A Superhuman Life

Romans 10:10

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Here's an ordinary phone booth and up to it walks an ordinary man called Clark Kent and he steps into the phone booth and then his suit jacket bursts open and his muscles swell and his chest swells and his glasses fall off and suddenly out of that phone booth walks, no out of that phone booth flies a projectile of blue and red color and that is Super Man! I think wherever you look in human history, whether it is in the Greek and Roman myths of gods who come to earth or whether it's the Celtic sagas of those heroes who are half man and half god, or whether it's our modern space fiction stories of "the force which is with you", all of us human beings, it's incredible, but all of us throughout the centuries have dreamed of some super life, some super life that will enable us to fly, to transcend time, to somehow overcome even the powers of nature itself.

It's as if there is something in all of us, in all of our forefathers, that wants to burst the bonds of this earthbound existence that we have. It's strange because it kind of ties up with a personal frustration that probably every one of us in this room have felt at some time or another. Probably every one of us here has felt at some time in our lives, that we were put here to achieve something. As you look back to the twenties or if you're in your twenties, you know that you have a great sense that you are here to achieve something. You are here to do something that nobody else can actually do and that, of course, kind of ties up with a commission that the Creator has said he has given us way at the beginning. If you'd like to look at it in Genesis, it's Genesis 1:28, "And God blessed them and said to them be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over

the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

It's interesting that probably every one of us in this room didn't need to read that verse because we would testify that in our twenties especially, we sensed we are here to do something that nobody else can do. We are here to achieve something. And then in the thirties, in our thirties, we begin to get preoccupied with survival, with just economic and financial and social survival. And this great subduing of the world that we were going to do begins to fade into the background as we start to depend on this world for survival. Then it's not long before far from subduing the world, we're being subdued by the world. And yet there isn't one man or one woman in this room that has not dreamed at times of those early days when you thought you were going to do something in the world, you were going to achieve something. Probably there isn't one of us here who hasn't little wonderings and little regrets. I wonder, could we have lived this life by our youthful aspirations? I wonder, have we been right to join the middle age cynics and decide that we were foolish young people.

It's true, loved ones, that this desire or feeling that there ought to be a super life somewhere, is not only found in our subjective yearnings. Because you can kind of get rid of that with a little psychoanalysis and say it's just wish fulfilment. But there is indication in history that there are some objective facts down through the centuries that suggest a super life. For instance, the first half of this Book is absolutely unlike the unsubstantiated myths of the Greeks and Romans, absolutely unlike the uncertain sagas of the Celtics. The first part of this book is history; it's history that has better documentation, manuscript documentation, than most of the rest of our world history. It's history that can be corroborated by the history books of other nations, and it's history that has the one great indicator of historicity. I don't know if you know the greatest proof of

historicity, it is that certain ceremonies and customs and memorials are established at the time a historical event takes place. And then that those continue to be observed down through the centuries to this very day. Of course there are ceremonials and customs and memorials in this book that are observed by the Jewish people to this very day. So when you look at the first part of this book, you are looking at history. This history contains evidence of a super life that is able to affect the flow of rivers and tides, that is able to turn inanimate objects into living creatures, that is able of all things, to destroy the affects of death. This history includes records of men that didn't die.

Now I will point you to one of them, loved ones, if you want to look at it. It's Genesis 5:23, "Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him." He didn't die, he just disappeared. And there is another instance in II Kings 2:11, "And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, 'My father, my father! the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' And he saw him no more."

Loved ones, the important things for us is that what makes these translations from earth to heaven instead of death, what makes them a pattern of super life instead of strange exceptions, is that men like these two during these same days raised people from the dead and turned back the deteriorating effects of sickness and disease.

Of course, our great privilege this morning is that we are facing the plainest and the most obvious expression of this uncreated life that has ever been given here on earth. We are facing the clearest expression of the very essence of this super life because we are facing not the myths of the Celts, we are facing this morning not the breathing experiments of gurus who pretend

they're dead and then appear to be alive. We are facing not even the reasonably reliable history of a man like Mohammed. Loved ones, we are facing this morning the most incontrovertible fact of our history. That moment in 29 AD when Jesus of Nazareth destroyed the power of death.

It's important for us to see how clear and clean that evidence is. It's important for us to see that there is no other evidence like this, loved ones. This fact is the surest fact in our world history. There is no fact that has received more legal, historical, psychological, literary, critical examination than this one fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And no fact has come forth from that continuous, that century's old examination and skepticism, no fact has come forth so unscathed. It really is true there is no fact of history that is surer and firmer than Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

There is no clearer evidence of a super life, of an uncreated life that actually overcomes the limitations of this earthbound existence of ours than this resurrection from the dead. Loved ones, it doesn't matter where you look for documentation. You'll never find the kind of manuscript documentation that lies behind this resurrection of the dead from Jesus. There are 4000 Greek manuscripts aged from 125 AD to 1000 AD. There is no history at the time that has such overwhelming manuscript evidence. It's those manuscripts that transmitted those facts to us here in our day.

The psychological balance of the original eye-witnesses, the persecution that they underwent, the desire of both the Jewish and the Roman authorities to discredit the whole resurrection if they possibly could, all these provide cumulative, overwhelming evidence that mean if you reject this fact, you may as well reject all of history. And loved ones, that fact is just plainly stated if you'd like to look at it there in John 20:24, "Now Thomas, one of

the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.' Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut and Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!"

If we are honest, intellectual people, we have to include that fact in our knowledge of this world. That there seems to be a super life in this world of ours that enables these hands, after they appear to have ceased to move forever, enables these hands to continue some kind of existence. There seems to be a super life that enables me to continue to exist, to continue to have relationships with others, to continue to think and live even after the blood has stopped flowing in these veins. Loved ones, that's a fact that you have to begin to include in your understanding of life. That all the blood drained out of Jesus when the spear was thrust into his side, that his lungs stopped breathing, that his hands stopped moving, that all physical life stopped from Friday to Sunday morning -- and then that on Sunday morning he was alive and traveled the country for over a month and was eating and talking and touching and touched by other people, by hundreds of people. That's a fact of our life.

Maybe what is equally important for us to see is that it's not an exception. I think some of us get the wrong idea. We think "oh yes, this is a magical day, I mean it feels different. We all have daffodils for one thing and it's different, we all feel different, so Easter is kind of special, so Easter Sunday it was kind of a magical once for all event, it was an anomaly, it's an exception to

the natural laws of the universe." No, it wasn't. You can see that these things took place long before Jesus lived, that men overcame death, overcame sickness and disease, overcame the limitations of gravity and our natural forces of the universe. It wasn't just an exception, it wasn't just an anomaly. Indeed in Jesus own life it isn't just an anomaly, it isn't just one strange aberration that occurred in our world and has never occurred again.

I'll show you why we say that. It's in John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day. He saw it and was glad. The Jews then said to him, 'You are not yet 50 years old and have you seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'truly, truly I say to you before Abraham was, I am.'" Just as an ex-English teacher, it makes chaos of the tenses. All historians know that it makes chaos of history because this man is saying before Abraham was, and he was more than 2000 years ago, "I am." In other words, this man who rose from the dead in 29 AD is saying "I was alive before I came into this world, I existed before the creation."

Then you get interesting events in Old Testament times. You get three men being thrown into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar. You probably remember that at least from the songs about it. You get those three men walking in the fiery furnace and Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace, it's in Daniel if you want to look it up when you get home, and he says we threw three men in but there is a fourth man walking there and the words are actually there in the King James version, "And he looks like the son of God." But that was four, five hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

On countless other occasions there are times when men say they see the face of God in spite of the fact that you're supposedly not to be able to see the face of God and live unless

it was the face of the Incarnate One and in that case you could live. There are countless times when the angel of the Lord is referred to as the Son of God. Do you remember that Psalm that said, "The Lord said unto my Lord sit thou at my right hand and I will make thine enemies thy footstool." Loved ones, this man Jesus exists above time. He exists above time. He existed before he was born as a little baby in Bethlehem and do you see what that means? He exists after that. He exists now, today. He is a Prince of Life that lives above the centuries. He is alive at this moment. His resurrection is not an aberration, it is a moment when that eternal life that is going on continually comes to the surface like a fish coming to the surface and showing itself and then down, but it's there all the time.

How do you explain the spring? You can't can you? I know we explain the symptoms of the sap coming up through the trees. We describe it. That's what we scientists do, we describe and we explain very little. We describe what is happening. It's very difficult to explain why it's happening. Suddenly, we look out on this winter landscape and we see green shoots coming out where there is apparent death, we see brown twigs beginning to bear green leaves, we see plants that are dead and seem to be dead forever and they come up in beautiful colors that we didn't imagine were there.

Loved ones, this Jesus life moves through all of our natural world. Even we, even our oldness is affected, even our old hearts, and our tired hearts and our weary feelings, isn't it amazing that even we for a moment or two at springtime begin to feel life again. Loved ones, it's that life that keeps the renewing going on in the world, it's that life that enables the oceans to overcome the incredible battering that we give them with our oil spills. It's that life that enables animals to be renewed, it's that life that enables limbs to develop, it's that life that lies underneath all of our life. And loved ones, it is that life that is available to all of

us here. Because Easter isn't an exception. Easter isn't just a once only. Easter is a super life that is able to transform our feelings inside, that's able to enable us to live above ourselves, enables us to live above the particular limitations of our present life. That super life is available and real and it exists, and it can change us here.

And it can come into you. You see, the interesting thing about it, it exists along with the hole in the side. That's important. It exists along with the hole in the side. He comes with the hole in the side and the holes in the hands. In other words, it's a life that works inside your present life as it is. So, in the morning you still have the arthritic pain, in the morning you still have the sense of physical debilitation. That life works alongside that. The symptoms are still there, the hole in the side is still there, the holes in the hands are still there. You don't know why but you're able despite them to do what God wants you to do this day. That's the miracle of it. That that strength is made perfect in your weakness.

That's where a lot of us go astray. We think it's going to remove the difficulties or it's going to remove the physical symptoms. It doesn't. The difficulties are still there, the problems are still there, the physical life debilitated is still there but there is something else that is tasteless and that has no smell and that has no sight, and it seems to enable us to get up. And you know fine well that we have seen countless moments when this has illustrated itself on athletic fields, when it's illustrated itself in us, there have been moments when we've been at the end, we've had nowhere to go, nothing left, and there's some life that we cannot understand that seems to move inside us. Loved ones, that's the norm.

The only reason you and I experience it periodically is it's only once in a while that we give up. It's only once in a while that we

decide we can't manage it ourselves. Because you might say well how do you get it?

Well, loved ones, by taking the same route as Jesus, by dying to your own survival. Why all of us hobble along with only created life is because we are always fighting for our own survival. That's all we care about. We are fighting day after day for our financial survival, our economic survival, that's all we care about. Let us get some more money that we need, let's make ourselves happy, let's have some good feelings. The moment you die to that kind of selfish in turned existence and the moment you identify yourself with Jesus and you say my meat is to do the will of him that sent me. In fact, the moment you get back to those youthful aspirations, that's it. However ridiculous it may seem, the moment you get back to asking your dear maker, "Lord, why did you put me here? What do you want me to do? Even if it costs me money, even if it costs me some degree of disaster I want to know why you put me here." The moment you begin to be interested in why your maker put you here, the moment you'll begin to experience the beginnings of that super, uncreated life force beginning to give you new energy and new ideas and enabling you to live above yourself in joy. That's it, loved ones. It will work.

The moment you will identify yourself with Jesus who is the life person, who has lived above the centuries forever, the moment you begin to identify yourself with him and you begin to say, "Lord, why was I put here? I've slogged away at this job, got the children up, got the home together, getting the degree organized, getting the school organized, I'm beginning to make a life for myself but Lord, why did you put me here? What did you have in mind either here in America or in some other country, what did you have in mind for me?" The moment you begin to turn your life out to what your maker put you here to do, that moment loved

ones, you'll begin to identify yourself with Jesus and you'll begin to experience this uncreated life moving in you.

That's what the Bible says. If we are planted together in His death, we shall certainly be planted together in His resurrection. If we die a death like Him, we shall certainly experience a resurrection like Him. That's it and that's true. There is no mystery. There is a bubbling spirit of joy and delight that can move your life above the events and experiences and the people that you meet day by day. It affects everything you do; it affects your love for other people. You know the way we love them if they love us, we resent them if they resent us, we criticize them if they criticize us, we're jealous of them if they're jealous of us, and instead of subduing that part of our life to God's order, we are subdued by it. We are overwhelmed by relationships.

You remember Jesus on the cross as they put the nails in his hands he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This life produces a love and affection that goes out from you however people are treating you, however they're dealing with you. And of course, you and I both know that is the only thing that will ever transform relationships. It's the only thing that ever transforms another person. Criticism never does but love and continual acceptance and continual beneficence does. Loved ones, that's part of what this uncreated life will bring into your heart. It will enable you to live above the world. "Make the world go away..." -- No, but live above it. The best that most of us can say in our little prison is "make the world go away." No, that wasn't meant to be it. We are meant to live above it as this Man did by the same life that moved him and you can do it, you can.

Decide why did your maker put you here. Start getting interested in why He put you here and that life will begin to move in you. It will. Let us pray.

Dear Father, when we see the daffodils and we see the spring flowers we are envious. When we see the little ducklings and the children playing, we are envious. We do realize there is an oldness so often about our life; there is a self-preservation urge that is so unadventurous and so deadening and so tiring and weary. Lord, we sense that surely in some way we should be able to take part in this renewal that comes into the world. Oh Lord, we see this fact of your resurrection from the dead and Lord, we begin to see that it's not an aberration; it's not an anomaly. You are alive all the time and this life is not only one that overcomes death but it overcomes all the limitations of our life here on earth and enables us to live above them and then to transform them. Lord, thank you. We would begin to ask not what do I want; we would stop the me, me, me. We would begin to ask you, Lord God our Creator, will you tell us why you put us here. And we'll begin to get about our business and begin to live by that uncreated super life that was so plainly set forth in 29 AD in Jerusalem. Thank you, Lord. Amen.