

## The World is Groaning

Romans 8:22

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

The new gold rush is taking place in Alaska as you probably know. And you can make \$40,000 a year in just laboring work in Alaska. And some of you who have read some of the reports know that the whole gold rush mentality has taken over the area around Prudhoe Bay where a great deal of the pipeline construction is taking place. And you know that they're involved in laying 800 miles of pipeline down from where the oil is obtained down to a suitable port. And here is what one of the stewardess' on an Alaskan flight from Prudhoe Bay to Anchorage says about the flight, "That flight takes workers down for a very brief vacation where they just blow a whole lot of their money and then they go back up and work for 12 weeks again and then fly down again."

And here is what she says, "On almost every flight the medics up at Prudhoe put a man or two in the front seats. By the time we get to Fairbanks the poor guys are usually bleeding through the bandages or gasping for breath because they have no hospital planes; they just put injured men on the ordinary flight. I've had several guys who were practically catatonic by the time we landed and the ambulance took them away." Now, that's part of the groaning that the whole creation is doing.

That takes place because obviously we are pretty anxious to get that pipeline laid down. We're not really anxious to lose any of our profits in making ambulance planes available and so that's part of the groaning that is taking place in our world. Or, think of a seagull on the Santa Barbara Coast after an oil spill or an oil leak and the little bird is probably more pitiful even than those guys who are bleeding through their bandages because at least they can tell somebody what is wrong but this little bird can tell nobody and so it drags the wings along weighted down with the sludge of the oil. And eventually as its little heart bursts and it topples over, that's part of the creation groaning.

That's what God means, the whole creation is groaning in all kinds of ways with pain and agony that really we have helped to bring. Oh, you look at our rivers and our lakes as the industrial waste pours into them. Or, you look at the hillsides that we have scraped and transformed into just wounds or gashes in the earth's surface by our strip mining and our refusal to lose any of our profits by replacing the top soil. Then that's part of the whole creation groaning. Or, you think of the increase in the numbers of cancers over the past 20 to 30 years and we know fine well that some cancers seem to be connected with the radioactive fallout that took place while we were involved in atmospheric tests. And you get some more of the whole creation groaning.

Or, you see the Japanese dear ones, that died in agony because of the fish that they ate that had been contaminated by mercury, then, loved ones, that's part of what God means when he says through Paul, "We know that the whole creation is groaning together in travail until now, until this very moment." It is incredible that most of those things are actually continuing to happen now so the groaning is taking place up to this very moment, at this very moment. Some fellow up in Alaska has cut an arm off or a hand off in a steel cable. And so that's part of what the Father means.

We know that the whole creation is groaning in travail until now. And it wasn't meant to of course. The whole creation was not meant to have to groan in travail in order to bring to birth paradise. That was not God's plan. God made you and me the midwives, and this creation was meant by us to be

brought into a complete and a full, and an effortless birth. And a paradise was meant to come forth from this creation. God, remember, gave us that commission. He said, "Look, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it." And that was his commission to us human beings. And we were meant to follow that out and bring forth a paradise out of this world.

He meant us to study the landscape, as you remember, like Frank Lloyd Wright did. And he meant us to build our houses so that they would fit in with the beauty and the soft lines of the trees, and the lakes, and the rivers, and the hillsides so that when we come home at night some of the peace and softness of the natural surroundings of our houses would even minister healing and harmony to us ourselves and to our minds and emotions. Instead of that of course, we've put up all kinds of high rises, we've built houses that receive all the wind that's going, and we've laid down concrete and asphalt desert strips that minister disharmony and chaos, and hardness to us when we come home from work each day.

The Father meant us to use the power and energy that he had built into the world as he guided us because, of course, he alone knows the power and energy he has built into the world. He alone knows how to use it properly and so he wanted us in close communion and love with himself to find out how to develop that power and energy. Loved ones, if you look at Job he says very clearly there in Job 37 that the Father understands the powers of nature that he has placed in the world. And of course it was his will that we should spend so much time in his presence in getting to know him that we would know how he intended us to use it.

And it's Job 37:5, "God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things which we cannot comprehend." And his plan was of course that we would receive these intuitively by living close with him instead of trying to develop them by the trial and error that we use scientifically. "For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth'; and to the shower and the rain, 'Be strong.' He seals up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work." But it was that all men may know his work, that's really why he wanted to do these things. "Then the beasts go into their lairs, and remain in their dens. From its chamber comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds. By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. They turn round and round by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world."

And God's desire was that we would work together with him to use these powers. So it was his will that we would not build our IDS tower with all the glass that would gulp all the energy that we could ever give it in order to heat it and air condition it at the same time. But his will was that we could do what the early settlers did and build our houses into the hillsides and make use of the 50 degrees that was there in the earth right through the winter months and make use of the coolness that was there during the summertime. It was his will that instead of burning up all the oil that we could that is irreplaceable, we would instead burn up our own refuse and our own garbage and heat our homes from that.

It was his will that we would use the aerodynamically designed windmills and "S" rotors to use the wind and the heat of the sun to warm our homes. It was our will that our industries would receive electricity not only from hydroelectric power, and from our rivers and our seas but that we'd have satellites in space beaming electricity down from outer space. Because really, it's what Buckminster Fuller said, "It's not a crisis of energy it's a crisis of ignorance that we're involved in." And it's ignorance because we men and women are trying to do it our way by trial and error. By guessing, by trying this -- finding it doesn't work but it kills half a million people -- and

then trying something else.

And it wasn't the Father's plan, loved ones. His plan was that we should develop the power and the energy that he has put into the earth itself, that he has hidden in the wind and the sun and in that way we would have preserved our irreplaceable fossil fuels and we could have had enough petrochemical products to produce plastic for centuries upon centuries. And really, that was God's will.

It was his will that we would in the same way cooperate with the whole animal and vegetable kingdom. It's impossible nowadays to think of trying to make everybody a vegetarian because of all the effects we have from our artificial fertilizers that we've used up really extravagantly instead of making use again of the human waste that has enough nitrogen in it to fertilize our crops. But because of the artificial fertilizer it's impossible to think of making us all vegetarians. And yet, there are indications in scripture that the Father intended us to live in this world in such a way that we would not make war on the animal kingdom as we have done.

You can see that loved ones, if you look at Genesis 1:29, "And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.'" There is an indication in that, that that was God's plan for us so that we would not be predators on the animal kingdom and in turn we would not encourage in them the hostility that they have to one another and so they themselves would not have been predators.

But look at Verse 30, "And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." So that the lion would no longer have to prey on the other animals, so that there would not be the hostility and enmity in the animal kingdom that there is today but really there would be that kind of harmony that is described you remember in Isaiah 11.

We looked it up a couple of Sundays ago, Isaiah 11:6-9. And really it was God's will that we would bring about this kind of paradise. And because we were not predators on them they would not have been predators on each other. But in fact, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain."

But you know that the proof that we've abused the whole mess is seen in the movies that we're all flocking to see. It's incredible if you look at the titles, they're all connected up in ways in which we've just abused and destroyed the holy mountain. "Jaws", "Earthquake", even the IDS tower is in it with "The Towering Inferno". And the distrust you know, that we've encouraged not only in the animal world but in each other, where in desperation some fella takes the power into his own hands to try to keep himself alive and his family.

Loved ones, the truth is that we have just abused completely the commission that the Father gave us. He said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." And we looked at the "be fruitful and multiply" and we found that when you were having a child you got a great deal of enjoyment and delight out of it and our eyes went off having children in order to develop God's

world into his kind of paradise and our attention became taken up with the joy and the enthusiasm, and excitement, and the exhilaration that we get from having children. And from that moment on we began to have them indiscriminately whether the earth at that time could bear them or not. We began to concentrate on enjoying ourselves, it didn't matter what that Creator wanted us to do. We concentrated on whether we enjoyed it and if we enjoyed it we did it. We didn't care what he thought about it.

And so you can see what happened really, at that very point we committed ourselves to the famine in Ethiopia way back then. We committed ourselves to the drought in India. We committed ourselves to the earth having to try to support far, far too many people. Of course, immediately we found ourselves overwhelmed with that, we found ourselves taken up utterly with trying to get enough of the food, shelter, and clothing to keep our own little children alive.

And the more we concentrated on our own enjoyment, and the more the population increased beyond what we could support it, the more greed and covetousness developed in our world. And instead of being taken up with filling the earth we became preoccupied with emptying it for the sake of our own families and our own nations. And so really we became involved all the time as predators. Predators on the world, predators on each other; we began to concentrate on trying to get as fast as we could what we needed and what our people needed. So we began to ravish the animal and mineral kingdom, and we began to scrape our hillsides bare whatever effect it had on our world.

In fact, you know the numerous ways in which we've done things to get stuff for ourselves that obviously and deliberately hurts other people. And so really, we as a group of human beings began to make the world groan with the shortages and frustrations that we know today. And really, our minds instead of being used to develop the plans God had for our world, they began to be used to produce all the cunning and shrewdness we could in order to make sure we had more than somebody else had just in order to keep ourselves in existence. And so private enterprise instead of becoming a cooperative development of all the talents and abilities that each other had, private enterprise became a mad competitive rush to try to monopolize the natural resources of the world so that we would be alright.

So we come to this time when the whole creation groans and 7 percent of Americans own 80 percent of the corporate holdings and business. It's not the way the Father planned it. Even we ourselves, as a nation, know that we're a 15th of the world's population and we consume something like 30 percent, or 40 percent, or 50 percent of its consumer goods. And so really, when the Father says, "We know the whole creation is groaning in travail," loved ones that's what it's doing. The whole creation is groaning under pain that it was never meant to bear. It's groaning with all kinds of frustrations and shortages that it was never meant to have. And it's all come from you and I deciding that we'd get what we wanted and we'd get the little bit of happiness we deserved whatever it cost everybody else.

And my idea to even share this with you this morning is that you see the word in the verse groaning in travail? In other words, God is still in the business of trying to bring about a paradise and the groans are meant to be a method that he transforms and changes completely to become a travail groan. We have made them just ordinary groans of pain and desperation. He is all the time working to transform them into groans of travail. But, it depends on us who are his children beginning to hear those groans.

And you can see that near the very beginning of the chaos he began to try to build into the very

mistakes we were making some of his own plans. And you'll see it loved ones in Genesis 9:1-7. "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'" So even after the flood and the fall he renewed that covenant and that's our commission, that's the commission under which we live. "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth." Now, that was the new groan. That was never so before but now it was fear.

"And upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." And that's the groan that was introduced and then here's the sign, "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image." And God built into the world a groan that would remind us that things were not right.

And loved ones, that's why I share it with you today. The thousands of stray dogs that roam through the streets of all our big cities, the distended stomachs of the little children in Ethiopia and India, the skyscrapers that gulp our energy so that we have to heat and air condition at the same time to make them work, the distrust that we feel on our city streets when we go out at night, the concern that all of us have over the availability of natural gas here in Minnesota for the winter, all of these are groans that God is hoping you and I will hear. We are his children.

We have been liberated from the old profit, success, enjoyment motive in our lives. We are the children that know that he will provide for us if we give our lives to developing his world the way he wants. Loved ones, God is calling us this morning who are freed from that old profit, enjoyment, happiness, success motive in our life. He is calling us to get back to the original commission. Not only in a Christian community business like Fish Enterprises. That's part of why we're in business -- but not only through that, but through your own jobs. Would you begin to look at your own job and see if you are part of the groan in God's creation or if you are part of the liberating of that groan? Would you look at your own job? I'm really asking you point blank, look at your own job and examine it in the light of some of the truth that we have been sharing and in the light of scripture and ask, "Lord, am I part of the increasing groan in this world and am I crying about it and saying, 'Oh this is no world to bring children into?' And am I increasing the chaos and the groan in this world? Or, am I becoming part of the liberation from that groan?"

Now loved ones, I honestly think each of us can do it with our own jobs. I think if you're a school teacher you can ask, "Am I motivated by the same thing as many of the others? The desire to be the best teacher in the school, to get an extra increment in my salary through my outstanding work -- or am I preoccupied with these children and preoccupied with delivering them from the competitiveness into which all of us have fallen because we're so anxious to get our piece of the pie.

I think loved ones if you're an insurance agent, I think you can ask, "Am I really concerned as I say I am about the welfare of my client? Am I really concerned for them or am I concerned that it increases my commission? Am I really advising them as they need to be advised? Am I really delivering them from fear or am I in fact getting them into more and more debt they cannot handle?" Loved ones, none of us here are in a job that we cannot examine before God in that way.

Now, I would encourage you to do it because this victorious life that we talk about is pretty down to earth and practical. And the Father is expecting us, his children, his sons and his daughters,

to begin to get back to the original commission that he gave us and to begin to deliver this poor old groaning painful world from the agony that it's in. So will you think about it? We used to smile a wee bit at Lady Bird [President Lyndon Johnson's wife; the First Lady], you know, and her beautiful American [campaign to make America a clean country] but I wonder -- how we are doing ourselves in our own little bit?

Let us pray. Dear Father, we see that this world was meant to develop beautifully and effortlessly as we, your children, listen to you and by intuition of our spirits in communion with you in prayer we were meant to receive your directions. And oh Father, we want to be part of that whole plan of yours. Lord as we think of the dear fellows up in Alaska wearing themselves to an early grave in order to make fast money. We pray Lord not only for them but we pray that you'd take that right out of our hearts and that we'd begin to do our jobs in order to develop your world as you want it. Lord we'd pray that you'd stop us being part of the problem and you'd begin to make us part of the answer. Father we would commit ourselves to ceasing from this endless whining about the terrible state of the world and Father we'd stand up like your sons and daughters and we'd begin to redeem this world and begin to bring it into the beauty that you have planned for it.

Father we know that we'll never complete the task until Jesus comes but we know that if we do this there will be a little baby paradise that will be a constant testimony against the humanist monster that revolution is producing. And we know that is what you want, our Father. You want in these last days a witness among your people to your original plan. And Lord, we would commit ourselves to being a part of that witness for your glory. Amen.