

ARE YOU ENJOYING WHAT JESUS CAME TO GIVE YOU?

As most of you are well aware, one of my wife and I's favorite Christmas movies is the classic: "*It's a Wonderful Life*." I'm not entirely sure how **many years** ago we started watching it—and how many **times in total** we've seen it—but we kept the tradition going this year and watched it again (although it was a few days after Christmas).

Two things invariably happen while watching the movie. **First**—and you already know this because I've mentioned it before—is that **I cry** at the end of the movie! 'Pastor, how can you cry when you **know** how it ends—and you've **seen the ending** numerous times?' To which I reply, 'I don't know!'

Another thing that usually happens is that **something different** "strikes me"—it makes an impression on me—that I had not had in the past.

What really struck me **this year** was the excitement George Bailey displayed when he realized that he got "to live again!" That joy was demonstrated **before he knew** that his friends and relatives had pitched in to give him what seemed like way more than the \$8000 Uncle Billie had inadvertently given to old man Potter!

How did George **show** his new-found joy? By leaving the bridge that he contemplated jumping from and running through town, yelling "Merry Christmas" to the things—and people—he had previously been **angry** with and **complaining** about! Had his circumstances **changed**? No; not that he was aware of, anyway!

--**His car** was still piled into the tree he had hit—but he joyfully smacked his hands on it when he passed by and yelled, "Yay!" with his arms up in the air.

--As he ran past the building where his family business was—a business that caused him a lot of disappointment and heartache—he shouted, "Merry Christmas, you wonderful old Buildings and Loan!"

--And—after pounding on the windows of Potter's office to get his attention—George shouted, "Merry Christmas, Mr. Potter!" To which Mr. Potter replied, "Happy New Year to you—in jail! Go on home—they're waiting for you!"

--Lastly, upon arriving at home, there are four men waiting for George in his living room: the bank examiner, a newspaper reporter, a photographer, and the sheriff. When the sheriff says, "George, I got a paper here for you," George replies: "I bet it's a warrant for my arrest, isn't it wonderful! I'm going to jail!"

The point I'm making is simply this: Nothing in George's life **had changed**—prior to him reaching home—other than his **outlook** on life! Which leads me to ask this question: Do you and I ever need a **fresh perspective**—a **new outlook**—on life? Maybe **you** don't, but...I'm **being transparent** here—I **sometimes** do!

And...many of you—if **you were** transparent—would admit that sometimes **you** need a new outlook, too! --Maybe you're **like George Bailey** and feel like your life is in a rut...and that every day is the same...and that what you do on a daily basis is **not meaningful** or worthwhile.

--Maybe you're the **father (or mother)**—of a **prodigal** son...or daughter...or spouse—that you want to see come back to God, but **they haven't yet**—and you've been literally praying for years.

--Or maybe you feel **like Martha** who was "cumbered about much serving"—she was overwhelmed with her responsibilities—and it made her "careful [anxious] and troubled about many things."

If **any** of these fit, **take heart**. There is hope! **Why?** How? Because Jesus said, "I am come that they might have **life**, and that they might have it more **abundantly**." Many of us have heard—and even know—that verse, but do we really **live an abundant life**? Is **our** outlook on life one of hope...and joy...and expectation? Sadly, I fear too many of God's children have re-written the verse to read, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more **miserably**."

My prayer for the new year is that each one of us have life—meaning **eternal** life—and that we **thrive**—not merely "**survive**"—in 2025!

Please take your Bibles and turn to John 10; follow along as I read verses 7-14.

This morning, we are going to focus our attention on verses 9 and 10. I will be referring to other verses—both in this chapter and in other chapters—but want us to really consider what it means to **have life**—and to have it **more abundantly**.

1. What does it mean to “have life?”

Notice again what Jesus says in the last half of verse 10: “I am come that they might have life...” What kind of life is Jesus talking about: literal, **physical** life—or **spiritual** life?

A. The context defines “life”

Three things point to it being **spiritual** life.

1) We know from the context that Jesus is talking about **spiritual** things. Here’s why I say that:

--Vs 6. “This **parable** spake Jesus unto them...” A parable is an earthly illustration that teaches **spiritual** truth.

--What parable is Jesus referring to? What He said in verses 1-5!

--What was He talking about in vs 1-5? Doors...and thieves...and robbers and shepherds and sheep.

--Jesus was talking about real, **physical** things—but Jesus was giving them a **spiritual** meaning.

--End of vs 7. “I am the door of the sheep.”

--Was Jesus a piece of wood—that swung back & forth—so four-footed furry animals could go in & out!

No! In vs 7, Jesus says, “I am the door of the sheep,” but in vs 9, Jesus says, “I am the door; by me if any **man** enter in...”

--Simply put, sheep—in this chapter—refer to **people**—and Jesus Himself is the good shepherd!

2) The word “life” itself. Vs 10 says, “I am come that they might have life” refers to **eternal** life—salvation from the penalty of our sins. It is translated from the Greek word “dzo-ay’.” One Greek lexicon put it like this: “In the New Testament, “zóé” refers to life in its fullest sense, encompassing both physical and **spiritual** dimensions. It is often used to describe the **eternal life** that is granted through faith in Jesus Christ.” (Biblehub)

I found it interesting—and yet not surprising—that a **different Greek word** was used of Jesus giving up His **physical** life. In vs 11, it says Jesus “giveth His life.” In vs 15 and 17, Jesus says that He “lays down His life” for the sheep. In all 3 instances, the Greek word “psoo-khay” —meaning “breath of life”—is used.

In other words, what Jesus gave up—His **physical life**—was different than the kind of life that He gave to His sheep! The word “life” is used one more time in this chapter—in vs 28. Notice what it says, “I give unto them **eternal** life...” Once again, “life” comes from the Greek word “dzo-ay’”—a reference to eternal life as a result of forgiveness of sins.

This—in my mind—“seals the deal” because Jesus defines “life” for us. It is eternal—it is never ending—so it obviously refers to the **spiritual** dimension and not the physical!

3) Reason number 3...common sense! Maybe “process of elimination” would be a better way to put it! Here’s what I’m getting at. Were there people **physically** alive when Jesus came to earth 2000 plus years ago? Of course! So...if Jesus came so they might have life—but they already had **physical** life—He had to be talking about **spiritual life**!

Not the only place in the Bible where it says this. Here are a couple of verses I gave you a week or so ago.

I John 4:9 “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might **live** through Him.”

Don’t miss what is being said here. **Because** God sent His Son, we have the opportunity to **live** through Him. “Live” here refers to eternal life—it’s a form of the word “dzo-ay’.” If God **had not sent** His Son, we would **not have** the opportunity for spiritual life—salvation from the penalty of our sins.

I John 4:10 “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Again, had God not sent His Son, we would not have had a sacrifice for our sins!

What is the life that Jesus is referring to when He says, “I am come that they might have life?” He is referring to **eternal life**, being forgiven for our sins and thus not facing the penalty required for our sins.

Next, let’s consider... B. The commencement of life

When does eternal life—the forgiveness of sins that Jesus talks about—**commence**? **When** does it **begin**?

Notice again vs 9, “I am the door: by me if any man **enter in**, he shall be saved...”

When is a person saved? When they **enter through** the door!

Who can be saved? Does “**if any man**” **exclude** girls and women and grandmas? No; **any person** can enter!

What people are **not** saved? Those who **refuse to enter** through the door, right?

Who is the door? Jesus! That means **Jesus** is the One we must go through to be forgiven and enter heaven! John 14:6 says the same thing, doesn’t it. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

But **how** does that work—what does that **look like**—especially considering Jesus is **in Heaven**—and we are here **on earth**? One of the easiest ways to explain it is to let God’s Word do it for us—and the A,B,C’s!

Mark your spot in John 10 and turn to Luke 23 where we have the familiar account of the thief on the cross.

What did the repentant thief do?

First, he “**A**” – Admitted that he was a sinner! We see that in the first part of vs 41: “And we [are condemned] justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.”

Second, he “**B**” – Believed that Jesus was perfect and did not deserve to die. We see that in the second part of vs 41 “but this man hath done nothing amiss.”

That’s not the only thing he believed, though. He also believed he could **not save** himself—that’s why he asked Jesus to “remember him”—and he believed that Jesus could save him!

And doing those two things—repenting of his sin and putting his trust in Jesus—led him to...

“**C**” – Call upon Jesus! Romans 10:13 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved!”

And we can do the same thing now—by faith! And Jesus **wants us** to do that!

--He wants us to admit that we are a sinner and can’t save ourselves.

--He wants us to believe that He was perfect—and died for our sins—not His own!

--He wants us to believe that we **can’t save ourselves**—and that He can save us and wants to save us!

And we must call on Him, believing that when we ask Him for forgiveness & salvation, He answers us w/ “Yes!”

Back to John 10. What does it say in vs 9? What happens when we admit we are a sinner and believe Jesus died for us and call upon Him? “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he **shall be** saved.”

What about **you**? Have you **entered** through the door? Has there been a time in your life when you know that you repented and put your faith in Christ? Along the same lines, **can you walk through a door** without knowing **you’ve walked through** a door? I believe it is good to know when we put our faith and trust in Christ!

C. The continuance of life

When does eternal life—the life that Jesus gives—**begin**? When we receive Him as our Savior, right?

When does it **end**? **How long** will you have it?

Look again at vs 28 “And I give unto them” [it’s a gift, not earned] what kind of life? “**Eternal** life!”

Eternal means everlasting; never-ending! Jesus reinforces that thought in the second part of the verse: “and they shall **never** perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

So...that means if you are a child of God, you have both a **temporary, physical life**—and an everlasting **spiritual life**—right now. You aren’t **waiting to get** everlasting life—you already have it!

And the **verb tense** of “have life” in vs 10—and “have it more abundantly”—bears that out. It is in the **present** tense. That means you are presently and continuously having spiritual life and having it in abundance!

2. What does it mean to have life “more abundantly?” Before we discuss specifically what an abundant life is, I want to make sure we understand... A. What an abundant life **does not** mean

--It doesn't mean an abundance of **health or wealth or possessions or power**.

--And it doesn't mean a **care-free, or trouble-free life**, either.

--In fact, it may mean an **abundance of suffering!** It certainly meant that for Paul—and Jesus had Ananias tell Saul that right after his conversion. Acts 9:16 “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.”

--And Saul wasn't the only one **Jesus warned** about suffering. The same warning is given to **all** His followers—**including us!**

Luke 6:22-23 “Blessed are ye, when men shall **hate you**, and when they shall **separate you** from their company, and shall **reproach you**, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

²³ Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”

John 15:18 “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”

So if the abundant life doesn't mean an abundance of health or wealth or possession or power—and it very well could be a life where we are hated and suffer—in what sense is it **abundant?**

B. What **does** an abundant life mean?

Notice on your outline a quote I have there for you.

James Montgomery Boice: “The Greek word for ‘abundance,’ *perissos*, has a mathematical meaning and generally denotes a surplus...The abundant life is above **all the contented life**, in which our contentment is based upon the fact that God is equal to **every emergency** and is able to supply **all our needs** according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus.”

Charles Swindoll also has what I think is a really good quote: “The abundant life is life that never ends, yet we don't have to wait until the end of our **physical life** to receive this abundance and to enjoy it. Abundant life includes peace, purpose, destiny, a genuine purpose for living, the joy of facing any adversity—including **the grave**—without fear, and the ability to endure hardship with confident assurance.”

In a nutshell, then, the abundant life that Jesus came for us to have is a **contented, joy-filled life!**

And John 10:10 is not the only place that Jesus mentions His desire that we be **characterized by joy**.

Turn to John 15. John 15:11 “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your **joy might be full**.”

John 16:24 “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your **joy may be full**.”

John 17:13 “And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have **my joy fulfilled in themselves**.”

Pretty hard to miss the fact that Jesus wants us to have a joy-filled life—regardless of circumstances. And let's not forget that “joy” is a fruit of the Spirit! Galatians 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**...”

Lastly—and briefly—let's consider... **3. How to have an abundant life**

In other words, how can we live a life of contentment—regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in?

Disclaimer: What I'm about to share with you is **just barely going** to scratch the surface. In fact, I thought about not sharing it with you at all! My hope, though, is that each of us will be so motivated to want an abundant life that we will study it out on our own! I'm also thinking about “**putting it in the crock-pot**” for the week and share with you more thoughts about it next week!

A. Aspire to have it

Jesus came for us to have an abundant life...and wants our joy to be full. The writer of Hebrews reminds us in **Hebrews 13:5** “Let your conversation [lifestyle] be without covetousness, and be **content** with such things as ye have...”

I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that you **will not have** a life of contentment if you don't want one!

B. Accept that it takes work to

Paul reminds us that he had **to learn** to be content. **Contentedness** does not come naturally—but complaining and murmuring does! **Phil 4:11** “Not that I speak in respect of want: **for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**”

If the Apostle Paul had to learn how to be content, rest assured that we do, too!

C. Attitudes needed to foster it

What kind of attitudes—and beliefs—do we need to work on in order to have a life of contentment?

1) God is in control. He is Sovereign. He ordains the circumstances in our life. If a sparrow doesn’t fall to the ground without God knowing about it, nothing happens to us that He doesn’t want to have happen.

Psalm 115:3 “But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.”

Psalm 139:2-3 “Thou knowest **my downsitting and mine uprising**, thou understandest **my thought** afar off.

³Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art **acquainted with all my ways.**”

2) God is good. **Ps 18:30** “As for God, **His way** is perfect...”

Ps 119:68 “Thou art good, and **doest good...**”:

3) God is molding us to be like Christ.

Romans 8:29 “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

And molding, of course, **often involves trials!**

James 1:2-4 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

Interesting, isn’t it? The very thing that God brings into our lives to “grow us up” and teach us contentment, we fight against and immediately want removed!

As we close, I want to go back to a question I asked during the introduction. Do you find yourself feeling **like** your life is in a rut...and that every day is the same...and that what you do on a daily basis is **not meaningful** or worthwhile?

That may be how **you feel**—but that is not the mindset that God wants you to stay in! Jesus came not just to give you **eternal** life—but also a life of **contentment and joy!** Do you have that kind of life? My prayer for the new year is that you will want to **thrive**—not just survive—in 2025!

So what decisions would God have us make based on what we have heard?

1. First, Jesus came that you might have **life**—meaning forgiveness and salvation from the penalty of your sins. Do **you** have that? Do you **know** that you have been forgiven—and that you will go to heaven after you die?

God wants you to know that! He wants you to **receive** Jesus for yourself!

2. Second—for those of you who are children of God—is your life characterized by contentment and joy? Jesus came to give you that! But it is found only in Him!

Are you obeying Him?

Are you trusting Him?

Are you focusing on the truth that He is in control...and is good...and is working in your life to make you more dependent on Him—and less dependent on you?