

December 8, 2024

The Reason He Came

Advent # 2: "To Give Abundant Life"

John 10:6-10

Intro:

We are going to be a little silly to start the sermon off this morning. More accurately, I am going to be a little silly as I'm pretty sure most of you are not going to join in on what I'm about to do. That's ok. As most you know by now, I have no problem with making myself look a little silly.

During my days of leading out at camp, we often did silly songs to get the kids out of their "I'm too cool" shells so that they would be more relaxed and open to hearing important things like the gospel message the speaker would later present. One of those songs is a repeat-after-the-leader action song about a guy named Bill.

[Here, Pastor Ryan demonstrated the silly song, complete with hand, elbow, foot, knee, head and tongue actions. You can watch a [similar song about a guy named Joe here](#).]

The part of the song that really gets me is the emphasis that we would put on the line "I have a life!" What does it mean to have a life? When I was a kid, and really an adult as well, one of the classic taunts was to tell someone to "get a life". What did we mean by that? Often it meant that whatever the other person was doing did not qualify, in our eyes, as being productive or useful. In the adult world words like "creepy" get added into the mix. A "life", therefore, is doing something that has value in the eyes or opinions of other people. It is productive behaviour. It is focused on what we should be doing, not just what everyone else is doing, although it seems that a great number of people feel that sticking their nose into other people's business is, in fact, a good use of their life.

But is that what having a life is really all about?

To have Life:

This Advent season we are exploring some of the reasons that Jesus came. We celebrate the birth of Jesus and the fact that he came down from Heaven at Christmas, but we rarely take time to consider his reasons for coming. This morning we are looking at His reason to give us abundant life, as found in John 10:10.

Often when this passage is preached, the message is that Jesus enhances all that life is. Through Jesus we are given more and richer experiences of joy and fulfilment in life. Through Jesus, purpose and direction are sharpened and clarified for us. We experience love in new and more profound ways. We gain satisfaction in selfless service. In short all that we perceive as being “good” things in life are that much better because life is now anchored in Jesus. The prosperity Gospel advocates – those who preach that God’s desire of blessing for us is that we be wealthy and have all the privilege that wealth brings, use this passage in John to support their claims that God desires us to live “the good life” and that this is the life Jesus brings to us.

Of course, the contrast in this scenario is that just as Jesus sharpens the experience of the “good” things in our lives, the life he gives also sharpens the bad. Deeper experiences of joy only come about because there is a greater experience of sorrow. We can expect greater difficulty and the experience of persecution because of our relationship with Jesus.

While this might sound discouraging, the truth is that Jesus never promises a carefree, “everything will be sunshine and daisies” life. He promises full life.

If you look at the broader context of this statement by Jesus about life, you will find that it is couched in the imagery of the Good Shepherd, and a sheep-fold that is guarded by the Good Shepherd. Jesus says he is the gate to this fold. All who enter have life. Life in the fold means safety, it means sustenance, it means water, it means rest. It means all of those things not only during the years of our life on earth, but for eternity.

The thief comes to try and rob us of that life. Ever wonder how he does that? We might think he does so by making life hard, but Jesus doesn't promise an easy life. Instead, he robs us of life by overwhelming us – not with the busyness or troubles of life, but with evil and the knowledge of evil and the claim that we can know the difference between good and evil on our own, and judge properly between them. Our world's general lack of care for others should be proof enough that this is a lie.

Let's, for a moment, go back to the beginning. In Genesis, in the creation story, God creates a garden for Adam and Eve to live in. In the middle of this garden he places two trees – the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God then tells Adam and Eve that they are free to eat from any plant in the garden, except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they eat from that tree they will die – in effect, their lives will be stolen from them. They are free to eat from the Tree of Life though. In this garden they walk with God. They have direct relationship with Him. They experience His delight, and in turn delight in Him.

But as soon as they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were opened to the burden of having to determine in their own selves what was good and what was not. So much of what we think is good is not, and so much that people call evil is also not. How are we to know? Our lives are robbed of the delight of God, because we are consumed by the lie that it is up to us to determine the dividing line. We are separated from the life that was originally intended for us, and if we are separated from life, then we are enjoined with death.

Jesus comes to restore that lost life, to bridge the divide and rejoin us with the only one who can take the burden of determining good and evil from us. The abundant life that Jesus came to give is a life that is full in the presence of God – in the experience of His closeness, of His delight. In the safety of the fold that Jesus is the gate to, we can release the burdens of life into God's care and

embrace the life that He has given us. Yes, that life might be hard, but the difference between the life that Jesus gives and the life the thief steals is that God will provide everything we will need in order to live through the hard parts, and He will be protectively present with us every step of the way. And that is true abundance.

Let's pray.