The Bible and Living

John 10:9-10

Preface

I start my day sometime between 5:00 and 6:00 in the morning. I often get home around 4:30 in the afternoon. Usually I help Pam prepare supper. Sometimes I just sit in the living room and watch the news to chill out a few minutes. If it isn't time for the news, I will watch "Judge Judy" while I wait for it to come on.

If you ever feel your life is a mess and you have done some foolish stuff, you need to watch Judge Judy. You talk about some people, who have done some stupid things, that show has them. And Judge Judy has a way of cutting through all of the smoke and excuses and getting right to the heart of the matter. Usually the problems stem from a lack of moral integrity and Judge Judy spares no words in expressing that.

Recently I saw an interview with Judge Judy where she was explaining how she wants to convey a simple message to those who appear in her court. The message she said is, "It is your life, live it well."

This message is consistent with God's word. <u>God gives each of us our life but he expects us to live it well. He doesn't force us but he instructs us on how to live our life well.</u>

Today I will begin the first of eight sermons in a series titled "The Bible and Life." Topics will include everything from health and money to relationships and sin. I encourage you to attend or at least read each of these sermons about how God wants to impact your daily life.

Scripture

[9] I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. [10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:9-10 NIV

Jesus said "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" The King James Translation says "*abundant life*."

If I were to ask how many of you would like to have abundant life, everyone would raise their hand. We all want abundant life and we all want our life to be full.

But what does life to the full really mean? We know it requires knowing Christ but what else is involved in having an abundant life?

Abundant life includes many things ranging from your relationships to finances; from what you do for a living to what you do in your free time. The abundant life involves what you yearn for and how you go about accomplishing your goals.

Imagine for a moment, a life of peace, goodness, generosity, mercy, love, patience, joy, kindness, gentleness, faith and hope, not just in your life but in the life of everyone around you. Imagine a world without hunger, war, oppression and violence; a world where you never had to lock your automobile or home. This is the kingdom of God; a place where everyone is experiencing the abundant life.

But we know this world does not exist on earth. Instead, we live in a world where most people live by their impulses and selfish desires. These desires are largely influenced by all the wrong things from advertisers to those who seek to draw us into sin.

If you promote a message long enough and emotionally enough, you can convince the masses they desperately need what you are offering even if it is not good for them

This drives our society today. We are being sold on the idea that what society offers and tells us is good or bad is the truth. This is done with no regard to Biblical principles. Society says it is acceptable to lie, cheat, commit adultery, hate, murder the unborn and so forth.

As Christians, we can rise above the disappointing life society offers and experience the abundant life that is available through our relationship with God.

So how do we experience the fullness of life that Christ speaks of? The answer involves many things but I have summarized them in three broad principles.

1. Abundant Living is making Jesus Lord.

Many people know Jesus as Savior, but very few come to know Him as Lord. As a result many miss out on the abundance He came to give. They recognize Him for their salvation from sin and they recognize that in Him is eternal life. But they fail to realize abundant life comes from walking daily with Christ.

There is a huge difference between knowing Jesus Christ and making Him Lord of your life. There are only two options for who will be Lord of your life; yourself or Christ. When we are Lord of our own life, we become subject to whatever feels good, the latest fad or whichever way the wind is blowing us at the moment. In other words, our life becomes a complete mess. Does this sound familiar?

Peace, goodness, generosity, mercy, love, patience, joy, kindness, gentleness, faith and hope; these are all the fruit of the spirit. They are the result of walking daily with Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit of God to guide your decisions and actions.

Illus: We have all seen the bumper stickers that read "Jesus is my co-pilot." For many people Jesus isn't even in the car, he was left back at the church. Jesus doesn't need to be our co-pilot, we need to let Him be our only pilot; Lord of our life.

God will give His Spirit to those who make Christ Lord, those who choose to live by His ways and choose to seek Him out. In the midst of the storm, you can have peace through the Holy Spirit that comes in knowing Christ.

[2] Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2 NIV

Overcoming sin and temptation do not come from our own strength. God promises to give us the strength to overcome by faith in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit.

All we have to do is keep our eyes fixed on Christ as Lord of our life.

2. Abundant Living is making the Bible your Complete Guide.

The Bible does not just contain nice thoughts about how to best live. The instructions are based on living spiritual laws that work for you or against you depending on how you chose to live.

The teachings of the Bible are the real truth, given by the creator to the created. They are timeless because God's laws that govern life's success have never changed.

In the Bible we find the wonderful truths that will transform us into peaceful, joyful, successful Christians.

God does not intend for you to live in fear, in doubt, in poverty or in despair. He gave us His word that we might understand His laws; the laws of life and live by them in peace.

Inside the Bible is every basic principle and law that governs successful living. The Bible was written as a letter to you so that you would know God and know how to live an abundant life on this earth.

[16] All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17] so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17 NIV

The Bible is filled with wisdom and practical instruction as we will see in the coming weeks. When we make the Bible our own personal instruction guide, we live according to God's law rather than the world's law and the results are phenomenal.

But it is not enough to just be in church and hear the preacher read the scriptures. You must read the Bible yourself, you must prayerfully study the Bible and apply it's truths to your life.

When we put its teachings into practice is when we live life with success. It is then we discover true happiness.

God's word is the owner's manual to how life really works. It tells us everything we need to know.

3. Abundant Living is loving God, Others and Life.

The fact that God sent His son to die on the cross for our salvation is an amazing thing. One of my favorite songs is titled "Strange Way to Save the World."

When we contemplate the cross, we are in awe for sure. Some choose to ignore what Jesus did for them. But for those of us who receive this gift, life to the fullest can be found.

Even more amazing than the cross is the motive behind the cross, God's love. God loves you so much and God wants to open the doors of fellowship with you. He wants to poor out His grace and forgiveness upon you and showers you with His love.

Have you been changed by the love of God? When we understand God's amazing love, we learn how to love others in return.

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." 1 Cor 13:1 NIV

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV

One of the laws of God is to love others more than ourselves. This law can be applied to every area of life. Do you want to be great in business? Find enough people to serve and do a good job serving them and you will build a prosperous business.

Want to be a great husband or wife? Then serve them by loving them more than yourself, without reservation and you will be great spouse.

True lasting greatness, abundant life is found in loving God, loving others and loving life.

You cannot experience abundant life until you are willing to genuinely love others, more than yourself.

God wants you to know the joy of having fantastic relationships with Him and others. Learning to love others can change your whole outlook on life.

Conclusion

How many famous people can you think of that have plenty money, fame and fortune but their lives are a wreck? In a matter of minutes you will think of plenty for sure. But, God has so much more joy in store for His children.

Illus: Some of you in this congregation grow great tomatoes. You prepare the soil, remove the weeds, plant the seeds, fertilize and protect the plants from bugs and other destructive elements. Then when the time is right, you harvest delicious tomatoes. There isn't a single person here who after doing none of these things, foolishly walks out into their backyard expecting to find tomatoes growing.

Likewise, you can't expect to experience the abundant life that Christ speaks of without doing the things our Lord instructs you to do. Accepting Christ as your savior is the first step. We must know Christ in order to make Him Lord of our life.

Today I am going to ask you to answer two extremely important questions. You have no choice but to answer them. To ignore either of the questions is to answer in the negative. Your answer to each of these questions will determine the direction of your life.

Question One: Do truly you believe God is the creator of the universe and the giver of all life?

Question Two: Are you willing to trust and live by God's word?

Today you can start a new life. Today you can begin the planting process of having a full fruitful life through the grace of Jesus Christ.

"17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

You have a choice. You can choose to make Christ Lord of our life and experience all God has in store for you or you can chose life your way.

I choose abundant life, do you?