

An Awakened Conscience

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to our conscience and acknowledging God's existence in order to find direction and purpose in life.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, John 6:63, Acts 3:19, Romans 2:15, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "Repentance"

Description

Ernest O'Neill discusses how many people today feel disconnected from the idea of God, as if a part of them is missing due to a deadness in their spirits caused by years of indifference. He emphasizes the importance of responding to our conscience, which holds God's will, as the first step towards finding God in our lives. O'Neill highlights the significance of God's words in the Bible, which bring clarity to our conscience and awaken our spirits, leading us to recognize the need for repentance and a change in our thoughts and behaviors.

Transcript

When God is mentioned, most people today feel nothing. The whole idea seems something that is beyond our ability to conceive. We just cannot get hold of anything beyond the vague associations of archbishops, church, and religion. It seems as if part of us is missing - the part that can respond to this idea of God.

Dead Inside

That's exactly what Jesus of Nazareth taught students like Paul of Tarsus - the part of us that can relate to God is dead. He referred to this part as our 'spirit'. Through years and years of indifference to our Creator, we have lost a vital sensitivity so that we are now cut off from our own God.

Are our spirits absolutely dead? No. Part of them seems to retain some life. Our conscience holds on to some memory of what life was meant to be. That's why we feel at times that we were put here for some reason or that we weren't meant to just die and disappear as if we'd never been. Our conscience keeps reminding us of the way things were meant to be. Conscience is 'God's will written in our hearts'. We reject it we rationalise it - we try to dilute it, but right throughout lives, conscience keeps on making us feel guilty when we're selfish or cowardly or irresponsible.

Even the worst of us who say we'll stop at nothing, have certain things that we will not do. All of us draw the line somewhere with someone. Conscience is the part of our inner spirit that is more alive than any

other part. It's the one part of us that has more in common with superhuman life beyond this earth than it has with us. It's the element inside us that is closest to a 'visitor from outer space'.

How to Find God

That's why the first step towards finding God in your life is to respond to your conscience. If it suggests that you are unique and you are known by the Creator of the universe, then respond to that by action - or words or thoughts. Think up to him your acknowledgement of his existence - and your thanks for him thinking you up. If it occurs to you that you seem made to exist longer than death, then whisper that to him privately. These are vital first steps you're taking towards reality. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' - these first steps are faith even if they're purely inward at this point.

If you have become troubled about some behaviour you engage in, then express that to God: let him do what he wants with it. But you be honest with your conscience - don't suppress it or sear it by ignoring it - respond to it. These steps of inner integrity are an acknowledgement that you recognise there is a deeper part of you that reflects your Maker's opinion. As soon as you make these tentative moves, you begin to wish for a clearer picture of what God is like and what He wants you to do in your life.

God's Words

The fact is that God has spoken to many people like ourselves through the centuries of the world's history. But to certain men and women He has spoken not only about themselves but about Himself and His plans for the world and the universe. Through the years, these words of His came to be respected and trusted as directions that He meant all people to observe and practice. When the unique human being, Jesus of Nazareth, lived and died and lived again in the first century, He affirmed that these words (of the Old Testament) had really come from His Father, our God. So, when you begin to want clearer direction about what God is thinking, you can find it in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (which recounts Jesus' own life and teachings).

This 'Word of God' brings clarity to the hints your conscience gives you. To a person who truly wants to know what God wants - His Word brings life to the conscience. Something echoes inside you when you read it. You sense it is true - and your conscience, in turn, seems to stir with life. You feel as if your conscience is awakening from a long, deep sleep.

An Act of Will

Once you start to read the Bible to find out what God wants for you, you see that you have been living in a dream world. You're not on your own - you have a loving Father. You can't do just what you want - because He made you to do certain things and be a special person that only you can do and be. So, very quickly you see that you have to change. It becomes obvious that you have to change your mind about a lot of things - this is what God calls 'repentance' - meta-noia in Greek - turning or changing your mind.

Of course, when you change your mind about your right to steal or be angry, or resentful, you automatically have to change your behaviour in order to retain sanity and integrity. As you exercise your will to start doing the things that God shows you, His Spirit infuses light into your conscience and your inner spirit slowly stirs into life. Let's talk more in the next article about what follows.

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