yearnings you have inside you to have at last a security, and a stability that you don’t have to continually fight for. Those yearnings that you have to be something other than a little wild animal in the forest looking around to see who’s going to attack him next. Those yearnings that you have were put in you by your Creator because he actually made you for that kind of life. But this is not it.

And loved ones, Jesus is just so strong in that. He just emphasizes repeatedly, “No, this life that you have at the present time is not that life.” And he says, “The life that you’re trying to use is that physical life there.” And at times when you try to manipulate your time by chemicals, or you try to manipulate your emotions by stimulations, at times you even use a mental life in there. But Jesus says, “There is within you another part that is deeper,” and it’s the part that will satisfy all those yearnings, and it’s the part that is made for infinity.” But he says really to us, with almost all of you, it’s absolutely dead. That part of you is dead. And until that part comes alive, you’re going to experience continual frustration trying to do on this level and this level what alone can be done in here by this infinite part of you.

And he says that part of you can only come alive if the maker who made you brings it to life through the power of his own spirit life. Through the power of his own infinite eternal life that runs through his own being. Only he can bring this part alive. That’s why Jesus said those words. You’ve all been born once. You’ve all been born of the flesh and you got from your mum and dad physical and a mental life. But you have to be born anew. You have to be born all over again. The maker of the world never meant you to make do with that life. He intends you to be born again. And that’s why Jesus said to that teacher Nicodemus, “Look, you have to be born anew all over again.” You have to start all over again. You have to be born from above. And the only way you will be born from above inside in your spirit is by God’s Holy Spirit coming in and regenerating, activating your own spirit and making it alive.

Then when that happens, that spirit of life from your maker will begin to work out through every part of your personality and it will impart to your mind here, a right perspective and a sense of where you fit into God’s plan for developing the world. That spirit will pour out through your emotions and will impart to you all the

excitement, and the serenity, and the peace of an infinite intercourse and friendship with the eternal being behind the universe, and will be utterly satisfying to your emotions. The Holy Spirit will pour out through your will and will begin to direct you as to what you should do in this life so that at last you'll have a real sense of significance because you can see where you fit into the Maker's plan.

And loved ones, that was his plan, that you would allow his Spirit to bring you alive in your spirit and then his lights would begin to pour out through you to the rest of the world. And the one great obstacle to that is that this physical and mental personality of yours has become utterly unfitted for that. This physical and mental personality has become a domineering, manipulating, egotistical, self-gratifying, self-deifying monster. And all it does and all its been able to do for years is to take in from the world, to take in from the world trying to create a sense of eternity within by sponging from other people on the outside. And of course, while that personality remains like that God dare not give you such an infinite power as the Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit is the person he used to make the ocean and the mountains. It's this Holy Spirit that holds all the protons and neutrons together here in our universe. It's this Holy Spirit that makes the whole universe work at this present time. It's this Holy Spirit that keeps the pressure right here on the surface of the earth so that we don't cave in and we don't blow up. It's this Holy Spirit that keeps the sun in the right position. God dare not give the power of that infinite Holy Spirit to you with a personality that would use it only to gratify and deify itself, and to dominate the rest of the universe.

And so loved ones, unless that personality of yours with all its selfishness, and all its self-deification can be destroyed, God cannot give you the Holy Spirit. And yet, that's what you and I

most need. We need this infinite spirit of life. It doesn't matter how many drugs we take, it doesn't matter how much alcohol we take, it doesn't matter how much money we amass in the bank account, it doesn't matter how fast a car we get, it doesn't matter if we go on vacation every other week, it doesn't matter what we do, we are never going to satisfy the infinite yearnings that have been planted inside of us. Loved ones, you're demanding too much from your husband. You're demanding too much from your wife. You're demanding too much from your employees or your employer, they cannot produce in you these things that only the infinite spirit of God can produce and that can only come into you if that personality is destroyed and that's what happened in Jesus on Calvary.

That's what it means when the Bible says, "You're old self, your whole personality was crucified with Christ." All that mess with all its domineering selfishness was destroyed in Jesus on Calvary in a supra spacial supra temporal miracle. And the fact is because God is eternal and could destroy you 1900 years ago even though you're alive today, because he is infinite he is able to do this today. That's really what it means you see.

Maybe you'd look loved ones, at just some of the things that happened on Calvary. It's Psalms 22:16. Psalm 22:16, this is one of those Psalms you know, that in an amazing prophetic way tell what Jesus was saying in his own heart on the cross, "Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots." "They have pierced my hands and feet."

Loved ones, your hands have been used so often to gratify yourself that God could not entrust the Holy Spirit to such hands. Your hands have been used so often to get your own way that

those hands cannot be used by this Spirit of God that is used only to express love and to give. That's why your hands were miraculously destroyed in Jesus. Loved ones, that's the only reason God is able to even consider giving you the Holy Spirit because your hands were pierced in Jesus' hands. Those feet of yours that have so often gone to the wrong place, those feet that have so often been used to get what you wanted for you. Those feet could not be used by the Spirit of God.

That's why when Jesus died you died. That's why the Bible says, "We judge that if he died for all then all died." Your feet were destroyed in Jesus on Calvary. That's what it means loved ones, when the Bible says, "God made him to be sin who knew no sin." God actually put all your independence, and all your desire for self into Jesus and destroyed it there. And because of that, he's able to give the Holy Spirit to anyone who will receive that Holy Spirit. And so loved ones, that's really it.

God offers you, this morning, the Spirit of his own infinite life and if you want it you have to do two things: you have to accept by faith the destruction of that inturned personality of yours, that personality that has cared for itself for so long, that personality that wants its own way whatever it costs anybody else, you need to accept the death of that old personality with Jesus; and you have to be willing for that.

In other words, you have to stop living for yourself. You have to stop turning in on yourself. You have to stop referring every event, and every situation, and every job opportunity, and everything anybody asks you to do to yourself and whether it's going to benefit you, whether it's going to make you happy, you have to once and for all say, "I'm finished with that. It'll leave me nowhere anyway, but above all God it's against your will for me. So today I'm accepting that you destroyed that inturned

personality of mine on Jesus on Calvary and I accept that and I'm willing for that."

Loved ones, you have to turn from self. You have to take self off the throne of your own life and you have to give yourself to God and say, "Lord God, I've lived for myself these years and it's a mess. I'm prepared now to live for the purpose for which you made me, for you." And secondly, you have to receive the Holy Spirit by faith. You have to say, "Lord, you promised that you'd give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Jesus said that, 'How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who asked.' Lord you promised that. I receive you Holy Spirit to be all that I need in my present life, all that my Father wants me to have." Loved ones, that's it, that's what Jesus said and that's what it is to be born of God if you do that, or to be born again.

It's a lesser thing to call it becoming a Christian. Really, that's our name for it these days. Jesus would have said, "It's entering into reality. It's coming free at last. It's being liberated from yourself. It's at last entering into all the aspirations that my Father planted inside your heart. So loved ones, really it's up to you, you know. I would ask you from my own experience, I would ask you not to wait for some emotional experience, really. I didn't have it. My wife didn't have it. Many of us here hadn't a great emotional experience, if you understand what I've explained to you about Jesus' ideas for your life, then you should just take the step now.

Just in a minute or two I'll say let us pray and you should just take the step. But you can see what it means, it means turning from living for yourself and it means depending on this Holy Spirit to produce in you the kind of life that your Maker wants you to have. And of course, anybody it doesn't matter whether you're a skeptic or not, anybody here knows the one that knows how to run the factory is the one that made the factory. It's just common

sense that the God who made you knows the kind of life that will be fulfilling for you.

So loved ones you've got what I said now, if you're not what people call a Christian, that name can mean a lot of things but, if you're not what people call a Christian but the big thing is you know. You know because some of you have talked with me and you know where you are, if you haven't taken this step I say you should take it this morning. If you say to me, "Well pastor, why take a definite step?" Loved ones, God answers only faith. Really.

I tried to get into it by osmosis, I tried to drift into it. You can't. You have to take a definite step, truly, truly. I think – I don't know quite why it is, with me I think the old mind was so much king that I think God wanted me to declare I'm going out on a limb here, it's a reasonable limb, but I'm going out on a limb expecting somebody else to do something. I felt so much it was all in my own control in the past. Lord, as an expression of my trust in you I'm going to trust you to do this thing I don't even know what it is. I don't even know if I'll feel any different. I don't know what it is, but I know these things that you've spoken about this morning are what I know in my life and I need and I'm going to take the step.

So loved ones, I'd really encourage you just to take a step today, this morning. I'll help you in the prayer if that's of any use, but really if you're real with God this morning yourself that's all you need it doesn't matter what words you use. Let us pray.

Lord God, some of us here hardly know how to talk to you, or how to express this, but all of us Lord, know what your son has said and it does ring in our own hearts because our own lives have not been very satisfying, and we have tried to somehow wind these attributes that we have here on earth, wind them up

to the nth degree to try and produce some kind of satisfaction, or sense of infinity. But Lord, we know that it has not worked. And Lord God, what your son Jesus has said makes sense to us, that we were made for something other than our names to be put on a gravestone. We were made for something other than few to remember us for a few years.

And Lord God, we want to get into the main stream of the plan that you have for our lives. So Lord, we bring before you now our own selfish life. Lord, we bring before you all the things that we have done to try and get satisfaction. We bring before you Lord, all the people that we have used. We bring before you all the circumstances that we've tried to manipulate for our own good. Lord, we see how we are like frightened little foxes in the forest, always on the lookout, always filled with flight or fright. Lord God, we bring this selfish egotistical hedonistic life before you and Lord, we don't know how you bring about its death but we believe that Jesus did rise from the dead and we believe that what he says did happen, that we were somehow in the infinity of eternity, crucified with him.

Now Lord, we accept that and we're willing to be made real now in us today. Lord, we ask you now to make this real in us, to make real in us this death to self once and for all so that we're finished with this living for ourselves, so that it is as if we're no longer alive. We've no longer ourselves to look after. Lord, we want to let this self and all its parasitism be buried in the tomb with Jesus, and Lord we want that stoned rolled over it today for good. Lord, we trust you now, we know that you will roll that stone over if we will let you. So Lord, we confess to you all the sin that fills our life. One-by-one we name them to you and we tell you that we're finished with them, we're turning from that kind of existence. With or without the Holy Spirit Lord, we're determined to get finished with this kind of life that we're living.

Lord, we're putting the bank account into your hands, all these other things that we've held onto and tried to multiply into some kind of goldmine, we're putting it all into your hands Lord. We're letting this old self die. And now Father, you have promised that you'll give the Holy Spirit to them that ask. Father, it's your life that we need so we ask you now for the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, will you come in now and make us alive inside? There's been a great hole in the center of our lives that has been emptied for years, will you come in and make it alive?

We don't even need to know that it's alive Holy Spirit, we don't even demand that we be conscious of it, we are willing to trust you. Will you energize our spirits and make us alive with God's life? And will you live out through us God's love, and God's direction, and God's rule? Holy Spirit, we would take a step now and thank you for coming in. Thank you that you are faithful and that tomorrow and Monday morning we can bank on you for direction as to what we should do at each moment. We thank you.