

The Life Within

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon emphasizes the life of Christ within us and our purpose to express God's kindness through our existence.

Scripture: Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 2:4, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 1:15

Topics: "Inner Life", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Ernest O'Neill delves into the concept of the spirit being willing but the flesh being weak, illustrating how there is a divine life within us that goes beyond our human limitations. He emphasizes that God Himself resides within us, guiding and correcting us through the Spirit of Christ. O'Neill highlights the profound reality that our existence was conceived in Christ before the creation of the world, with God foreknowing and experiencing our entire lives in Christ while still preserving our free will.

Transcript

"The spirit's willing but the flesh is weak" - even non-religious people use this saying at times to express the idea that "I really want to do this, but haven't the strength". The suggestion is that there's something inside me that wants to do what is right, but the rest of me is too weak to do it. At other times we'll say "I didn't think I had it in me" or other people will say the same thing about us: indeed, we will often surprise ourselves at the abilities we discover we have. Sometimes we'll say "I don't know where that came from" - what we mean is that this particular thought or feeling or action seemed to come from someone other than ourselves.

All of these instances are examples of a life within us that is actually beyond ourselves. We will refer to this unexpected energy or attitude in another person by saying "he shows remarkable spirit" or "it's as if a different spirit has taken hold of him". This is reality - because inside each of us is the actual spirit of the Son of our Creator. As Paul wrote to the people at Ephesus in 58 a.d., "for we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which he has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them", so Christ is the great human being who is within each of us endeavouring to do and say things through our lives. Deep within us - in our spirits, His Spirit has prompted, guided, and rebuked us from our earliest days. Although we have learned to dismiss these impressions as inherited prejudices and instincts, they are actually signs of our Maker's life and desires for his life in us.

Living from Within

The first step into the life we were made for is whole-hearted acceptance that God Himself is within us and that we are in his Son. The second step is to recognize that the Spirit of Christ moves in our own spirit so that we can commune with Him, be guided by Him, and be corrected by Him. As we begin to take this reality seriously, we sense increasingly the life of the universal human existence of Christ inside us. Just as he is with His Father, our Creator, at this present moment, so are we too - in Him ! As Paul wrote, "God, who is rich in mercy towards us, out of the great love with which he has loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, make us alive together with Christ and raised us up with him and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus". And very reason he did this was "so that he might show forth the riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus".

So, the whole point of our present life here on earth is so that your Creator can demonstrate the richness of his own life and kindness to us in our lives. Far from being little puny human animals trying to eke out an existence for ourselves, we are here specifically so that the Creator of the universe can express his kindness to us through the infinite life of his Son inside us. This He does as we respect his presence within us, as we act in response to the impressions He makes upon us, and as we submit to His opinions. But all of these attitudes and actions by us take place in the context of two staggering realities that most of us have grown up ignoring completely.

Foreknowledge

The first is that the infinite Creator conceived you and your existence in His Son before He made the world: Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians 1:15-16, " He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth ". So, before even the earth was created, you were conceived as part of the humanity of Jesus Christ who was not only the first-born of all creation, but later was the one who made the earth. So, the infinite Maker saw your existence from before the beginning of time - and obviously saw it all in one millisecond in timeless eternity. This means He didn't need to wait for your life to be lived by you day-by-day in order to see how it would turn out. He knew all that because he put within you in his Son all the potential and He also foreknew all the people and events that you would encounter.

He had only to arrange all these things so that you would really have a free will that you could exercise yet one that He Himself could deal with and yet not turn you into a mere puppet or robot. Only this way could He ever beget in His son others who were similarly free to love and trust and enjoy Him. This is what He did in Christ before ever the world was created. He foresaw and experienced in Christ your whole life - all your smiles, your tears, your kindly words, your cruel acts - in Christ He was forced by you to hurt others (whose pain He also bore); and at the same time, He graciously and justifiably induced others to act in ways that would draw you continually towards Himself.

Your Present Life

Then, after the earth was created, that millisecond in eternity was lived out day by day, moment by moment, act by act, word by word, so that you could actually experience all that had happened in Christ. This is the first great fact of the context in which your life takes place - it has all been foreseen, foreknown, and experienced by Christ, so that your whole future has been lived by Christ, yet your free will have always been preserved.

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