

## The Messiah

Romans 11:14

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever noticed the names that people give to their boats or their trailer homes or their campers? I was watching some boats on a lake – little boats – fishing boats and runabouts. Suddenly, into the middle of them plowed this massive power boat with two big 150 horsepower Johnson engines sitting in the back of it. He never reduced speed. He plowed right through the middle. And of course, the wake toppled several of the little fishing boats.

As you looked at it, it was just chaos and a struggle for survival. There were people trying to bail the water out of their boats. He just tore right on through and threw up the wake and the wave so that half of the boats were swamped. I looked for a moment away from this struggle for survival, and caught a glimpse of the name of this power boat. It was on the stern. It was called, "Ulcer Easer." It obviously eased only one ulcer – the ulcer of the guy that was at the throttle! It aggravated an awful lot of others.

It is interesting if you look at the names that people give to their campers, or their trailers, or their boats: "Shangri-La!", or "Rainbow's End", or "Haven". I saw one, "A Piece of the Rock"! Of course, all of them express what a lot of us feel in our own hearts. They express a desire or a hope for some perfect life that will release us from the miserable day-to-day commitments that we endure. They all point to a kind of a mañana, a "tomorrow" when everything will be as we think it should be.

It's good for a minute to ask ourselves: what is our mañana? Have you a mañana? Have you an idea of a perfect time in your life when everything will be right? When is your mañana? When you graduate, or when you retire? Or when you get married? Or when the children are grown up? Or when you find your own special desert island?

The truth is, tomorrow never actually does come. Mañana never does come. The truth is that today is the only reality, and tomorrow -- whether it's when we retire or when we get married or when we graduate or when we get the house paid for -- tomorrow is going to be very much like today, isn't it?

That little phrase is true; it's four words: "As now, so then." We like to bluff ourselves that tomorrow is going to be different, but it isn't! Today is a pretty fair description of what tomorrow, or the tomorrows in our life, are going to be like.

And yet it's true, isn't it, that the hope of some future release has enabled many members of our dear human family to endure untold sufferings. That is true. It's true particularly of that dear people that have endured probably more sufferings than anyone else in the world -- the Jews. The hope of a mañana has often enabled the Jews to endure all kinds of wretched and unjustified and unfair persecution.

What is their mañana? "When we get to Jerusalem." For many loved ones who are of Jewish background in the States it's "When we get to Jerusalem." That's their mañana. In fact, there's only one mañana that is dearer and more precious to them than that. It's one that's mentioned by a lady in Samaria

1900 years ago. This for the Jew is the ultimate mañana. It's in John 4:25: "The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.'"

The Jews in concentration camps, the Jews in the midst of their persecutions and their exiles and their oppressions, have always looked forward to the time when a Messiah would come. They call him in Hebrew, "Yitsar," which means oil, or the Anointed One, or the Light Bringer. They have looked forward to that time when the great Messiah, the Anointed One, or the Light Bringer, would come and would finally deliver them from the midst of their oppressions and their sufferings.

In fact, all their great human leaders and their human saviors have been regarded by the Jews as types of that Messiah. They've always seen their human leaders and saviors as embodying in some mysterious way this ultimate Messiah. So, Joshua and Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Isaiah, and Samuel, and Micah and Zechariah -- all their prophets and their kings have been for them an embodiment in some sense of this great ultimate Messiah who would finally deliver them once and for all.

So it's interesting -- often when these men speak, they seem to soar beyond their own human selves and they begin at times to use language that does not describe them themselves, and cannot. But in some mystical sense they soar into a realm where they seem to be speaking the words of the Messiah himself. So it's very interesting -- as you study the words of the great prophets and kings in the Jewish history books, you find that from time to time, they soar beyond their own temporal situations. They transcend their own time frame, and they begin to speak words that seem to be coming from elsewhere and seem to be describing a being that's greater than they themselves.

So the truth is, the Jews are very clear about what this Messiah will be like -- because they have the words of these prophets and these kings written down. All these words that have been spoken for almost two thousand years -- the Jews have these words written down in their scriptures. In their scriptures they have a perfect description of what the Messiah will be like, and so they know who they're looking for.

They know what the Messiah is going to be like and the kinds of things that he's going to do, because down through 2,000 years of their history, their prophets and their kings and their leaders have soared beyond themselves, and the gigantic figure of the Messiah himself has broken through these human beings, and has spoken his own words in a mystical way. So really, the Jews will recognize him when he comes because of the descriptions they have in the prophecies about him.

So it's interesting. One of the prophets of the Jews was Micah. Micah wrote probably about 720 B.C., and he described how this great being from beyond time and space would be born. He described it by inspiration from God. The Jewish people know this description. This is the way that Micah describes the birth of this Messiah. It's in Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

It's interesting! Obviously Micah is not describing a human being, because he says, "This is a being whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." So this is a being who has come from beyond, from eternity, a being who has pre-existed the world and creation. This being, who is obviously the Messiah because that's the only one that the Jews ever talk of in those divine terms -- this Messiah is going to be born in Bethlehem. "But thou, Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

It's very like a person who was born about 4 or 6 B.C. and whose birth is recorded in Matthew 2:1: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem."

Another prophet is Zechariah. He was a prophet who wrote many years later than Micah, about 500 B.C. Zechariah wrote of how the two great dreams of the Jewish people would come together. The two great dreams of the Jewish people are the two great parts of their mañana -- Jerusalem and the Messiah. And Zechariah wrote of how these two great dreams would meet -- how the Messiah would come to the holy city of Jerusalem. It's in Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee;" And how does he come? "He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

That's the way he will come into Jerusalem. Not in a great chariot, not at the head of a great military procession, but lowly, riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass. Zechariah wrote that in 500 B.C.

Would you like to look at an incident that happened five hundred years later? It's in Matthew 21:6: "The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, 'Who is this?'"

One of the interesting prophecies about the Messiah is a very strange story of his betrayal. Why it's strange is -- the Jewish people have always thought of the Messiah as coming as a strong mighty military leader. But there runs through their prophecies this strange story of a betrayal that will take place. Zechariah wrote about this, and actually wrote about the amount of money that the traitor would get for betraying the Messiah.

It's in Zechariah 11:12: "And I said unto them, 'If ye think good, give me my price; and if not forbear.' So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Zechariah in this mystical part of his prophecy rises above what he's talking about and begins to talk as if he were getting thirty pieces of silver for betraying this great, mighty person. Very like a betrayal that took place five hundred years later that's recorded in Matthew 26:15: "And Judas said unto them, 'What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?' And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

It's just supernatural! Because would you believe it, Zechariah goes on in 500 B.C. to tell of what will be done with these thirty pieces of silver! In chapter 11:13, Zechariah says this; "And the Lord said unto me, (and if you're reading the Hebrew it seems absolutely bewildering to you) "'Cast it unto the potter,'" (and in fact you'll find that in the RSV it's translated "treasury", but you see the footnote says that the Hebrew word is actually "the potter".) "'Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Five hundred years later, this is what Matthew records in chapter 27, verses 6 and 7: "And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, 'It is not lawful for us to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.' And they took counsel, and bought with them the Potter's Field, to bury strangers in." It was one of those prophecies that you'd think that, "There's no way that

this silly prophecy could come true!" But loved ones, it's there written not into some strange obscure book, but written into history books that are better documented than any other ancient histories this human race possesses.

What I said before is true: that the Jewish people normally think of the Messiah as being a mighty general, as one who is coming with great power to deliver them from whoever is the current dominator of the world. But throughout prophecy there runs also this other theme. It was brought to the fore especially in 720 B.C. when one of the greatest Jewish prophets, Isaiah, wrote his prophecies. There he described the Messiah in different terms. He described him not as a mighty military leader but as a suffering servant.

He described the death of that Messiah in chapter 50 and verse 6: "I gave my back to the smiters," -- it's one of those occasions when it seems the great Messiah figure is speaking through the prophet himself, as if he himself is the prophet -- "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Very like an incident that occurred over 720 years later and is recorded in Mark 14:65: "And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, 'Prophecy!' And the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands."

Isaiah goes on in chapter 53 and verses 4 and 5: "Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Many Jews have read those passages and have been bewildered, "The Messiah? It's obviously the Messiah he's talking about, but how are we going to be healed by his stripes? How is he going to bear our sorrows and carry our pains?" And then in Matthew 8, verses 16 and 17: "When the evening was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and he healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.'"

The Jewish people couldn't understand how the Messiah would ever go through a trial, but Isaiah described once a mockery of a trial. In chapter 53 and verse 7, over seven hundred years before it ever took place, he wrote this: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Almost as if Isaiah is there seven hundred years later when Matthew 26:62 records: "And the high priest arose and said unto him, 'Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?' But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, 'I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.'"

Above all other prophets and all other kings there's one great one who stands head and shoulders above all the rest. He more than any other is a type of the Messiah, because he has the gracious character that the Jews expect the Messiah to have, and yet he also had the mighty military power as a general that they expect the Messiah to need to possess. Of course this is David, King David. No king is greater in the eyes of the Jews than David. No human being in the Jewish race more typifies or embodies the whole spirit of the Messiah than David.

David wrote -- of all times -- in 1000 B.C., earlier than most of the other writers in the Jewish

scriptures. David repeatedly transcends his own experience. Repeatedly he rises above things that could be said of him himself. He begins to talk in terms that the Jewish interpreters have always found bewildering, because they couldn't make sense of the particular details that David used. It was as if he was describing some terrible death that he was going through.

In Psalm 69 verse 21 he writes, "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The Jews knew, "Well, he's talking about the Messiah. He's rising above himself at that time. But why say, 'They gave me vinegar to drink'? Why is that important?" A thousand years later, John Chapter 19:29 records, "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar. And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth."

Then David seems to get into H.G. Wells' time machine. He does. He seems to actually step into that time machine – because even though he's living in 1000 B.C., he seems to be present at an event that took place one thousand years later. In Psalm 22:8 he describes it this way: "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." It's as if Matthew almost copies the words. Matthew 27:43 describes the onlookers as they jeer at a man hanging on the cross: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" It's so exact that you feel David must have been there, except that he lived a thousand years before.

Then David describes something that could not be made sense of. He describes what they will do with the Messiah's clothes. If you ever read some of the great commentaries that the Jewish scholars have written on the Old Testament scriptures, you'll know the bewilderment with which they came to this kind of very human, down-to-earth detail.

David writes in 1000 B.C. in verse 18 of Psalm 22: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." It's so outlandish a thing to happen and it seems so utterly unimportant. Why say it? "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." But a thousand years later, around the foot of a cross on a hill outside Jerusalem, Mark describes in chapter 15 and verse 24 the activity of the soldiers: "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take."

There was very little belief in the resurrection among the Jews. So the last quotation I want to share with you is one that was utterly bewildering because it was so far outside the tradition of the Jews. It was written by David in Psalm 16:10: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." There was no tradition of the resurrection that was recognized or respected very much among the Jews. So that verse written by David in 1000 B.C. was always a problem. You're talking about the Messiah -- "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." It seems Jews when reading this verse would ask themselves: "You mean this Messiah won't die? Or do you mean in some way he won't disintegrate as an ordinary body would?"

Then loved ones, I'd ask you to look it up, because it's so amazing, in John chapter 20, verse 11. David had written a thousand years before that the Messiah would not see corruption, that his soul would not be left in the world of the dead. John 20:11: "But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it

was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Why show that all the Jewish prophecies of the Messiah are fulfilled in Jesus? Why bother to do this, loved ones? For the reason that a Jew set forth in Romans Chapter 11 verse 14. This Jew called Paul says, "In order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them." That's why. If you are of Jewish background or faith, I would ask you: Is this Jesus the Messiah? When you look at the prophecies of the Messiah written in the Jewish scriptures that are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, I would ask you if you're a Jew, if you're here this morning or listening to this on the Internet: Is this the Messiah?

Paul wants to make the Jews jealous not in the sense of being resentful about something that they do not have -- but jealous in the sense of realizing that this is their Messiah! That he is not my Messiah, but he is your Messiah. He is our Messiah. That this Jesus has fulfilled all the prophecies that are written about him in the Jewish scriptures.

That's why I share these things. To ask you if you're a Jew, or if you are of Jewish background: Has the Messiah come? Is Jesus the Messiah?

Let us pray. Dear Father, we thank you for your good word. We thank you that there is no way round it. We thank you that it's solid. We thank you, our Father, that we cannot tear it apart. That it is written into the history books. That it is spread out over thousands of years. That there is no way that we can prove it a fraud, and that we are faced with facts that will not go away -- the facts of the clear description of Jesus' life and trial and death and resurrection, written a thousand years before they occurred.

Father, thank you. Thank you for a testimony that the rational mind cannot reject or ignore. Thank you. And we would thank you that the Messiah has come. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are the Messiah, and that you are here this morning, and that you are here to bless. And that you who transcended time, still transcend time, and are here this morning, and that we can introduce ourselves to you, and can receive you into our lives as our Messiah, as the one who brings light and life and direction into our lives. Thank you, Lord. And now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with each one of us, now and until we see Jesus face to face. Amen.