

Let God Be God

Romans 9:20

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Let's look at the next verse we are studying. It is Romans 9:20, "But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me thus?'" In connection with that verse, can we study the principle I mentioned earlier. It is a very simple principle but one that we ignore so often because of our own self-importance. That is the principle: we are not the Creator. You are not the Creator. I am not the Creator. We are creatures.

Therefore, we are facing reality when we let God be God instead of trying to be God ourselves. In your own life let God be God. That is the heart of that verse. Who are you, a man or woman, to answer God? Will what is molded say to the one who has molded him, "Why have you made me thus?" Many of us do that. There are two ways in which we so often say to God, "Why did you make me like this?"

To illustrate them, I will introduce you to a dear friend that I brought this morning. All English guys and girls know him as Paddington. He looks a little lost and, in fact, that is what he is. He is a little bear that got lost in Paddington Station in London. Yet, in a way, he isn't really lost, because he has a label which on one side says, "Please look after this bear. Thank you." Those of us who came through the blitz in the Second World War were often packed off to the country when the bombers came over. We were often found in railway stations with labels tied round our neck with our name and address on so that our parents wouldn't lose us. That is what Paddington has on the other side. It says "Darkest Peru to London, England, via Paddington Station." You see that he almost feels lost himself. He is not quite sure where he is, and yet he is not really lost, because the label is there and all he has to do is get somebody to read the label, or read the label himself, and he will get straight home. But still, he looks lost.

What we have been saying the last few weeks is that too many of us behave as if we are lost little Paddingtons. We behave as if we don't quite know where we are going; we don't quite know why we are here. I think many of you here would agree with that. We say, "Oh, I have tried typing and it didn't work. I have tried selling and it didn't work. So what I have to do while I'm here on earth, I'm not sure at all. I'm trying one thing after another but, actually, I'm not sure what I should be doing."

Then we pull the yellow hat a little more down over our eyes, we see through a deeper haze and we say, "Quite apart from what I'm to do here on earth, I don't even know why I'm alive. I don't know where I'm going. I don't know the point of being created is at all." Our generation behave as if we are lost little Paddingtons who don't know what our short term destination is and don't really know what our long-term destination is. We curl up on the edge of the platform and make stabs in this direction or that direction. Some of us behave like that character described in Robert Frost's poem "Two Roads" and we say, "Oh, I kept to the first for another day, but knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back." That is the way a little child or a teddy bear gets lost. They are left to wander away to see if they can find out where they should go.

The other thing we have been saying these past weeks is you don't need to do that. You have a label on. You were sent here by a dear Father who loves you as much as the dear mother or father that sent

Paddington from darkest Peru to London, England. They didn't send him to find his own way; they put a label on him. You are made by a dear Father who has put a label on you. On one side Paddington's label stated plainly what his short-term destination is-Paddington Station; and on the other side it tells his long-term destination, London England. You have a label that came with you when you came to earth, and it makes it absolutely clear what your short-term destination is: that is, what your vocation is here on earth and what your long-term destination is -- why you were ever created at all. The amazing thing, loved ones, is it is different for everyone. I can remind you how to read those labels, even though they are different for everyone of us. I can remind us how God showed us to read those labels.

Let's talk about the first side of the label. A lot of us have the attitude, "I've tried selling, warehouse work, nursing, teaching, traveling. I've tried insurance and I really don't know what I should be doing." You were sent here for a special purpose as far as your vocation is concerned. In Genesis 25:23, Rebecca was the mother, and it reads: "She was told, "The elder will serve the younger." Before Esau and Jacob were ever created, God had a job in mind for them. So he had for you when he sent you here. If this God of ours takes so much care to invent an incredible substance like water which has all the qualities that are essential for life here on earth; if he created a substance like blood that can carry over sixty different substances in it without becoming sludge; if he can set the sun and earth and stars and planets in their positions and keep them in accurate orbit so that they don't collide. If God has taken so much care to plan everything in so much detail in this world and has made us the crown of creation; then don't you see that he did not send you down here without a label? He did not send you down here to see what you could do, but he has a purpose for you that is as clear and definite as the purpose that he has for every bird that he made, for every insect that he created.

Some of us tend to respond to that by saying, "Wait a minute. I can see how God has a purpose for people like Esau and Jacob, and even Isaiah and Moses, even people like Billy Graham and Jimmy Carter. Because they are moving men and nations, I can see that. We can see that God takes a lot of trouble to plan their life exactly-but me? I'm just a nobody. I don't move men and nations, I am just a little individual. I don't see that God wouldn't take the trouble to plan my life.

Look at Job 31:15: "Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?" The same God who made Moses and Isaiah made you and designed you as carefully as he did them. He designed you to do a certain job in this world that only you can do. That is what this verse that we are studying says. Will the person who molded say to the person who molded him or her, "Why have you made me thus?" God molded you in a certain way to do a certain job here that none of the rest of us can do. That is it. There is nothing of chance in God's universe. There are no stray cats in God's universe. Everything is carefully planned and designed by him to set forth himself and his own beauty. It is so with you. You were carefully designed to do a certain job, and that job is plainly written on the label that you came to earth with.

How do you read the label? Dead easy. God has designed you and molded you in a certain way. God has made you a certain kind of personality with certain interests, certain aptitudes, in a unique combination that nobody in the whole world has. That is how you read the label of what you are to do with your life here on earth. That is how you are to determine what your vocation is, what your temporal occupation is here during these seventy years. Look at the interests that God has built into you. Look at the aptitudes that you have. Look at the particular trends of your personality. That is God's first clue. Have you an interest in working with wood? Then improve that skill, develop it and think how you could use it to bring God's world into his order. Begin there. You have

an interest in singing? Improve that skill, develop it and think about how you could use that to bring God's world into order. You have an ability with money? Then improve that skill and ask God to show you how you can use that to bring his world into order. But see -- you have a label that is different from the label everybody else has round their neck. There is no one like you, no one at all.

Loved ones, some of you may say I don't know what my aptitudes are or my abilities are. What do I do? You remember we said don't sit around and meditate and wait for a vision. It is plainly stated in God's word what you do if you are not sure. It is in Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." Whatever you are doing now, do it with all your heart. Don't do it half-heartedly, thinking, "This isn't what I was meant to do. God never told me about this. I never saw this in prayer. I wasn't even a child of God when I started this." God says whatever you are doing at this moment, do it with all your heart; all your heart, hold nothing back. God's Spirit will begin to lead you into an awareness of what your abilities, interests, and aptitudes are.

What is God saying to us through Romans 9:20? It says, "Will the person who is molded say to the molder, why have you made me thus? Who are you a man or woman to question God? Loved ones, God is saying to us today, "Some of you know fine well what you should be doing." Some of us know what our aptitudes and interests are. Some of us know by intuition what we should be doing with our life, but we have put God's purpose for us on the back burner and have made it subordinate to our own selfish purposes of getting enough security, significance and happiness to please ourselves. He is saying to you and me -- who are you to question God?

Will you whom he molded carefully and with foresight to do a certain job, ignore what he molded you to do and take other abilities that you have and prostitute them to try to make yourself more secure or important in this world to exalt yourself or gratify yourself more? That is not why he gave you those abilities. He will make you secure. God is saying, "If you have the ability to be a teacher and you are selling insurance because teaching doesn't bring in enough money, you will wind up like Howard Hughes, with lots of money but lonely, sick and abandoned and purposeless." If you are meant to sell insurance, God has molded you so that that is what he wants you to do in this world. If you have become a stockbroker because you want to be important or you want more money or security, God says you would be better if necessary starving as an insurance man than becoming rich as a stockbroker, because you may get in this life what you want, but at death you will be more frustrated and defeated than you can possibly imagine.

Loved ones, I know the Father wants to say this to somebody here this morning. You had better respect the abilities and interests and aptitudes that God has given you, and you had better use them for the purposes that he gave you them for -- to bring his world into his order. You had better be sure that you don't prostitute them and pervert them to serve your own selfish needs for security, significance and happiness. That is not what they were given for. God will give you all those, if you seek first his kingdom and use your abilities for him. That is the first thing I think that God wants to say to us through the verse. You know what your vocation is, your label is round your neck. Look at your personality, your aptitudes and your interests. Develop those and God will make clear to you what he wants you to do in this life. You better be sure to use those for his purposes and not for yours.

All of us who have gone through school or college know the temptation. It is often very difficult to tell whether the doctor is a doctor because he wants to save humanity or because he wants a better car; or if the dentist is a dentist because he wants to save humanity or because he wants to be

wealthy. It is often difficult in our meetings together when we graduate to be sure why a person is going for a certain job. God is saying through this verse, "You watch it. You better be sure that you are doing what I sent you to do here on earth and that you are not just making use of me and making use of the unique personality that I have given you."

Look at the other side of the label. Why are we here? What are we here for? What is the purpose of life itself? It is stated clearly in 1 John, that the purpose is to have fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ, his Son. God made us to become his friends. He made us to become people like his Son, with whom he could spend eternity and with whom he could enjoy good company and good friendship and good love. That is why God made us all, so that we could become his friends and live with him and love him forever throughout the universe. There is a clear way that you can become that.

There is a label that will tell you clearly how to become the kind of person that God will be glad to have with him forever. It is different for everyone of us. Every one of us is trying to live for our own convenience and our own advancement in all kinds of different ways. The reason Jesus came to earth at all was by his death to free us from that slavery to our own advancement, our own happiness and our own gratification. There is a label around your neck that will tell you what you have to do to prepare yourself for that final destination. The label is your conscience. Your conscience is different from everybody else's in this room. Your conscience is Jesus lightening everyone coming into this world. Your conscience is God's Spirit speaking inside you and saying to you, "Deal with this. Move this way. I want you to identify yourself with my Son in his death to self-gratification and self-exaltation in this way." If you follow that conscience and exercise your will in conformity to it, God's Spirit will bring you to that final destination of oneness and friendship with himself. Do you see that many of us ignore that? We listen to what all kinds of people say we are to do, whether they be preachers or ethical teachers or philosophers. We listen to what they think we should do. We think that by giving mental assent to Jesus' death for us, somehow we will get to that final destiny; or we think if we distract ourselves with latter day prophecies or discussions and Bible studies, we will somehow come to our final destination.

There is only one thing that you really need to do for God's Spirit to lead you into your death with his Son Jesus to self and into the fullness of the Holy Spirit. That is: pay attention to your own conscience. That conscience will tell you to obey God in many ways that other people don't have to obey him. We may think but he doesn't have to do this but you have to do it. Many of us risk missing our final destination because we are not looking at the label and responding to our conscience. Instead we are trying to go to this prayer meeting or this bible study to get from it what we should do. All we need to do is look at the label which is unique for you and no other. It's your conscience. If you will respond to that conscience, God's Spirit will bring you into your death and resurrection with Jesus. Every conscience here (there is about 1500 of us in this room) is giving each of us a personal message from our Maker. God is speaking to us and telling us something that we should do. Do it!

How will you find out what your destination is here on earth, your vocation, your temporal occupation? Look at your personality, your interests and your aptitudes and develop them. Develop them for God and for his purpose in sending you to the world to subdue it and bring it into the order of his will. How do you know and how do you get into your final destination, your eternal destiny, into a fellowship and friendship with God? Listen to your conscience. Do what it tells you slavishly and instantaneously, and God's Holy Spirit will bring you home. There is no need for us to be lost little Paddingtons, if we will read the labels. I pray you would read the label today and

act.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, thank you for molding us uniquely. Thank you for making us different from one another in the whole universe. Thank you, Lord, that therein lies our guidance, both as to what we should do on this earth and to what we should do when this earth passes away. Thank you Lord for the label you have given us, on one side with our aptitudes and interests and the other side with our dear conscience. Lord, we see if we pay attention to these lights within us that have illuminated our way from when we were born, then your Holy Spirit will lead us all the way home and into rest and peace. Lord, there is no alternative. We fool ourselves when we think there is an alternative. You have molded us to do a specific job and fulfil us to a certain destiny. There is no other way in which we will be happy. Thank you, Lord.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.
Amen.