WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Trying to Prove Ourselves
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Program 213

We have been talking for about a year now on the question, what is the meaning of life. We have been trying to get some clues about life from some of the things you and I meet in our everyday experience. One of the things that we do meet, all of us, is the tendency we have to try to be proving ourselves. I don't know if you've sensed that within yourself. But many of us find that we're always trying to prove ourselves.

Now it was understandable when we were children, because we were very unsure of ourselves, new little human beings in a strange world. And we wanted to try to prove to our dads that we could jump as high as maybe our brother, or we wanted to prove to him that we could jump as high as he wanted us to. Or maybe if we were little girls we wanted to prove to our mom that we could sew the way she could. And so we understood that children have to try to prove themselves.

The unpleasant side and the concerning side of this whole symptom is that now we find ourselves, not fifteen years of age, not even twenty, and not even twenty-five, thirty, but sometimes thirty-five, forty, forty-five, fifty, fifty-five, sixty, seventy and eighty, and we're still trying to prove ourselves.

Sometimes we're trying to prove ourselves to our selves.
Sometimes we're trying to prove ourselves to our wives.
Sometimes we're trying to prove ourselves to our children.
Sometimes we're trying to prove ourselves to our bosses.
Sometimes we're just trying to prove ourselves to our friends.
Sometimes we don't know who we are trying to prove ourselves to. But we are very troubled by the fact that often, we're laboring

under this strain in our job, or even it seems when we're taking part in some recreation, or when we're just driving a new car. We're always trying to prove ourselves.

Often it happens when we just go into a store or a shop, and we for a moment reflect on the way we spoke to the shop assistant or the way we spoke to a dentist or the way we spoke to the conductor on the bus. And we are horrified at the realization that we're always trying to prove ourselves to them. Or we're always trying to prove ourselves to ourselves. We're trying to show that we're really as good as the next man, and sometimes better -- or that we can do the same thing as the rest, whether it's drink the same as the rest, or whether it's earn as much money as the rest, or be as slick as the rest or as much of a swinger as the rest, or as clever with our little phrases, be they English phrases or American phrases; we find ourselves trying to prove ourselves.

Of course you find it particularly in driving a car. You know it yourself. "Oh, I'll prove that I'm as good as him," or "I'm as good at getting out of a tight corner as he is, or as driving as fast as he is." And sometimes, of course, in the cities like London and Birmingham and so forth, it can be positively ugly, because it's almost daring the other guy to drive you into the lamp post. And that symptom seems to run through so many of our lives. We have all, of course, explanations for it.

Some of us say, "Oh, we're over- achievers." Some of us say, "Oh, our dad was always wanting us to be better than everybody else." Or some of us say, "Oh, our mother always was down on us, and so we're always trying to prove that we're good." But there is actually a better, a more solid explanation. It's the solid explanation of reality itself. And it's part of what we've been sharing for this year.

We said, you remember, that in trying to find out what life was about, or what the meaning of life was, it was important to take note of the order and design that existed in our universe and the indications that that gave us that there was some kind of intelligent mind behind it. And there was some mind that programmed evolution and that made it progress from simple to complex. And we of course looked at many things, like the seasons, and the orbiting of the planets, and the circulation of our blood, and the structure of the DNA molecule, and we concluded there has to be some kind of intelligence behind the universe.

Then we tried to look, you remember, for indications that there was such an intelligence and that that intelligent mind had tried to communicate with us. Eventually after examining people like Zoroaster and Confucius, and the Hindu prophets and Buddha, we concluded that there was only one man who was different from all the rest, that is, the man, Jesus of Nazareth who lived in the first century of our era. And that He was different from the rest in that He obviously was able to leave the earth and come back. That is, He was able to pass through death and come back again, because, of course, one of the most reliable facts of history is the thing known as the resurrection of this man Jesus.

And actually, if you'll go to the British Museum you'll see old manuscripts like the Codex Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus that attest to the absolutely reliable historicity of this man and that He did actually rise from the dead. So you remember we examined His life and concluded that He was really the Son of the Maker of the universe. And He explained to His followers, and of course, they explained to us through their books and through their speaking, that you and I were made by the Creator of the universe, because He wanted friends. He is a fatherly person.

And He made you because He wanted you to be His child. And He wanted you to come to know him. And that's why He gave you a free will; because He Himself has a free will. And He wants you to love Him, and you can only love Him if you have a free will and if you choose to love Him. So He put us here on this earth so that we would come to know Him and to trust Him in this life, and to love Him. And as we did that, we would develop the world, of course, according to His plan, and we would gradually become more and more like Him ourselves as His life began to come into us.

And then after this life was over we would join Him in developing the rest of the universe, which is infinite. And that was His plan for us. And of course, most of us have not followed that plan. We have decided, "Forget it. There is no Creator. There's no God. We're here on our own. We have to do what we can in this world to try to make it what we want it to be. We've got to try to keep ourselves as secure as we can, and make ourselves as happy as we can, and establish ourselves in as prestigious a position as we can to satisfy our desire for self-worth."

And of course, you can see what we end up doing. We aren't living the way He meant us to live. We aren't actually pleasing the one Person whom it's important to please. And so we have a dreadful sense of falling short, a dreadful sense of not being the people that we ought to be, an almost overwhelming sense of not being worth anything, because we're not really doing what He gave us to do. We're usually doing half a dozen other things that He didn't plan for us to do. And we therefore end up trying to prove ourselves, to prove ourselves, actually to Him.

But, of course, because we pretend He isn't there, we wouldn't dream of saying we're proving ourselves to God. But we're trying to prove ourselves to ourselves and prove ourselves to everybody else. Somehow we feel that if we can make

everybody else think we're really worth something, or we're really doing what we were meant to do, He may fall in line. Or maybe it's not so important whether He knows or not. And of course, you can see that the whole thing is a frustrating example of futility.

Because it doesn't matter how many people you prove yourself to, if you don't please the Maker who put you here on earth and do what He intended you to do, it won't matter how many other people think you've proved yourself. And of course the amazing thing that He has said to us through His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, is, "You don't have to prove yourself to Me. I love you. I care about you. I know what you're trying to do and I feel sorry for you. And I'm more than anxious to give you another shot at it."

And in fact He said that kind of thing. He said, "Though your sins are as scarlet" (your sin is falling short of what He wanted you to be) "though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they are as crimson, they will be as wool. I don't care what you've done. I don't care how much of a mess you have made of your life. I don't care how much you have tried to prove yourself. All your works won't prove yourself to me. You can't prove yourself by your works. The only way you can do it is by believing what I say, that I really do know that and understand and I still love you."

"And I don't reward you according to your sins, or treat you according to your iniquities. I deal with you as one who really loves you. So come on. Let's stop proving ourselves to everybody else and believe that I love you and start trusting Me." Well, you could do that today. Will you think about it?