

A New Start for Your Life

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

During these first four weeks of the academic year, we've been discussing the first principles of the presuppositions on which we here base our weekly studies of the explanation of reality that Christianity gives. You remember that we started about four weeks ago with the question "Is there a God?" and we concluded with Darwin really and Einstein, which is fairly good company, that the existence of a Supreme Being, who is personal and intelligent, is the most plausible and indeed the only completely satisfactory explanation for our own existence and for the existence of the order and design in our universe and for the presence of our conscience in us and our sense of moral obligation.

Then you remember, we studied the various human accounts of what this Creator is like and we saw that the accounts of men like Buddha and Mohammad and Zoroaster, are accounts of their own personal subjective opinions of what the Creator of the universe is like, and that there is a vast difference between the Koran and the Buddhist scriptures or the Hindu scriptures or Zoroaster or the Mormon scriptures and the Bible. The other scriptures are the accounts of the personal subjective visions of ordinary human beings like ourselves.

There is no way of substantiating or confirming them unless you can get into the mind of the person himself, but that the Bible is a remarkable, historical account of the actions and the words of not only our Creator but of His own Son in our time. And they can be substantiated by confirming them, in comparison with other contemporary accounts, and by studies of archaeology and by studies of other writers outside those that are in, for instance the New Testament, but who refer to the same events and the same people.

Then we discussed really the most striking and startling phenomenon of our world and that is the phenomenon of a man who was born in 6 B.C. and who said he was the only begotten son of the Creator of our world and that he knew God before the world was created. You remember we examined his life and found that it does not have the abnormality or imbalance of a lunatic. And it is a contradiction in semantics to call him a great ethical teacher and a liar and that there was not sufficient time for a legend to develop after his death, because we have written accounts that circulated within 14 or 15 years after he died. So we were bound to conclude that because of his power over sickness and disease and because of his perfect humanity and a sinless life and, above all, by this incredible power over death that he expressed in his own resurrection, that when we deal with Jesus of Nazareth, we're dealing with the actual Son of the Creator of our universe.

This Sunday is the pivotal point in your own thinking and mine. It is, because loved ones, if you believe all those things, it makes not an iota of difference to your life, really. Believing all those things need make no difference to your life. In fact, this dear book, the Bible, says that even the demons believe and shudder. Even the demons believe all those things because it is reality. It is very difficult for a logical mind faced with the intellectual evidence that we have to reject the idea that this man Jesus is more than human and that in fact he is what he says he is. He is the Son of our maker but the pivotal point in your thinking is today.

It's not WHAT you believe that makes the difference because lots of people believe that smoking causes lung cancer but as soon as they get out, they are smoking like mad. It's not what you believe that matters, at the end of the day, it's what you DO in the light of that belief, and I'd just

point out to you the real situation.

If I said to you, "I am the son of your Creator and my Father and I were close, before you were ever made, and I have been here on earth and I have left the earth and I came back here and people have seen me alive. I am the son of the Creator of the world. Don't you see that?"

Loved ones, you know in your heart that if you believe that with your whole being, there'll be a whole response from you to me that will run along the lines of, "Well, tell me why am I here? You must know it all. Why did your Father make me? Look, my name is so and so, this is what I am doing here on earth. Now, what should I be doing? Why am I here? What did you put me here to do? What do you want me to do?" You know that would be your reaction, it certainly would be mine.

If I could get one of you who could prove to me that you were the son of my maker, my whole response to you would be, "Well, listen tell me. My name is Ernest O'Neill. I've been here so long and I wonder what should I do? What should I be doing with my life and listen, what's the point of all this? Listen -- there are things I want to ask you about this life and about life after death. Can you tell me?"

In other words loved ones, once you believe a person to be the son of the Creator of the universe, that person becomes your total authority in everything and if he doesn't, do you see that you're being illogical, do you see that? Actually, in order to run your life your own way, you have to be illogical. You have to say, "From the evidence, this seems to be the Creator of the world but forget it, I will run my life according to my own ideas however poor they maybe."

So I'd like to assume that some of you at least are interested in knowing what this man said about our lives and what he said was the most important thing for us to do. I'd just share it with you simply as I have been able to understand it myself.

This man Jesus says to you this morning, "Look at your body. You have wrinkles. Even the youngest of you have wrinkles that you didn't have before. Even the youngest of you probably have discovered gray hairs. It must be very obvious to you that all you are is flesh. You're born of flesh, the way your grandparents were and your great grandparents. And you must see that that flesh is deteriorating and you must see that you're not going to live any longer certainly than your grandparents, probably 70 or 80 years at the most."

In fact, this morning, do you know that millions of cells in your body have died since you got up this morning? Now, some have renewed but more have died than have been renewed or reborn, and that's the first thing that this dear person has told us, that all of us here are just flesh. That is, we're just mental life and physical life that is not going to last beyond 70 or 80 years.

Then, the second thing he says is, "You know you won't believe that. You see all the evidence for it but you don't believe it. It's as if you're on a bus together, a greyhound bus that's traveling at about 80 mph and five miles on, there is a concrete wall into which you know it's going to crash, and yet you somehow won't believe it and you keep on thinking that you weren't made to go out like a light after 70 or 80 years, no it can't be, it can't be. There is some way in which we can avoid this," and Jesus says, "That's what you all think. You all live as if you're never going to end," and yet He says, "You are going to end. The physical and mental life that you have is not made to last forever and it's going to deteriorate and die and that's going to be it."

Yet he says you won't believe it and that's why you keep trying to parley the attributes you have of your physical and mental life into some semblance of life that goes on forever and you know it's right, we do, you know that. I mean deep deep down, every one of us here, feels we should have stability. We feel it, don't we?

We feel there must be steadiness somewhere. I mean, we see popes come and go, we see politicians come and go, we see our own parents and our children at times, come and go, but we keep on feeling, "No, we weren't made to come and go like this. We weren't. There must be some security or stability or safety somewhere," and it's interesting, isn't it, we all feel that.

When we see the old Prudential Rock, we feel, "Yeah, we were made for something like that. There must be some kind of safety that we can get." I mean we spend most of our lives, poor little slaves that we are; we spend most of our lives trying to bring that about, don't we? We try to get a good education and try to bargain that into the best job we can possibly get and then we try to do something with our salary, you know the way we do. We pay it out in rent and then if we can get a little extra, we start salting it into an insurance policy and we try to build up the best insurance package we can, the best life insurance, the best fire insurance, and then if we have a little extra, we try to buy some stocks and shares and in our heart of hearts, we're trying to somehow get beyond that 'fiddler on the roof' experience that most of us have.

That feeling that the slightest breeze will blow us right off. And so we spend most of our lives trying to establish safety and security. We sense that we were made for that, don't we? Then of course we're utterly cast down and continually haunted by a Howard Hughes who seemed to do it better than all the rest of us, seemed to get more money than all the rest of us and yet died you know, in loneliness and died as a pauper really, in the conditions of a pauper.

We wonder, "Well, we were made for that but how do we get it?"

I think it's the same with our feelings. We feel we were made for peace. Somehow, we were made not to worry about hitting that wall in that bus, at the end of five miles. We somehow feel, "But we're made for peace", and so you know, we're always trying to get it. We're always trying to experience peace and yet it's interesting, isn't it, peace itself bores us, isn't that right?

So we want peace on the one hand and we want excitement on the other, but we somehow feel there's some way in which we can break away from the bonds of this earthly existence and get into the realm of eternity or infinity. I think that's why we sky dive and hang glide, isn't it? Why we go down slopes as fast as we can on skis or go around corners as fast as we can on motorbikes or cars?

We somehow feel, "We were made to burst beyond these bonds that we feel," and we sense if we could just get the atmosphere of the South sea islands and so we all dream of South sea islands or tropical shores where you'd have the serenity and the peace of Walden Pond and then on the other hand, yet have the wild excitement of the Arabian nights. And we're always trying to do that and that's actually why we, at times, use each other to do that, don't we?

We try to get every kind of relationship we can, every kind of experience to somehow produce that mixture of peace and excitement that we feel we were made for and yet, it's kind of disappointing, isn't it? I mean a soap bubble burst in your hand; you feel that would so often symbolize our experience.

However many people we use, however many relationships we prostitute to get the excitement and the peace that we want, somehow we end up in loneliness and delusion and in a desolation and an

emptiness that is in absolute contrast with the sense of conviviality and the sense of utter satisfaction that we feel we should get from some deep intimate experience. And yet we feel we were made for those things.

It's the same with ourselves. I had a terrible inferiority complex. So I don't think inferiority complex gets you out of this feeling. However inferior we all feel, we all have some of the feeling of John Milton, the English poet, that we were born for some great thing, or we were born to do something that nobody else could do, or somehow we are important.

It's interesting you know, but every one of us is feeling that the person next to you is feeling the same as you. "Oh that was a terrible shock to me, because I thought I was the only guy," and we all seem to have a feeling that, "Well, yeah, yeah, they're clever, they're more intelligent than I, they're either stronger, they're better looking, but I have something that sets me apart from them," and usually it's nothing but that thought that we are different from them, but we do have that feeling.

We feel it's more than a gold watch at the end. It's more than the name on the gravestone. Someone, somewhere, somehow must have noticed that I have passed this way, somebody! And we feel we are in some way significant. There's some way in which we do go on forever and that's why we love that feeling.

The scientists prove to us, "Oh yes, everything in the universe somehow goes on and on forever." We like to feel that, yeah, somehow surely we can't just go out like a light. And that's it, and yet Bing Crosby haunts us, doesn't he, because they don't talk about him anymore, and Jack Benny, you don't talk about him anymore. Eisenhower, once in a while, Howard Hughes, rarely.

It's amazing how even the most famous people seem to go out of life and that's it. And so we're haunted with this feeling that we should have more security and safety than we actually possess and we should have more of the feeling of an eternal life than we have and we were made for something beyond this world and yet somehow we can't get it, and the more we try, the more we become perverted, hedonistic, egotistical, domineering, manipulating monsters who actually become so perverted that we could not be trusted with the power to live eternally even if it were given to us, because we would turn our universe over an infinity of years into a hell.

Yet the amazing thing is, Jesus says, "Ponce De Leon, searched for the fountain of eternal life and your mythological history books are full of people who searched for the elixir of life that would maintain eternal youthfulness because you were actually made to live forever," that's what Jesus says.

He says, "All those feelings you have reflect reality. You were made to live forever. My Father did actually make you to live forever but not with that mental or physical life that you have, that will never last forever. That itself has to be transformed by the life that runs through my veins," Jesus says.

"The life that was able to transform my broken wounded body on the Cross into a life and a body that could pass through walls and cover immense distances in a short time, you have to receive that life into you and that's my Father's will, and you all are trying to make do with the mental or physical life you have and trying to parley it or whomp it up to the nth degree through drugs and through something that will take away the terrible anxiety in your heart into an eternal life that lasts

forever."

And He says, "You can't do it. You can't make a stone into an animal. Stone does not have life in it. However long you leave it there, it never becomes an animal and you yourselves cannot become the beings that my Father made you to become unless you receive from him the same life that runs through me." And then Jesus has pointed out to us, "My Father was willing enough to give you that at one time but do you see that if he gave it to you now, the way you're living, trying to get everything you need from each other and from the rest of the world and the perverted monsters that you now are, you would destroy the universe with this power to live forever."

In other words, "Your own personality now is so perverted that it doesn't matter what power my Father would give you, you would not use it to benefit the world. You would not use it to make it what he wants it to be. You would use it to make the world your slave." I don't know if you have noticed that that's true in your own life. I certainly did.

I noticed that I could have little feelings of good desires and good motives and when I tried to express them in my own life, it came out wrong. I mean often, I really wanted to be patient with my loved one and I couldn't be patient. I mean I got so used to using other people to do what I wanted that I could not be patient when they didn't do what I wanted, and I found that my personality was so perverted and twisted that even when I wanted to do the right thing, I couldn't do it.

What this Son of God says to us is, "That's why when I died, I took your hands with me. Your hands, if my Father gave to you the Spirit of his eternal life that runs through him and me, and he wanted your hands to do that, to give, your hands are so used to grabbing that they grab, they continue to grab and you'd actually destroy that life in you. Your eyes were given to express love and generosity and joy and love to others. Your eyes have become so irrevocably covetous and filled with desire and lust that even if my Spirit wants to express that through you, it cannot, because your eyes have become perverted. Your body, your legs, your feet, your hands, your side, every part of you, your whole personality is mystically enslaved to this world from which you have tried to get all the security and the happiness that you need and unless that is destroyed and remade completely, my Father cannot give you the life that will enable you to live forever."

And Jesus says, "When I allowed my side to have a sword put through it, I was only expressing the miracle that happened in eternity, when I allowed all of you to be put in me and destroyed and completely renewed, and that is something that my Father has done to all of you. And you are able this very moment to experience that complete change in your own life if you will accept at last, the destruction of that old in-turned, selfish, egotistic, domineering, manipulating life trying to produce its own security and stability, its own happiness, its own sense of significance. If you will accept the destruction of that in me and believe that you were destroyed in me and then will submit to my Spirit as he comes into you, that is what my Father wants you to do."

Loved ones, that's what Jesus says, and if you're one of those independent kind of philosophic types that I certainly was and you just want a little help, you don't mind a little help, "I'll do with a little help but I'll really do it myself," you'll never come into reality. You won't.

Jesus is very down-to-earth. He says, "You have to be absolutely changed. That's why I died. I didn't die to give you people a good example of how to love others. You've had plenty of good examples. You don't need good examples. You need the power to change and when I died in a cosmic miracle, God, my Creator Father, remade you and you are able to experience that now." Really I just

thought of it you know, it is like those old Firestone tires.

They all have been recalled, they have, and all you have to do is go in but you do have to go in. You do have to go in and say, "Okay, I'll trade in the old ones that you say now have become faulty or are dangerous and I'll receive the new ones." The whole transaction is already done, the price has been paid, the whole thing is ready but you do have to be willing to make the change and to allow it to be made true in your life, and loved ones, that's the crux of what Jesus says.

"Are you willing to accept that you are a hopelessly perverted, twisted personality? That it would be a crime for my Father to allow you to live forever in this universe? Are you willing to accept that, and are you willing to accept that you were destroyed with me on Calvary and that all your in-turned selfish life was destroyed there and are you willing now to live for me and for my Father instead of yourself?" And then secondly, "Will you submit yourself now to my Spirit as he begins to come into you?" Loved ones, that's what Jesus, the Son of our Maker says we have to do.

So if you're sitting here and it's kind of come home to you for the first time and you say to me, "Well, what do I need to do then?" I'd say just those two steps. One, are you willing to join Jesus on the Cross? Are you willing to have everything destroyed in you that is filled with egotism and selfishness that is filled with setting yourself up as your own God? Are you willing for that? God will show you the things that you need to be willing for, but are you willing to have that destroyed? Are you willing to admit that you're wrong and you need to be utterly changed and you're willing to submit to that change?

Secondly, will you now this morning, by faith, receive the Spirit of eternal life that enabled Jesus to rise from the dead into your own life and begin to obey that Spirit as a real person and a friend? That's it. But do you see it isn't a philosophical concept. It isn't something that you think over and you like the idea of. I am asking you, will. The "will" is the key.

For the past three Sundays, we've been talking about the mind. Now the will is the key. Are you willing to accept the destruction of your old selfish life in Jesus and are you willing to submit your will this moment now to the Spirit that will begin to move inside you and begin to come out through your mind and give your mind a sense of what you ought to do in life and in the Creator's plan? He will begin to touch your emotions and begin to give you the sense of joy and peace that comes from a relationship with an infinite eternal person and that Spirit that will begin to come out through your whole will and give you a sense that you are loved by your Father and you are His dear son and you are actually unique and you are dear in his eyes. That's what Jesus, the Son of our Creator says and explains.

Now, what will you do with Jesus? What is your reaction at this moment? That places you in a place of life or a place of death, this day. Let us pray.

Jesus, we see that you have evidence to give us that you are the Son of our Maker that no one else has. And we do see too that if you overcame death once, you must be able to come in and out of this life as often as you want. And we do see that logically you must be alive today and you must be able to see us and Jesus, we hear your words that "all that is born of the flesh is flesh. You must be born again, born of the Spirit". And Jesus we see that unless the old creation is destroyed, there can be no new birth or new creation.

So Lord, we thank you for putting it so plainly and we thank you for showing us that your death was

actually the destruction of our perversion and that you are now asking us, are we willing to live in the benefits of that death and to allow our personality to be completely renewed and recreated, and Lord we see that that's our choice. We see you're asking us, are we willing to die to our own selves and to our in-turned life.

Lord, we see that you're asking us this morning that if we're willing, will we submit this moment to your Spirit, to the Spirit of the lamb who is willing to come into us, to not only enable us to live forever but most of all, to live an unselfish loving life like yours.

Holy Spirit, we would want you in, we would receive you and we would begin to obey the promptings that you give us so that we may begin to become eternal as our Father planned.

Just as we're praying loved ones, it's really important that you do what you need to do at this moment and take whatever action or attitude to Jesus that you know is right for you. I'd just encourage us as we remain with our heads bowed to do that and take a definite step this morning. It's very easy for us I think to continue to talk about these things and do nothing. I'd just point out to you that nothing will happen unless you take a step.

So often we've said, "We can't think ourselves into this thing." You have to will yourself into it by taking a new attitude to yourself and to your God and then ordering your will in harmony with that new attitude.

Lord Jesus, we would ask you now to begin to run our lives, we're asking you in faith and we ask you to begin to speak to us in ways that we can understand, so that we may have some direction in our lives and may begin to develop as your Father planned for us. We ask this in your name and because you're alive and you're truth and we want to live in reality.

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 evermore. Amen.