

## God Has a Dream for You

Romans 15:04e

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

How many of you have thought, my life's a complete mess? It's just not going anywhere, all the plans that I had and all the special abilities that my parents and my teachers thought I had, they are unfulfilled and my life just seems to have fizzled out, it just isn't going anywhere. It's just a mess, it's not what I planned at all, it's not what I dreamed about. It just really is a disaster and I've decided just to accept it as that and now I am trying to make the best of it. I've missed so many of the things that I was aiming at and now I've just settled down to a kind of anti-climax to try to get through now as best I can.

Some of you might be even worse than that -- and you may think, oh you couldn't be worse than that -- but some of you might be even worse than that, in that you never did have any good hopes. You've kind of felt inferior most of your life and you felt you were just one of the masses anyway and there was nothing special about you and you were kind of one of the crowd scene that formed a background against which all the stars would perform and so you've never really had any good hopes for yourself or any special dreams or thought there was anything special about you. And you've always thought that the best you could face in this life, with your sense of inferiority and inadequacy, is just a kind of subsistence life that will get you to the end without too many disasters or without too much pain.

Now, if you feel any of that at all this morning then the verse that we are studying these weeks is written for you. So I'd like you to look at it. It's Romans 15:4 and you know we've been on this verse more weeks than we can remember because God seems to say to me each week, I have something more to say to someone through this, so Romans 15:4. "For whatever was written in former days," that's in this book [the Bible] written by men moved by the Holy Spirit you remember, over a period of 1500 years -- "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

God wants you to receive some hope this morning and some encouragement if that's the attitude you've had to your life, he really does. The first piece that he brought to my mind to share with you that was written in former days is a story you might remember of a woman whom Jesus met at a well and he asked her for some water. Now, if you would turn to John 4 you'd see the way that story develops, it's John 4:16. He asked her for water and then he said, "Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.'"

God sees everything in your life. You're not just performing actions and saying words that only you know, you aren't. You are not just a little flea in the corner of the universe, doing your little thing and only you will remember it. That's not it, loved ones. Jesus knew all about that woman, because he knows about every human being on the earth. He knows about you. He knows what your life is like. He sees your life. Your life just isn't a little nothing. The Creator of the world sees all that you have done up to this time, he knows it in detail. That's why Jesus said, "Even the hairs of your head are numbered." You know you couldn't attempt to count the hairs of your head. That's how detailed our Creator is about your life. No, you are not a little nothing. You are not somebody that

is just fiddling your way through eternity here and at the end, only you will know what you've actually done. No, the Creator of the world knows every detail of what you have done.

He knows exactly where your life is at this moment. He knows -- your dad might not know, your mom might not know, your boss might not know, your wife might not know, your friends might not know, your psychiatrist might not know, your teachers might not know -- but God knows, God knows you and he knows your life in detail. He sees every smile and every tear and every worry and every happiness. God knows you, he knows everything that has ever happened to you, and he knows all the secrets that nobody else knows. He knows all that Jesus knows and Jesus knows every detail of your life. He knows things about you that you don't know. He sees things developing inside you that he knows he will have to heal further down the road. He knows things that are beginning to take place in your body that you have no notion about but he sees it and he knows it.

So, loved ones, first of all, you are not nobody. You might be nobody compared with Ronald Reagan [former American President], you might be nobody in all your friends' eyes, you might be nobody in all our eyes, you might be nobody in the whole world's eyes, but you are a vitally important person about which God, your Creator knows every detail. So, it's very important that you see that; that you are dear and precious and important and everything that has happened in your life, God knows up to this present moment. Not only that, there is something more. It's not just that he knows what is happening in your life, but look at Job 34:21. "For his eyes are upon the ways of a man, and he sees all his steps." God sees all your steps, he sees every step you take, he sees every decision you make, and he sees everything that you are going to do tomorrow.

God's eyes are upon your ways and he sees every one of your steps. He knows every detail -- but he doesn't just see it. Look at Proverbs 16:9, "A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." You think, what job am I going to get, where am I going to go on vacation, what will I do with my money, what will I do about my marriage? Your mind plans -- but it's God that directs your steps. So if you think, well, the place I am at now is just the result of a lot of guess work in my part. I've done my best, at different times in my life, I was more or less mature, at different times of my life, I was governed by all kinds of wrong motives, so where I am at the moment, to tell you the truth, I don't really know how I got here except that it's by a series of, at times right decisions, at times faulty judgments, at times wrong decisions, so to tell you the truth, I don't know if God even knows where to find me. I have made so many errors over the past years, that where I am at present, I can't see if there is any relationship to any kind of absolute in the world.

That's wrong. The Lord is far better than the biggest thing that Cray [computer company] has created and some of his are pretty big. And IBM I think are going to beat him in the next couple of years, but God is far bigger than the biggest mainframe computer that has yet been created in the world. The Father is able to read your mind to preserve your freedom of will and to let your dear little mind tick away there and make its decisions and yet -- incredible that it is, we'll only know it when we get to heaven how he does it -- he incredibly and lovingly is able to direct your steps without forcing your free will and that's what the Bible says. Your present stage in life has been reached certainly by you using your mind and planning things in your thoughts, but that isn't how you got where you are. God has lovingly and graciously directed your steps, so that you would not get into any situation from which he could not redeem you, that's it.

In other words, if the Lord had just let you and me go, we would get ourselves into ridiculous situations, where it is impossible for him to touch us or to get a hold of us at all. But the Lord allows us to use our minds and our free wills and yet, in an incredible way that only a magnificent

computer mind is able to do and a computer mind with a loving heart and tender mercies, he is able to direct your steps. Actually you know this, you know that at times you have with your mind planned all kinds of things and it's turned out utterly differently. So you know that yourself, that at times you have planned with your mind to do certain things and if you had had your way, you would have been in big trouble. And you know that there is an incredible Providence that seems to be taking a hold at times in your life and directing your steps.

So it's incredible. God does not only know what you're doing, he does not only know every detail of your life, but he actually has had a hand in it. If you said to me, in Gorbachev's life? Yes. The Lord is able to do it without destroying their free will. He is never able to bring them into his kingdom, or bring them into an acknowledged relationship with Jesus without them willing it, but he is all the time working because of the general benefits of the atonement. He is all the time working in all our lives to make sure we are still within reach, lovingly within reach. We can make it harder and harder for God, but still he is in an amazing way directing our paths.

So no, it is actually quite hard to get lost. You have to be pretty determined to get lost because God is such a loving Father. Now you can get lost but it is quite hard to get lost as far as his knowledge of you is concerned. I suppose it's very easy to get lost if you keep on exercising your rebellious will against him, and to get lost as far as heaven is concerned. But it's quite hard to get lost as far as him managing to keep you within striking distance. So that whenever you turn around, he will be able to bring you into himself. So loved ones, no, it doesn't matter what has happened in your life, your life is far from lost, it's far from gone a way out of God's plan, it's far from gone too far in one direction. There is a dear Father in heaven who is looking down upon you and has directed your steps this far.

Now what's very important to see is that none of you nor me, none of us are too small or unimportant -- because isn't that what gets us? I mean that's what gets every one of us. In a way where we're big heads and we think we're just wonderful people, but deep, deep down, there is a feeling, eh, I am a nobody, I am a little nobody that really I can't see God being too concerned about. Loved ones, what was written in former times was written for our encouragement, it's Mark 10:46. "And they came to Jericho; and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David have mercy on me!' And Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; rise, he is calling you.' And throwing off his mantle he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And the blind man said to him, 'Master, let me receive my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way."

Now it can't be worse than a blind beggar. I mean, you can't be more unimportant or more insignificant than a poor beggar that is blind and can't see and cries out and all the rest of the people say, "Keep quiet, keep quiet." It doesn't matter how small you think you are, it doesn't matter how unimportant you think you are, you can't be worse than a blind beggar. You are at least as important as a blind beggar. At least you can see, so you can yell in the right direction. The Lord God knows you and is concerned about you and will touch you and heal you and bring your life into line, whoever you are, whoever I am, however unimportant I am, however unimportant you are, however pitifully small and insignificant we think we are, our God, the Creator, is one that looks out for blind beggars.

He is looking for you and he is concerned about your life. In fact the truth is, it's not just that God knows all about your life, and is interested in your life, but God has a plan, a plan for you, a plan for you that he has for nobody else. And I'll show you loved ones where it says that. It's in Psalms 139, and it's just an amazing Psalm, verse 13. "For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well; my frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance, in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me," -- isn't that wild -- "The days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee."

I don't know how you felt about the usual joke, "Oh I knew you when you were a twinkle in your father's eye." But when that was said to me, I knew it was kind of funny more or less but I also felt, yes that all I was was a kind of a little bit of sperm and my mum's body and that was how I came to be. And I always felt, is that what I am, just the chance results of these genes and all that kind of thing. And of course, God describes it entirely differently. He points out that underneath all those rather crude, physical ways and medical terms that we use, there was an amazing miracle taking place and actually I you see in verse 13, "For thou didst form my inward parts," -- not my dad, my mum, my great grandmother, my great, great grandmother or my great, great grandfather or whatever drug my mother happened to be on at that time or whatever food she was eating, but -- "thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother womb." Not just the whole thing coming together and in a kind of chaotic way. But "Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb."

I mean it's kind of funny, isn't it? There God is in there with the needles you know, knitting. But it indicates that is a very definite, deliberate putting together of something, and I remember the way my mum used to count the rows, count the stitches. And that's the way it happened. You are far from chance; you are carefully and with great detail designed and personally made by God. He covers it up with sperm and all kinds of other things to make us think everything is spontaneous, but the beautiful thing about all this spontaneity in the world is that it comes deliberately and consciously and carefully planned from the Father's own heart.

And so he says, "For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well; my frame was not hidden from thee." In other words, you know me not because you've been watching me these last years and seeing the way I'm going, you knew me before I was born. You knew all my tendencies before I came ever -- actually the secret is, before I ever came into my mother's womb. But that's a deep one that we need to just discuss over the coming year but actually God knew you even before you came into your mother's womb.

In other words he had you planned from before the beginning of the earth. And he has a plan for your life that is absolutely perfect for you. You know that, that's true if you look at the world of nature. It's amazing how the things in nature are exactly designed for the purpose that they fulfill. And so you can see how much more it is with you and me. You are designed exactly right for the purpose that God has for you to fulfill. And he designed you that way in your mother's womb. So, my nose did not come from my dad; I might think oh dad, could you not have done a better job, but now I have to say, "Father, you gave me this, not Jimmy Durante [an American comedian] but this one

and this you designed perfectly for exactly the purpose in life that you have for me to fulfil. It's really nice."

Because you then begin to relax about all your natural characteristics and you begin to stop comparing yourself with other people because you see it's dumb. The Lord has made each one of us an absolute original and "He looked at everything and, behold it was very good" [Genesis 1:31] -- that included you. The Lord looked at you and his plan for you, and he said "Behold, she is very good. She is a masterpiece and she will fulfill exactly what I planned." Or "he is a wonderful design, just an original. I have never made another like him. And he has the capacity to fulfill exactly my dream for him." That's it, loved ones. That's it. You're not just a nothing; you're not just a throw up from evolution.

You are somebody that is being designed carefully by God. Do you see how you're as important as Abraham Lincoln? Do you begin to grasp that? You see, if these things are true, you can see that to God, there are no Abraham Lincolns; there are no Beatles, that's what we do in our silly world here. There aren't, you are as important as Abraham Lincoln, you're as important as Jesus, see. You're as important as Jesus. You are a dream that God has for this world. A dream that only you can fulfil. Nobody else can fulfill it and if you don't fulfill it, it will never be fulfilled and the universe will forever miss that fragrance, that's right. That's right.

So the Lord God has planned you carefully and designed you perfectly because he has a dream for you. A plan that you can be utterly satisfied in yourself. I don't know if you heard about the guy in California that died some years ago and he had I think a three-acre garden. And he had it absolutely filled with all kinds of wooden birds that swung on perches. All kinds of moving things that he made that blew in the wind; I mean the three-acre garden was absolutely chock-full. He spent his whole life doing that. He is like the guy you remember that was on the Coral Show isn't that his name, who built a road? You remember what he felt, he should build the road, built it right through the wilderness, he didn't complete it absolutely, but I remember him being on television, he was building a road.

God has something for you to do that will fulfill you; doesn't matter too much what the rest of us think about it. That's a detail. Doesn't matter too much what society thinks about it, doesn't matter too much whether you get your name in the papers, doesn't matter too much whether anybody knows about it. But God has something for you to do that only you can do and you're designed perfectly to do it. So, your life is big, it's important, it's vital to the Creator of the world.

It's just amazing, this other verse I'll show you, if you don't tell anybody. It's Ephesians 2:10. We shared it before, but it is such a mind twister and yet so encouraging and reassuring. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." If you really receive that, you'll breathe a great sigh of relief. "You mean I don't have to get out there, and create something?" That's right, you don't. "You mean I don't have to get out there and make it through the executive wilderness?" That's right, you don't. "You mean I don't have to get out there and justify my existence here and there?" That's right, you don't. "You mean I don't have to get out there and prove myself?" That's right.

You are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He has prepared beforehand that you should walk in. That's it. The Lord has the good works prepared, even the good works, not just the vague path, not just the general direction, not just the career, he has the good works actually prepared, so that as you do each one of them, you know that you're doing something that God

has actually prepared for you. He does not delight in giving you a good work that you're not able to do. He doesn't do that. He is a loving Father. The good works that he has prepared for you are possible for you in Christ Jesus. That's what the Bible says. We are God's workmanship.

You're God's workmanship. You're a product of God, you're not a product of your mum or dad, you're not a result of evolution, you're not a result just of your own chance decisions or your own reasonings or your lack of reasonings. You're God's workmanship, he made you. You've been created in Christ Jesus because it's only in Christ and Christ in you that you can fulfill all the dreams that God has for you and you are created in him for good works that God has prepared beforehand for you to walk in. That's it.

Are you important? Only so important that Jesus will miss part of the reason he came to earth, if you do not allow him to take part in your life with you. That's it. You are put here on earth to willingly band yourself together with God's son Jesus, so that together you too can do some works and express some part of his Father's heart that nobody else can express or do. That's it, yes loved ones, that's it. With all my heart I say to you, this is not just kind of the pep talk that they give us when we kind of have trouble with our self-esteem. This is truth, this is reality; you're unique. The Father has designed you perfectly for the thing that he has for you to do. He has already a dream for you, a perfect way for you to go in your life and he has his son Jesus surrounding you and inside you. So that all you have to do is say, "Lord Jesus, I want to get on to this way that my Maker has for me. Will you begin to lead me along this way and show me it? And indeed Lord, I'm not able to do it myself, these good works, but you are able to do them through me. So, Lord let's go, let's begin."

I'd encourage you do that today. Just do it. I'd say just do it now. Just do it. Stop all the business of, where is my life going -- all that stuff. Just start now today. Because at the end of this life each one of us will come before our Maker and loved ones, He will say to you, "What about the dream I had for you?" And you have no right to say, "I didn't know you had a dream." Because today that dream has been set forth in his word for you and you know you have heard it. So I would encourage you, just today turn around to the Lord Jesus and say, "Lord, I want to get onto this plan that my Maker has for me. I want to stop looking down on myself; I want to stop criticizing my abilities or my lack of abilities. I want to stop blaspheming God by criticizing his workmanship. And I want to start thanking you Lord that I'm just the way I am. I want to thank you for the way my nose is and the way my ears are, and I want to thank you for the mind I have. I thank you Lord that it's just right. And now Lord Jesus let's go, let's get going and get this life right on track." And as sure as you should do that, your life will begin to just open up beautifully like a flower to God's sunlight.

Let us pray. Dear Father, we would give ourselves to you today. We apologize Lord for the way we've criticized ourselves as if we had a right to do it; we realize we were in the process criticizing you. And we realize too that we were going by the standards of society, and putting ourselves down in the light of those standards. Lord, we thank you that you have made us unique, that there is nobody else just like me, that there is no one else with just the abilities that you've given me. And Lord that I'm your workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which you have prepared beforehand for me to walk in. And they're exciting works and satisfying and fulfilling. Lord Jesus, let's go together and let's do what you've been wanting to do for so many years. Just take me now and let's begin your Father's plan for my life, this Sunday. May the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with each one of you now and forever more. Amen.

