What is the Meaning of Life?
Program 69
Searching for Identity
by Ernest O'Neill

We're talking about the meaning of life on this program, and we have been for several months now. We have been discussing it in the light of the greatest authority we could find on that subject. We realized that the greatest authority cannot be just another man like ourselves or another woman like ourselves, who has never been off the earth or has never been anywhere in the universe but here.

Such a person can't really explain to us the place of our planet in the universe and its system, nor can such a person have the knowledge or the understanding to explain to us why we ourselves are here. In other words, the authority that we need in this situation is the authority of a person who has been off the earth, who has been beyond the sky; who has, in fact, broken the death barrier and has shown that he is able to move in and out of this created life that we possess here on earth at will.

There is only one such person. It's not Muhammad or Buddha. They died like dogs like the rest of us and were buried. There is only one man who has proven to history and to critics and to scholars over the centuries that he did, in fact, break the death barrier. That is the man Jesus of Nazareth.

We examined his life and we suggested that he might be just a madman who claimed to be -- not Napoleon in this case -- but the Son of God. But his life does not have the imbalance of such an egotist, and such a megalomaniac. His life, in fact, is looked upon by many of us as the most balanced life ever lived here on earth.

We thought, well, perhaps he was a liar. But he is regarded by philosophers and theologians alike as the greatest ethical teacher the world has ever seen. It is absolutely illogical to say that the greatest ethical teacher in the world lied about the focal point of all his teaching, that is, his own identity. It is impossible to level the charge at him that he is a liar, and yet, in everything else, true.

Then, we suggested that maybe he was a legend. Maybe it was a legend that grew up after he died. But there wasn't the time for that legend to develop, because there were many people still around who had seen him and seen him die, and seen him rise from the dead, and they were still around when the written records of his life were being circulated. So, there wasn't time for a legend to develop because they were there to contradict or confirm what was written.

So, we came to the conclusion that he must have been (and therefore, must be, as he was able to come in and out of life and death whenever he chose), he must be the Son of the Maker of our universe. We have been listening to his explanation of the purpose and the meaning of life.

We started with his statement that "what is born of the flesh is flesh". That is, we're born in this life with a certain created life that we have inherited from our parents. That's all we've got, and it's going to end! It's just going to end. It's going to end after 70 or 100 years. Jesus said, "You won't believe that. They will not believe that." And of course, we don't. We don't.

However often we see somebody put into a hole in the ground, we still think, well, somehow, we have eternity within us. We're not very religious, we don't believe in heaven, but there's something in us that makes us believe we were made for something better than this present life.

Of course, what we do is, we try to raise this present created life to the "nth" degree, to the point where we can reach the kind of life that we feel we were made for. We feel that that kind of life we were made for is a very high life. We believe for instance, we were made for complete and continual happiness. We're always trying to get happiness, wherever we can. We use people. We use things. We use circumstances -- anything in order to establish that great serenity and peace combined with exhilaration and excitement that we call happiness.

Yet, always we're left with a soap bubble that has burst in our hands. We're always disappointed. We feel we were made to be really important, to be really of some significance. We feel we were made for somebody to notice that we have passed through this world. We try to get people to notice us and pay attention to us by all kinds of subtle and not so subtle efforts.

Yet we always feel disappointed. We feel in some way we're not regarded with the same love, or attention or acknowledgment as we were made for. It is the same, of course, with security. We believe we were made for stability, and economic and financial security. Yet, somehow it doesn't matter how much sacrifice we make to establish that security, we never can feel the security that we feel we were made for and that we used to experience when we were little children with our mother and father.

What Jesus said was, if you keep on trying to get that kind of life from the elements of created life around you, you will become monsters. Of course, that's what many of us have become. Many of us have so dominated our families, because they won't give attention to us, that we are now monsters in their eyes. We are monsters to our wives and our children.

Many of us have so dominated our employees and our businesses for the sake of making an extra buck or an extra pound that we have become monsters - covetous, greedy monsters. Many of us have so sought happiness at any cost, that we have become monsters to the partners that we have had. We have become monsters to our friends -- egotistical, voracious, gluttonous parasites that try to live off other people and try to get from other people, and other things and other circumstances, the stability, the happiness, the security, the significance that we feel we were made for.

Jesus says you're looking to the wrong source for that. You were, in fact, made for those things. But, you're made to receive them from the Person that has given you everything else. The things that you have around you, the pounds and the dollars, will in fact be devalued. The boats and the cars and the motor bikes, and the gliders and the planes will in fact rust eventually.

Even the people that now praise you and act as sycophants around you, even they will die, and you will soon be left as Bing Crosby has been left, with nobody really to care much about him. Eventually, all those things will disappear. You were made for those, you're right. But you were made to receive them from the Person that has given you everything else. The person that has given you everything else is the Maker of the Universe. He gave you all these things, because He Himself has an attitude towards you of real care and real love. But, in fact, you're ignoring that and you're trying to get it from everybody else.

Of course, that's what happens to you when you pretend that there is no God. You end up trying to get things from other people and other things. Jesus said that's really just what you're doing. In fact, the mistake you're making is, you're trying to make created life, uncreated life, and you can't do it! It's from uncreated life that you receive that satisfaction. It's not from this

created life. Jesus said, you're just looking to the wrong place. For instance, in terms of significance, here's what he said: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?"

This, if you have a Bible and can look up the last quarter of it there in the New Testament, this is in Luke Chapter 12, verse 6. Jesus said, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" In other words, there isn't a sparrow that drops to the ground but the Maker knows it.

If an IBM mainframe (computer) is able to keep track of every individual in the United Kingdom or in the United States, then certainly the Maker of the universe is greater than an IBM mainframe or a Cray mainframe. He is able, in fact, to watch every sparrow, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

That's what he said. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. "Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows." In other words, Jesus said, for goodness sake, stop trying to establish your significance in the eyes of your boss, or in the eyes of your peers, or in the eyes of your children, or your parents, or your teachers, or your fellow students.

Stop that game. Stop playing that game! Their significance won't last beyond their death. But your God, who has made you, He has numbered even the hairs of your head. He has counted the hair on your head. Even your barber hasn't done that. So, let's talk a little more about what the Maker thinks of us tomorrow.