

Reconciled

Romans 5:7b

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

You can read the story of God's creation of the earth in Genesis. And in Chapter 2:7-9 it says, "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

That's really what it was like on the first morning. It was beautiful. We knew our Maker just as our dear Father and old Adam had no trouble. You remember I shared with you before. God showed him where to get the orange juice, he went over, got it, and had breakfast. Then the Father showed him what he wanted him to do that day. Adam obeyed him and he dammed up this river, he pruned that tree or he ploughed this field. God therefore provided everything that Adam needed and Adam received all his enjoyment from just working hand and glove with the Father. Loved ones, that's what it was really like.

It really was a beautiful place and that was the Father's plan. That also is his plan for us. It is possible to live that way. You know it's all gone miserable. We were watching TV in London about two weeks ago and Jack Manoe was on, the geneticist, talking about genetic engineering as the only solution to the over-population problem. You know what their solution is.

You select the ones who can reproduce and you eliminate the ones who can't reproduce. You know that's the miserable mess we men and women have got ourselves into. It was a beautiful place and God would have governed it if we had listened to him. He'd have governed us so that there wasn't this over-population problem but you know that it's all just gone down the drain.

Really, at the very beginning men knew their position in the world. They knew what it was like. They knew why they were here. They knew how important they were to their Maker. But one of the things you and I fight now is just the sheer insignificance of our lives. It's come to such a point that we all feel that terrible insignificance. It's so hard even to gather together like this, however loving and concerned we are with each other. We've had the feeling, "Oh, I am insignificant. I really am not important to anybody." You know the way that has led you into trying to make yourself significant.

From when we were teenagers, we've been trying to get ourselves noticed by somebody. We feel so insignificant. We want somebody to notice us so we'll be significant to somebody. We tried all kinds of things when we were teenagers. Now we've got a little more subtle. We think, "Maybe if I do a doctorate – there aren't so many doctors as there are bachelors." So, we go for a doctorate.

We're all struggling to get some kind of significance. It is very difficult to get that without eventually beginning to discourage others from getting significance. It's very hard to try to go for significance in your own life without ending up discouraging others from catching the limelight.

You know bit-by-bit you begin to manipulate and to dominate other people in order to get yourself

into a position of significance. You know how that leads to alienation. You begin to feel, "Well if I am doing this with my roommate, if I am doing this with the people in my family, if I am doing this with my girlfriend, then they must all be doing it to me." It leaves us with alienation and we begin to suspect each other. We begin to suspect everybody else is trying to manipulate and dominate me. In trying to establish our significance we're all becoming fearful of each other establishing their significance.

It just goes on and on like that and we try to get over it in different ways. Some of us begin to get so distraught about it that we settle, "Well, we have to get safe in some way. If everybody is alienated to me and everybody is trying to get one over on me, then I'd better band together with some others and we'll band against the rest of the world." And so we love to join things.

We love to join clubs for the wrong reason. We love to be part of a political party for the wrong reason. It's good to be for a governor or for Nixon. But so many of us are just using that to feel we're with a herd, we're with a group of some kind that will be safe because it's a bundle of people who are grouping together to get their own significance in the world. You know that that whole herd instinct doesn't do it any good at all. It begins to destroy the individuality of us, ourselves.

We begin to cease to be individuals ourselves, those of us inside the group, and it further intimidates the people outside the group. They feel more and more threatened. Brothers and sisters, that's something of the mess that we men and women have made of what was a beautiful situation at the beginning.

You know as we try to tackle all these problems, we get to feel more and more inadequate. Because we feel inadequate, we think that we have to do something about our inadequacy. And so we try to prove ourselves adequate. We set goals for ourselves in this life and we try to hit those goals. We call the people who hit those goals achievers. The people who fail to hit them, they're under-achievers. We try to achieve in order to declare ourselves adequate and significant in some way. It all brings strain and striving.

We're all straining and striving for the "A" (top grade) even though we know that the university administration is committed to giving only four "A's" per class. But we're all aiming for the "A". There is strain and striving because we're all trying to get to that point where we prove that we're of some value in the world. Yet you know if you're like me, you just never get to feel you're valuable enough. You feel nobody really estimates your personal value high enough.

The more indiscriminate bombing that takes place in Vietnam, the more violence that takes place in the city streets, the more mass classes of 500 people watching a TV set there are, the more we feel that we have very little value to anybody. Therefore we try to establish our value and you know how we do it. We try to get into a position where we prove that we're indispensable. This is what makes so many wives and so many children pout when they're not given attention. They feel, "No, I am of value, I am of value." It's what causes so many husbands to seek alliances elsewhere outside their home because they want somebody that gives them some value and respects them.

It's really what makes so many business and church people just pained. They're always trying to get into a position where they think they're indispensable. Now brothers and sisters, you know that we're not talking about everybody else, we're talking about us, poor people. That's very much us. In all kinds of different ways we're trying to justify our being here. We're trying to prove that we have a right to be here.

Now brothers and sisters, don't you see where it leads you? It really leads you into constant frustration. Your mind and emotions get utterly disturbed and destroyed and you have to do something to quiet them down just in order to keep going. Nobody is giving you the notice that you need. Nobody is giving you the significance that you need. Nobody is setting the personal value upon you that you need. Therefore, you get frustrated inside and resentful. You get worried and troubled and anxious. All you can do is deal with those symptoms.

You know the way we deal with it -- we try to calm our emotions. First of all we do it with the tranquilizers, then with the alcohol, and then we go a bit further into the drugs. Now you know the latest thing is what some of you mentioned in prayer this morning where you try to hypnotize the soulish powers, the mind and emotion, into a place of passivity through chanting "Hari Krishna" or through practicing the negation of self and Zen Buddhism. You try to blot it out and that's the point that many of us are at today even in America.

In Europe it's worse. The old story is that Europe is ahead of us in thinking and they are ahead of us in the decline. There's a great sense of hopelessness. People feel, "If only I can blot out the whole mess. I can't find a solution to it so if I can just blot it out I'll last through it." That's what sister was talking about with the girl concerned with suicide.

I don't think there's one of us who live in this chaotic world with all its alienation and all its self-seeking and desire for significance that have not come to the point where there was real heavy depression you're stepping over. Now brothers and sisters, do you know that there is a sensible, planned solution? The Maker of the world does have a way out of that.

Now, all of you won't accept it this morning, and I understand that. If you have come in this morning with a whole lot of atheism inside and a whole lot of agnosticism, you're not going to accept what I explained this moment. But I am asking you to begin to consider that there is a way other than the drugs, a way other than the alcohol, a way other than the occult. There is a real solution.

There was a man in the first century. You know who he was, Jesus. He said, "Listen, you're all seeking significance from the wrong people. You're all trying to get it from each other. The reason you're trying to get it is that you have lived your life without the Maker of the world. Things were beautiful at the beginning but you no longer treat him as your father. You treat him as an "it". You call him an "élan vital" or a vital force of some kind that started the world. You call him an explosion in the middle of nowhere. You call him two atoms coming together. You call him a single-cell amoeba. You have ignored this Creator."

"You have ignored him and lived your own life in your own way for your own purposes. Now because of that, my Father has turned his face away from you also. He has ceased to make his power available in your life. In fact, he has released his wrath upon you and what you feel now of loneliness and insignificance is a result of God's reaction to your rebellion against him."

Jesus explained that there was a man at the beginning called Cain who killed his brother and from then on he became a fugitive and stranger upon the earth. Jesus explained, "Look, that's what you've become."

When you live your life without the Maker of the world with you, you sense this rejection. What

you're doing is attributing it to everyone else. You are trying to live with it by getting other people to accept you. But Jesus said that's not what is needed. "My Father has condemned you to go into infinite darkness after this physical life is over. It's the fear of that and the awareness of that in your conscience that makes you so desperate."

Then Jesus said, "But listen, my Father loves you. He has allowed me to go into that infinite darkness in your place. He is able to keep his antagonism and his condemnation against people who rebel against him, he is able to remain a just God and to keep his promise that those who forsake him will die, and he is able to keep his promise by working that out on me. But he Himself wants no longer to work it out on you. Because I have died for you, my Father is ready to give you another chance. He is willing to accept you as his children and he wants you to start all over again, this time to start with him as your loving father, and to start treating him as a real person."

Brothers and sisters, all I can share this morning is that those of us who have believed this and have begun to deal seriously with this man Jesus, someone who was above time and space and is alive today, we have found an utterly new Spirit coming into our lives. We have found freedom from our depression and worry. We have found freedom from frustration and a freedom from always pulling somebody's coat tails and saying, "Look at me, look at me, look at me." So many of us have never got beyond that childish stage, "Daddy, look at me, look what I am doing."

We have found a new spirit inside us that makes us realize that the Maker of the world knows us, notices us and loves us personally as one of his sons and daughters. We have found that he makes things available to us that we need. But the real reason we started to treat him in this way was not because he did these things for others but because God is real.

God is the loving father of Jesus. That's why I am asking you to start believing that -- not because he'll do all those things for you but because God is real. God is a loving father. He knows you this morning. He knows your name. He notices you. He knows how you've dressed this morning. He knows what you ate or didn't eat this morning. He knows what you'll do this evening. He knows you by name. Even though you have ignored him for years and treated him as a kind of religious principle for generations, he is willing for you to start all over again with him and to start believing that he really does love you and he really is a father.

Brothers and sisters, for many of us in this theater that has changed everything. And as this Father has begun to give us his life, we've sensed a freedom from all those frustrations that I shared with you at the beginning. Now you have to think the whole thing over. You have to think it all over.

You have to read some of the books that you'll find in the lobby or in the Fish bookshop and you have to start talking with some of the people here. Then decide -- is this true? If it's true, then take the step of saying to Jesus, "Lord, I believe you were real. I believe you did not die as a political criminal but you did die so that my father would be free to forgive me. Lord, I am going to believe that now and I commit my life to you. I ask you to give me your Spirit and drive away this darkness, desperation, frustration and insignificance. Enable me to be what I was created to be."

So will you think about it? If you want to pray with someone about it then set up a time. Come and see me or see some of the brothers and sisters or just stay behind the theater or talk to some of them in the fellowship. But move forward in it as God guides you to. Let's begin to live in the way

that we were planned to live. Let's begin to really live with God as our father. I'll pray that Jesus will enable some of you today to see it and to come to it.

Let us pray.

Dear father, I thank you for my brothers and sisters here this morning. I trust you Father by your Holy Spirit to make it real to somebody for the first time today. Father, I know that men's voices are of no value, man's intellect achieves nothing -- but I know you by your Holy Spirit can make all this new and real to all of us today. I trust you Father to do that. Now we would commit ourselves to living this week with a loving Father who knows us, who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, who set out the galaxy, who planned the seas and the rivers. We thank you that we can call you our Father and we can trust you and love you because of Jesus. Amen.