

## LIFE AND PEACE

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Romans 8:6

I'd like to tell you a story of a football star and it'll really be quite an achievement for an Irish soccer player to tell a story about an American football star, but I'll try to! We'll call him Johnny Pinitis. He started off having an interest in football when his dad and he used to pass to each other in the backyard when he was just an 8-year-old, but he began to get real excitement and satisfaction just out of throwing that old ball and seeing it arc through the air and land exactly where he wanted it. He enjoyed it so much that he used to spend more and more time in the backyard with his dad in that way.

Of course when you do anything a lot you become good at it and he did just become very good at it -- very good at exact control of the ball -- so much so that he was picked for one of the school teams. Then he discovered all that excitement of cutting down a field and weaving and evading people and breaking out into the open and all the thrill of getting the touch down. He thought there was nothing like this in the whole world. He got so much satisfaction from doing these ordinary things on the football field that he thought there's nothing else worth living for. And then there came the time when he was picked for the school team and they made him the quarterback and he began to discover the satisfaction of the mind working out the plays and calling the right play, so he discovered that not only his body was getting full satisfaction, but he began to realize that his mind was deriving great satisfaction from this.

He never realized that anything could so take up all of his personality as this game of football; he felt that his whole being was coordinated and that at last he found himself doing something that he utterly enjoyed doing. The tremendous surprise was when he graduated from high school and some fellow came along and offered him a scholarship to university just to play football for the college team. He couldn't believe it. He thought, "you mean they actually pay you to enjoy yourself?" Of course he took the scholarship and through those four years, gradually got hold of the idea that football was a far more lucrative profession than school teaching, which he had planned on.

When it came to graduating from the school, he went on to a professional football team; he joined "The Pennsylvania Robbers", so he really had that excitement of leading them into the Super Bowl and that was the height of his success in his career and his happiness.

Something was happening to him all during those years. At the beginning, it was the game; it was the game that was everything. It was the joy of seeing that old ball curve through the air and arc right into the hands that he had aimed it for. It was the joy of working out the right play to baffle the other side. That was what he lived for. It was breaking out into the open and getting a touch down -- that's where he got his satisfaction and his excitement from, and that's the way it was for a number of years.

For a number of years, the incidental side benefits that's all they were; incidental benefits -- like the increasing salaries, the increasing bonuses, he just took them in a stride. They were something that automatically came with what he enjoyed doing. But gradually as the years passed, he began to get more and more pre-occupied with those side benefits. And he began to be concerned about the bigger cars and the better vacation homes and he began to be more and more interested in

the fame that he had been and in the limelight that he had.

He gradually became fascinated by being a celebrity and being interviewed on television. He began to enjoy the adulation and the admiration and the hero worship until more and more these things became important to him. Gradually he began to find that the game itself was simply a means to an end and of course, the more he enjoyed the celebrity and the more he enjoyed the fame, the more he stayed up at night, the more he took the pep pills to enable himself to stay up at night. Then the more he ended up the next morning taking tranquilizers, the more he took alcohol, the more he had to take other things to try to balance the whole thing out. And bit-by-bit, his body became more and more ravaged by what used to be, actually, the incidental by-products of what he enjoyed.

Indeed, the more of this he did, the more he had to do to compensate for the satisfaction that he was now missing in the game because the game was now becoming just a means to an end. In fact it was worse than that; it was often just a nuisance to him and an unpleasant interruption, in the series of enjoyable occupations that he could have during his leisure time.

So it came to the bit eventually where he was so fed-up with that game, and he was so frustrated with his own attempt to satisfy himself, that he really did wish that he was dead and that he could start all over again somehow and begin again the way he used to be as a little 8-year-old with his dad in the backyard -- enjoying the game itself.

That's our story. That's really our story.

Our Creator made this world with valleys and hills, and mountains and rivers, with minerals and crops, with fruit trees, with animals and with meat available. And instead of putting his own son in it so that he could live here for centuries and could develop it in the way that the Creator intended, he made millions of people like you and me so that the spirit of his son could use you and me to release the power and the beauty and the energy that God had put in his creation.

His plan of course was, that just as the football player got full satisfaction from the game, we'd get complete satisfaction from doing what we were made to do ourselves. So really each one of us is a picture frame in which the Creator is trying to paint a portrait of his son, and each one of us is an integral part of the Creator's plan for the completion of his creation.

So one of you here, at least, is to teach children how to use language in a way that will express beauty and love and peace to others. One of you here is planned by God to paint portraits of other human beings that will bring out the beautiful traits in their character and encourage them to develop them. One of you here is planned by God to sell exactly the right kind of insurance to someone to counteract the effects of accidents that come through other people's carelessness and lack of love. One of you here is planned by God to allow his son Jesus to so order the business of our nation that each person would make the profit that is exactly appropriate for the value that they add to any product.

In other words loved ones, each one of us here is here by God's plan. Moreover, just as his body got full satisfaction from the game, each one of you is going to get complete satisfaction from doing what the Creator made you to do. So some of us here would not get any satisfaction from pottery, some of us here would not get any satisfaction from the law. Some of us here would not get any satisfaction from secretarial work. But there is somebody else here in this auditorium that does get full satisfaction from those things. And the Creator's plan was that each of us would get our

satisfaction that way.

I think I've mentioned before that from the balanced economy that would result from that, we would have all the food and the shelter and clothing that we would need. But really we've operated the same way as the football player. First of all, many of us do not have the sense at all that we are here by plan. Many of us think, "Oh, we just happened here and it's up to us to try to make our way through the mess as best we can." So many of us are in doubt about that; but there are many of us who know fine well that we are here for a purpose.

We know that there's a thing that we can do that nobody else can do and that will give us full satisfaction, but our eyes have been drawn off the real purpose for which we were created just as his were; his mind got completely off the game and on to these side benefits. And so many of us have let our minds get off the main purpose for which we were created and have got onto the side benefits. So we live to get enough food. We live to get enough clothing. We live to get enough shelter. Just as he began to live for the fame and the limelight, and the cars, many of us have started to live just for the clothing, , just to get enough shelter, just to get the right kind of home around us. And loved ones, we're no different from that football player.

We just are not animals; there isn't one of us here can get satisfaction from counting one coat, two coats, three coats, four coats they have. Oh, one dress, two dresses, and three -- we just cannot get satisfaction that is deep from that. We can be fascinated by it for a while; but after we think about it, we just stop getting satisfaction from it and we have to jump onto something else.

So many of us like looking at the new car that sits in the garage, but you can't sit day-after-day getting satisfaction from looking at that new car; eventually you have to realize it's not giving you the satisfaction that you really feel you need deep down. But many of us, loved ones, are in the same position as this football player; because as his body became ravaged with his own habits, so our personalities have become utterly perverted.

So that you know, many of us have real trouble saying, "Oh no, I would. I live for money. I'd live for money. I love money." Many of us have so perverted our personalities that we almost think that money is the thing we live for; the clothes are thing that we live for, that food is the thing that we live for. Our personalities have become so utterly perverted from what they were originally meant to be that we hardly think it's possible to live the way we used to when we were little kids; just doing what we really enjoyed doing most.

Of course we have the advantage over the football player because we've shared often that that old self, that old personality, was crucified with Christ. And that old personality that has got so used to living for food and living for clothing and living for money and living for the right home, that has been crucified with Christ and we are able to change.

We are able to be different kinds of people and we are too able to live for the game itself, and to trust God to bring those incidental side benefits to us; the food, shelter and clothing that we need. And you know there are many of us here that kind of are envious of a fellow like Picasso, whatever mess he may have been in spiritually, we kind of like to look at somebody whom the world regards as a genius and see somebody who lives for what he enjoys doing.

Many times we think, "Oh yeah, we'd love to do that too but we have to get the food in, have to get the clothes. I have to get the shackles coming in somehow or other. And maybe when we're rich we'll

begin to do what the Creator made us to do." But loved ones do you see it's not the Picassos that were meant to do that; it's each one of you.

The Creator loves you and has planned for you to be here in his world, to complete his creation. God wants you to stop living for the sake of the food, the shelter and the clothing. That is death; living from the outside in, that is death. You know I've shared it before; it's the difference between living "in" all the time and living "out". Has the Creator some plan for you that he can show you from your inside? Has he something to give the world through you that he can give to you and you can give out to it? Or have you to spend the rest of your life trying to draw in enough food, shelter and clothing to keep you alive?

In other words, is it possible to live an outgoing life, and you know that we've been sharing what that it is; it is possible to stop setting your mind on that [inward looking] kind of existence and begin setting your mind on that [outward looking] kind of existence.

I know there are many moms and dads here who have lived through the depression and now realize that because of that, many of us were tempted to just concentrate on the food, shelter and clothing and say, "Oh listen brother, if you don't concentrate on that, you won't live." But loved ones, God's promise is that that will come to you if you do what he put you here to do. Otherwise you end up in as illogical a situation as that football prayer; forgetting the thing that would give you full satisfaction and that you were made and created to do, and living for those incidental side benefits which will never give you satisfaction. God's plan is for you to live this way [from the inside out]. How do you do it? Well, it's the verse that we're studying this morning. God puts it very plainly in Romans 8:6.

The only way to begin living this way is, at least, to get your mind back on the game; get your mind off the cars, off the celebrity spots, get them back on the game. In other words with us; get our minds off the food, shelter and clothing. Romans 8:6, "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." There was a real sense in the footballer of harmony, of life and peace, as his whole being seemed to be used harmoniously for the purpose for which he was created and it's so with us. You know a little of it in your own life because you remember times when you were teenagers, when you really did something that you just enjoyed doing.

You remember feeling such satisfaction in it, may be it was painting a picture or may be it was doing something in the garden, but you just did it with all your heart and it seems so good, it felt so good. Now loved ones, God has a purpose for you -- something like that -- and what he wants you to do is to begin setting your mind on that and take your mind off the flesh business. Take your mind off the business of trying to get enough food, shelter and clothing together to keep yourself. How does it work out?

Well you're a plumber and you go into the house and then look up to Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus can I repair this valve? The last one I couldn't repair at reasonable economic cost, I just had to replace it but can I repair this one with a little harder work that will also save the customer some money and will save us wasting more metal. If I can Lord, will you now give me the energy from yourself? Give me the power of your Spirit in my hands and in my mind to do that." That's what it means: not setting your mind on what you can make out of this person in the easiest possible way to get you enough food, shelter and clothing to keep your head above water, but looking up to Jesus and setting your mind on the spirit and saying, "Lord Jesus, what kind of job do you want to do through me here today?"

You are an insurance salesman; instead of setting your mind on the commission that you could make out of this person, looking up to Jesus and saying, "Lord Jesus, I have with you, at the right hand of the Father, everything I need. What I haven't, you're going to provide for me. Lord, how do you want to service this man in the best possible way? How can you love this dear person through me? Lord Jesus, will you guide me to put together a plan that will be really a benefit to him? No more than he'll need and no less than he'll need."

You're a schoolteacher: take your mind off getting through the day the easiest way, "Lord Jesus, I could put these kids to some busy work that would give me time to think and would keep them out of my hair, but Lord Jesus, I know that you are anxious to interact with these kids through me and so Savior, I trust you now to give me the power and energy of your Spirit to interact with them so that they can touch you through my mind."

Loved ones, each one of us can either set our minds on the flesh or we can set our minds on the Spirit. You come home at night, "Lord Jesus, I have from you all the love and attention that I need. I have all the energy that I need even though I've had a hard day. Lord Jesus, what do you want me to give to my dear ones in my home or in my dormitory now? Lord, how do you want me to make them happy this evening? Lord Jesus, you want to serve them through me, Lord, I trust you now to do it."

Loved ones, in every situation in your daily jobs you can begin to walk in the Spirit by setting your mind on the Spirit rather than on the flesh. And you know what the Father has told us; that those of us who are 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. [Ephesians 1: 19-21] That's our position. In that position God will give us all that we need.

We can afford to trust him for all that we need in that position, and spend our lives letting his life come through to others. But do you see it doesn't happen by magic? It happens by you setting your mind on one thing or the other. The mind really is the key to God's Spirit working through us, but it does take a definite choice each day.

So today; it's coming to lunchtime: you can either set your mind on the flesh, "What would I like for lunch today? Wife, I would like", or, "Lord Jesus, this is lunchtime. I am not going to die if I don't get any lunch. Lord Jesus, what do you want to do today?" If we're husband and wife, "Lord, what do you want to do for my wife today? What happiness do you want to give to my husband today?"

If we live in a house, "Lord Jesus, who do you want me to talk to in this house today?" Not, "Which sandwich do you want me to grab for myself", but, "Lord Jesus, who do you want to serve through me this day?" Loved ones, walking in the Spirit is a down to earth thing. If you set your mind, God will take care of supplying you with the energy, but you do have to set your mind on it and it's the thing that we have to do each day.

So I encourage you in your own lives to think out, "Well Father, now how would I set my mind in my particular job?" And remember that if you set your mind on the flesh, you eventually end up in that frustrating death that lacks satisfaction and that ends up in loneliness and alienation and frustration. But if you set your mind on that dear Spirit of Jesus' life flowing through you, suddenly your whole personality begins to work as it's supposed to and you wonder why you never get tired or why you never get bored. That's really God's plan for you.

