WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 216
The Deepest Experience We Can Have
by Ernest O'Neill

We're discussing on this program together, the question, What is the Meaning of Life? -- a pretty big cosmological issue, and very important as you realize, to the way you live life and the way I live it day by day. And you remember we've come in our discussion to the point where we have examined the evidence that there is a God, that there is a Supreme Being who is intelligent and who is also personable. We've examined the life of that remarkable person, Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in the first century of our era.

We've looked at the manuscript evidence that reinforces the historicity of His life and His death, and actually of His amazing coming back to life after the crucifixion. And we've concluded that in fact He is the Son of the Creator of the universe. And then you remember we studied His explanation of why we were here. And that's the point that we have reached in our discussion during this past year. We've seen that the Creator of the universe made you because He wanted you to be His friend. He actually wants you to be His child. If you're a man, to be His son. If you're a woman, He wants you to be His daughter.

And far from being just a vague managing director who looks after the mass of mankind, He actually knows you individually. And He regards you as His own personal child. And He wants you to be His personal child. And that's why He put us on earth. He put us here on earth so that we would become the kinds of people that He wants in His family to live with Him forever so that we would take part in the development of the rest of the universe in friendship and in love with Him. Because, of course, the deepest experience any of us can have is that of love.

You know it in your relationship with maybe someone whom you did love, a father or a mother or a husband or a wife or a brother or a sister, a son or daughter; you know that that's the deepest experience of which we human beings are capable. And so the Creator of the universe made us for that experience with Himself. We, of course, determined we would not live that way. And what we have been sharing over the past months is that we determined we would live on our own, by our own power -- and we would not trust Him and depend upon Him to provide what we needed as long as we did what He wanted us to do in the universe.

We determined we would do what we wanted and we would get from the world whatever we needed. The result is, of course, we have become in-turned, selfish bloodsuckers; parasites who live off everybody else. We live off everybody else's good opinion of us. That's how we establish our sense of significance. We were meant to get it from Him, from knowing that the Maker of the whole universe knew us. And that would give us enough significance. But when we turned from Him and forgot about Him and determined to live our own way, we had to get that sense of significance from someone. So we have tried to suck it from everyone else's opinion.

We're always looking for people to praise us. We're always anxious for our peers to acknowledge us. We want recognition. That's why we all get wrapped up in the Elvis Presley's and the Beetles and all the famous people that live in our world. We love the idea that we would be praised and respected by the whole world. That's what would give us a sense of significance. So we've become little bloodsucking monsters, or parasites that live off the opinions of other people. The result is, many of us have fallen under men-fear. We're utterly dominated by what other people think of us.

But it is the same with the security. We have had to try to get our security from elsewhere. And because we no longer can depend on Him to give it to us, because we don't know Him anymore, we try to get it from our jobs, and from our stocks and shares, and from our investments, and from our insurance policies or from our children, or from the government.

But we try to assure ourselves that we will have enough food and shelter and clothing to see us through this life. Except, that of course, we always come up against the dreadful thought that after this life we don't know what's going to happen. And any security that we have built up in this life is blown to bits at that point. Nevertheless, we are trying to get our security from the world instead of from the Creator of the universe.

It's the same with our happiness. Our happiness was meant to come from our relationship with Him, from being able to walk through the world with the Maker of the world beside us. No thrill is equal to that. But, of course, because we have turned against Him and have determined to live on our own, we live lonely lives with a great deal of unhappiness in them. And we try, therefore, to substitute the happiness that we can get from happy things happening to us.

And so we try to get nice vacations, have good homes, have comfortable clothes, have exciting moments in the plane or in the car. And we hope by that means to get the happiness that we were meant to get from a relationship with the one significant other in the universe. The result is we have become little monsters, the very opposite of what He wanted us to be. Instead of receiving all that we needed from Him and giving out continually to the world of people, we have actually started to take in from the world of people and try to empty it of any life that it had.

And so we have become in-turned selfish people instead of outgoing unselfish people. We have as a result become the most dangerous monsters that the universe has ever seen. Because if we had our way, we would use the whole universe to feed our needs. And the Creator of the universe knows that, so He cannot let us live forever the way He meant us originally to do, because He knows that if He did let us live forever, with the powers that we have at our disposal in space, we would turn the universe into an empty desolate place, full of loneliness and full of selfishness. And we would make it serve ourselves.

And so the only thing the Creator can do is make us all over again. And that is what He has actually determined to do. He has determined to destroy us absolutely as we are at this present time, and to remake us completely. And so there is already a death sentence upon all of us. And the way Jesus said it was this, He said, "You know all of us, all of us have sinned, and we've fallen short of the glory of God. We've all fallen short of what He wanted us to be. And the wages of sin is death." And He explained the only way to cure the mess is to destroy it and to remake it.

And so He said, "All of us are under condemnation to death as we are at present." And that's why we often feel depression at times. That's why we often feel a sense of rejection at times. That's why we often feel there's no purpose in life. That's why we often feel we're just waiting for death to come. Because in fact we are under condemnation to death. And that's what many of us feel. That's why we often are fearful, not just of the nuclear disaster, but because we feel that we're committed to death for some unknown reason.

And of course, what Jesus said was, our Maker, our Father, did commit us to death, but He committed us to death in Jesus. And

Jesus began to explain to us, that's why He died. The Creator of the universe worked a miracle, a cosmic miracle. He put us all into His Son Jesus and He destroyed us there. And so the reality of the situation is, that Jesus died for us. We should have died forever. We should have been destroyed forever. That's the only possibility the Maker of the universe faced when He realized the monsters that we'd turned into.

But what He has actually done is to work a cosmic miracle. He has, in fact, put us (and we'll talk about this in the coming months)- He has actually put us into His Son and He has destroyed us in His Son. And that's why Jesus explained that He had come to die. That's the purpose of His life. He had come to die, not just as a political criminal in the first century in Palestine but to die a cosmic death, to allow all people that had ever lived to be destroyed in Him in a massive, eternal, cosmic miracle, above time and space. And the reason for that was, of course, so that in His resurrection we would be remade completely, and we would become absolutely new creations. And so that was the purpose of His death.

That is what He says to us. He says, "Stop this dreadful fear of death. Stop this terrible depression over the fact that you are committed to death. You are. My Father has condemned you to death. But He has done it in Me. And the reason I died was so that you would not have to be wiped out forever. You do have to be wiped out, but you can rise again inside me. And you can live again the way you were meant to, made all over again in Me. And that's the purpose of My death." Perhaps you'd think a little about those things as we develop them in the coming weeks.