

Why Are We Alive?

by Ernest O'Neill

Jesus teaches that we were made to live forever and that the only way to achieve eternal life is through a complete change in us, receiving a new personality from God that can trust Him for security and be satisfied with His friendship.

Duration: 32:49

Scripture: Psalm 90:10, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Matthew 6:19-20, John 1:1-3, John 10:30, John 14:6, Romans 8:6

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Purpose Of Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus as the Son of God. He encourages the audience to intellectually conclude that Jesus is God's son and to then seek out what he wants them to do. The speaker suggests that if Jesus is indeed the Son of God, it is only logical to follow his teachings. He also highlights the brevity of human life and the need to contemplate the purpose of existence.

Transcript

At the beginning of every academic year, we try to deal with the basic questions of life, and particularly the most basic one of all, why are we here, why are we alive? And through the year, it is obvious that we as a group believe that the Christian explanation of reality is the true one. But there are reasons why we believe that. And so at the beginning of every academic year, we try to look at those reasons.

And you remember that about three weeks ago, we felt that a first question that you ought to deal with when you're dealing with the whole issue of why we're alive is, is there anybody who originated the whole thing who might be able to give us some clue as to why he put us here? And we dealt therefore with the question, is there a God? And you remember that we concluded with people like Einstein and Darwin that that is the most reasonable explanation for the existence of our world, of the universe, the order and design in our world and the universe, and particularly the most reasonable explanation of us, personable people that we are, and particularly of the existence of our conscience within us that is always making us want to be better than we actually are. And then you remember that two weeks ago, we dealt with the whole question, what is this God like if he exists? And we talked about the various sources of information on that that we have in the Greek and Roman myths, in the Eastern religions, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, in Confucianism. And we came to the conclusion that intellectually, none of them have the kind of information that we have in this collection of books here, because all the other religions are

based on the subject of personal opinions of a man or of a woman as to what God is like.

But this collection of books contain historical records of what our Creator did and said over 2,000 to 4,000 years of history. And we concluded that this was some of the most reliable history compared with that of the ancient writings that we have in our world. Now, you remember then last week, we tried to deal with the incredible information that is included in the last quarter of that book.

The information about a human being like ourselves who lived for about 33 or 35 years in Galilee and who kept on saying that he was alive with God, the Creator, before the universe was made. And kept on saying that he was really the son of our Maker. He was our Creator living here on earth.

And you remember that we examined critically, I think, that claim last week and talked about the fact that he doesn't have the marks of derangement and imbalance in his life that maniacs or lunatics have. But indeed, he is looked upon as the pattern of a balanced life. We talked about his sinlessness and the fact that he had power over nature and power over disease.

Then you may remember, finally, we talked about the incredible event of the resurrection. So that in spite of there being many imitations of resurrection and many experiences of controlled breathing and people being buried alive and pretending they came alive again, there is no event so substantiated as the resurrection of Jesus. It stands unchallenged after more stringent and more demanding legal and sociological and historical analysis and examination than any other event.

And so you remember last Sunday we said that if any man is the son of the Maker of the universe, it is this man Jesus. It's reasonable to believe that this man is who he said he was. And really what I would ask you to do this Sunday is to look at him and ask what he told us about our lives and about reality.

And loved ones, if you conclude intellectually that he is God's son, do you see that you have no alternative but to do what he says? I mean, it's just good common sense. And so once you take that step and say he is the son of God, you can't hold back from the next step, which is obviously, let me find out what he wants me to do. Because you know that's what you'd do if I said that.

If I said to you, I am the son of our Maker. I existed with the Creator that made you before the universe was ever created. I know why we're here.

My Father has explained it all to me. You know you would say, tell me, tell me, what does your Father think of me? Explain to me what should I do with my life? What's the meaning of it all? And that's what I'd ask is just to listen to today Jesus' own explanation of what life is about. And I have not found any better terms than the terms that we've shared before.

That Jesus said very plainly, first of all, all of you are not going to last more than 70 or at the most 80 years. That that which is born of the flesh is flesh. You have a mind and you have emotions and a body.

And Jesus said they're not going to last beyond 70 or 80 years. You're not going to stay alive any longer than the parents or the grandparents that gave you that mental and physical life. You're not.

Of course, our reason reinforces that. You are more dead now than you were when I started this sentence. You are.

There are millions of cells in you that have died even since I started that sentence. And you may plead, oh, but aren't there others being renewed? Yes, but fewer than are dying. And you come to that point in life and believe me, you're all past it when you're losing more than you're gaining.

And you can see the signs of it in graying hair and in wrinkles and in pains where you didn't have pains before. And Jesus said it's all proof that you're not going to last forever in your present state. Your mental and physical life is already dying.

And then he said a strange thing. You just won't believe that. That's what he said once.

He said they will not believe that. You just won't believe that. You refuse to believe it because there's something inside you that says, no, no, I wasn't made to stay here for 70 or 80 years and then go out like a light.

I wasn't. I was made to last longer than that. And there is something in this, isn't it? It's strange that our reason opposes it, but there's something in us that feels we were made to last longer than that.

And we will not believe Jesus' words that our present mental and physical life won't last longer than that. And so, of course, we fight against it. You know we do.

And we feel, no, we're made to experience. We don't even know the word eternity, but we feel it's like that. We were made to live forever.

We're made to experience the security of eternity. We're made here to experience the safety of security, of eternity. We're made to experience the stability of eternity.

No, somehow we're not made to be fiddlers on a roof. And yet, you know, all of us feel we are. Wall Street shakes and we all shake.

Iran stops exporting oil and we all run scared. We know that there's great uncertainty in this life. And we feel it ourselves.

We feel it in our own waywardness and our own lack of tenacity. And so, you know what we do. We try to get that stability.

We try to get that security. And we try to take the attributes of a purely temporary mental and physical life and we try to parley them into the attributes of life as we think it should be. And so, you know what happens.

We get the education and we try to exchange the degree for the best job possible. Not so that we can serve humanity, most of us, or so that we can make the world a better place, but so that we can get more money, so that we can live with some kind of stability and some kind of security. And then, you know, as the years pass, we try to trade up our cars and our houses to somehow try to get some security into our life and some sense of stability.

And then we try to get the best life insurance and medical package that we can, hoping that somehow we'll be able to guard against these uncertainties that make life so shaky and uncertain. And then we try to get a good position in our jobs. We try to establish ourselves in a position where those underneath us can't undermine us.

And we try to establish our stability in relationship to our colleagues or against the interests of our rivals. So, of course, life becomes a very anxious process because you're always trying to make yourself stable and secure. And however far we go in that, we're always haunted by that figure with the haggard face and the long hair and the beard who was carried out of that hotel room and then died on the way to the hospital.

And we're haunted by that character because, of all people, Howard Hughes did it better than any of us. He did it better. He owned more millions than we will probably ever own.

He did more to establish security and stability and eternity here on earth than anybody could and then we probably will ever do. And yet at the end, he found he couldn't protect himself against the bacteria and the weaknesses that show us that we're only temporarily here. You know, it's the same with the whole business of happiness.

Somehow we feel we were made for an eternal experience. And we feel we were made for the serenity and the peace and the exhilaration of eternity. And we feel that somehow we should experience that serenity and peace of Walden Pond and then it should be combined with all the wild excitement of the Arabian Nights.

And somehow it should be possible to get a South Sea island where we can feel all that. And so we try to feel it. And you know we do.

We try to use experiences and try to use relationships to somehow extract from life that mixture of wild excitement and of great serenity and peace that we feel we were made for. And yet, however many relationships we use, however many people we prostitute, however many experiences we try to produce, however much we try to calm our anxiety chemically, yet at the end of it all we're left with a sense of emptiness and loneliness instead of the sense of conviviality and excitement and exhilaration that we think we should have. And we're left with a kind of anticlimax and you might almost say a sense of desolation instead of the happiness and the excitement of eternity.

And it's the same with who we are. I don't know that there's one of us here that doesn't feel a bit like Milton, you know, that we were born for some great thing. And we do.

We feel it deep down, don't we? Every one of us. You think you're the only one who feels it, but the person beside you feels it. You think you're more individual than me, but you're not.

I feel I'm more individual than you. We all feel the same. We all feel we're very different and we all have different little twists that make us special.

And we feel we are special and we are significant and we are important. And somebody must know we're here. Somebody must know that we've passed through this veil of tears.

Somebody must know what we've done. Somebody somewhere somehow must know us ourselves. And yet we have a terrible feeling that nobody does.

And the gold watch on retirement day is a kind of sweet sour thing, you know. We joke about it and yet we have a funny feeling that that's probably all we'll mean to those that we work with over 30 or 40 years. And we are kind of surprised that however much we try to will ourselves into positions of importance, and we do that, don't we? We try to will ourselves into a place of importance.

We try to will other people to recognize us and to look to us and think of us. We throw our weight around at home. We throw our weight around at the office.

We exercise our authority in ways we ought not to in order to try to get somebody to notice us. Somebody to realize we are somebody. And yet after it's all done, we're kind of surprised at how quickly they've forgotten John Wayne.

And he was pretty famous. And how quickly they forget Bing Crosby. And how quickly they forget Jack Benny.

And how quickly they forget John F. Kennedy. And we're not nearly as well known as them. And you wonder, well, how will we become known? And loved ones, what Jesus said was, don't you see you're trying the impossible? That the life that you've got now is not eternal life.

And you're trying to make it into eternal life by your own efforts and you can't do it. The mental and physical life that you have is going to die and be finished and go into a grave after 70 or 80 years and that's it. And it'll just be a name on a gravestone and nothing better than that.

And that's all you'll receive. And what you're trying to do is somehow to take the attributes of what is a purely temporal life and you're trying to make them into the attributes of eternal life. And you can't get blood out of a stone because a stone is not alive.

And you can't extract from a dead inanimate thing, like mental and emotional life, the life blood that makes life eternal, however much you try. And of course, all most of us have succeeded in trying is making ourselves into monsters. That's what we do.

We pervert ourselves into egotistical, hedonistic monsters that are domineering and manipulating all the time. And of course, what Jesus says is, you see those feelings that you have, those aspirations, those feelings that you should have the security of an eternity, those feelings that there is a happiness beyond what you've experienced, those feelings that you have that you should be able to break out of the earthbound existence that you're in. Those feelings are there because that's right.

That's true. You were made to live forever. You were made to be important.

You were made to be happy beyond your dreams. You were made not to have to fear whether Iran cuts off the oil or whether you lose your job. You were made for eternity.

That's what Jesus says. But he says it's a gift. It's a gift.

You have this body, this physical life, and inside it you have your psychological being, your mind and emotions and your will. And inside that again, if you can talk about inside at all in regard to this subject, you have spirit. You have a part of you that is sending up all those aspirations.

And that spirit is at the moment dead. And that's why you feel such emptiness. And the reason you can't fill it is you're trying to get at it from a mental and emotional and physical level and you can't.

And what Jesus said was the only way that spirit can come alive and give life to your mind and emotions and to your body so that you live forever is if the person who made you brings that spirit of yours alive by the action and the energizing of his own eternal life. And that's the only way it'll ever come about. And Jesus said that's a gift.

That gift of life from my Father is something that God has to give you. And when he gives you it, everything comes alive inside you. And your mind and emotions begin to work right and your body begins to operate right and you stop trying to squeeze out of people and other things life.

You begin to have life inside. And you begin to sense the real joy of the love of the one significant other in the whole universe that he is your own personal father and that he knows your name and that he's put you here for a special purpose and you begin to sense your identity in this universe. And you begin to feel most of all of course that he will not see you go down in the dirt.

That he will be right there every moment whatever Iran does or whatever the stock market does. And Jesus said this is a gift but the Father will give it only to those of us who cannot and will not find it elsewhere. And that's what Jesus said.

That you can't serve God and mammon. That you can't be going to establish your version of security by exercising your greed and exercising your covetousness and trying to gather around yourself all the little nuts and stocks and shares that you possibly can to hedge your bets. That you can't do that.

You can't be grabbing at every human being you want to try to have an exciting experience of exhilaration with them whatever it costs them. You can't do that. You can't be domineering others and requiring them to respect you and exercising your pride and your envy and your domination over them.

You can't be getting that kind of thing from this world and also expect God to give you real eternal life. Jesus said it's either one or the other. And many of us I know say well I mean I want to do that.

I really do. I want to trust God as my Father for my security. I do.

But when the bank balance goes down there's a little fear goes through me. And I want to trust him but I do find myself grabbing at other ways to rectify that. I do want to enjoy God.

I see what a beautiful morning he's made this morning. I want to enjoy him. He must be brighter than the sunshine.

I want to know him. I do. But I find that when I can get some quick thrill or quick exhilaration or quick happiness from a human being I find there's something inside me that goes that way.

And Jesus said that's right. You as you are at the moment can do nothing else but try to get eternal life from this temporal life. Your present personality has become so perverted that it can do nothing else.

But why do you think I died? I didn't die just to bribe God to overlook your sins. That's not why I died. I died to express the miracle that my Father worked in eternity for you.

He foresaw the way you would develop and he took that perverted personality of yours and he put it into me in eternity and he destroyed it there. And that's what we were both expressing on Calvary. And your old self was crucified actually with me but crucified with me indeed in eternity.

And you have a whole new personality from my Father's hand that can be activated this very moment if you believe me. And this personality that comes from my Father and comes from my resurrection is able to trust God for security. This new personality is able to be satisfied with my Father's friendship even if it is friendship from no other human being.

This personality is satisfied with the importance that it receives from my Father's attention. And this personality can come alive in you this very day if you are willing to turn from seeking these things from the world. Stop trying to manufacture your own version of eternal life and I will make real in you a personality that can receive eternal life from my Father.

And that's why Jesus said you really have to be born again. You have a mental and physical life that you got when you were born first time but your spirit needs to come alive. You need to be born again and there's a new version of you that can be born in you this day.

Loved ones that's what Jesus says. That you ought to analyze and you ought to think and you ought to use your critical faculties. But after all that is done what is needed is a complete change in you.

A complete new birth. A new person has to be created in you. And Jesus said that that's possible because of the destruction of the old person in his death and the fact that when he rose from the dead God resurrected the whole human race new and created it new.

And there is a personality of yours that is available to you that is able to know God as his own friend and father. And loved ones actually all you need to do is believe that and turn away from your version of eternal life. If you say to me you mean no savings, no stocks and shares, no friends.

Sure you know I don't mean that. Jesus had those things. Jesus had friends.

Jesus had a coat. He had shoes. Sure you need some of those things but you know fine well what we're talking about.

We're talking about when you go beyond that and you begin to try to get your security from those things or you depend on your friends for your happiness. That's where it's wrong. And Jesus says if you will stop doing that and you will do what I do which is look to my father for the only life that I ought to have.

And I was content with whatever life he gave me and didn't ask for more than he was willing to give me. If you will do that then his spirit will come into yours and make you alive to him. And that's why you're here on earth.

And loved ones that's why we're here. If I could just say even to those of you who are college people, it goes quickly. It does.

I mean it's amazing. It goes fast. And it just seems yesterday that I thought I was 17 and I'd gone up to university and I thought oh I have all the time in the world to get this thing sorted out.

And that honestly seems like yesterday. And so the rest of us would say the same thing. It goes very fast.

And of course none of us can tell how long we have really. None of us can tell how long we have to think about these things. And then could I just say this to you.

I know some of my dear friends who were thinking about it when they were 17 and they're still thinking about it. It's very interesting to see those of us who hear about it for the first time and respond immediately. We come through and we live that way.

But those of us who hear about it and decide to think about it or to wait for a more convenient season, we're still standing at the railway station in the same place 40 years later. So be wise will you. Don't think

that you have forever.

You haven't. You have 70 or if at the most 80 years and probably now you have at the most 30 or 40 years. And who knows whether you do have 30 or 40 years.

But the reason you're here and I'm here on earth is to get to know this dear maker of ours and to allow his spirit to make our spirits alive so that we can live with him forever. Dear Father, we thank you for Jesus, for the unbelievable pain that he was willing to bear. We thank you for your love for us.

And Lord, we want to be real with you this morning. And Father, we do see that much of our attempt at imitating eternity has come to nothing in our own lives and has in a sense made us incapable even of ordinary life. And Lord, we see the truth that you have set before us during your lifetime.

That there's only one place to receive life that goes on forever and that has a quality of eternity as well as a quantity. And that is from our maker who originally give us this temporal life. So Father, we would turn to you.

We would ask you to show us what we need to turn from in order to receive your gift of a spirit and to be made alive to you and to begin to know you and begin to be able to relate to you. Father, show us where we have to stop doing certain things so that we can come alive in your Holy Spirit. We ask you, our Father, to work with us as we think and pray this through.

And we ask you most of all to make it real to us by the power of your spirit. Lord Jesus, we would welcome you in as the person that you are and as our dear friend and our Savior. And we would give our lives to you now and expect you to give us directions each day so that we may be what you and your Father made us to be.

We now commit ourselves to you, Lord. As you committed your life for us, we commit ours to you for your glory and for your service. 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 evermore.

Amen.

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