

Advent Series

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

John 10:10

December 18-19, 2004

“Finding the Life God Always Intended for Us”

This week I stopped by an Alzheimer care facility to see a couple of Villagers

- It is a place where, for its residents, thought, memory, language are diminishing each day
- As I looked in the faces of many of the people, I could not help but sense the lights had sometime ago gone out
 - They were there, and yet they were not
- As I was going out, I was reminded of the pain this brings to families
- Reminded as well of life's fragility, debilitation of age
- I could not help but think of my own fears
 - What will be my future?
 - Knowing my mind could one day be gone, long before my body stops breathing
 - (But then, my kids would say it has already happened)

-but something else grabbed me—it was the facility's mission statement—

-posted on a wall were these words--

“Partnering with families, staff, and healthcare professionals to create an environment where—

-employees want to work

-families want to visit

-and residents want to live

And I wondered—do they want to live?

-but then—that's a fair question for all of us

-do we want to live?

At the deepest level—I believe most of us want to live

-few of us anyway—are content to merely exist, drift, take up space

-deeper than our instinct to live is our longing to be alive

-but many are unsure where to find LIFE

When Jesus walked this earth—He came with the answer

-in John 10-Jesus declared in the most concise manner why He came to Bethlehem

-here—we find a third text—that gives the reason for Christmas

-I have come—to bear witness to truth

-I have come—to destroy the works of the devil

-and here in our text (vss 7-10)

-I have come that you might have life, and have it in abundance

-in this one statement—Jesus touched a nerve—a good nerve anyway

-perhaps more than any verse—this is what brought me to Christ—the promise of life

-but what does this mean exactly?

-His words suggest this—first of all--

1-HE CAME TO OFFER SOMETHING THAT WE DO NOT HAVE

-He did not come to enhance, improve, add to something that ALREADY IS

-otherwise He would have merely said—I have come that you might have a BETTER LIFE

-but Jesus begins with the assumption that life itself is missing

-for it is

-God's Word—and life itself—tells us that something inside is dead

-the result of sin

-choosing sin—we are left separated from God—the Lifegiver

-our Creator, Sustainer—our life support system

-FOR LIFE EXISTS IN HIM

-and sin and life cannot co-exist

Maybe for some of us—we are painfully aware this is true

-we might be breathing, eating, sleeping—even in a career—even having lots of things

-yet feel walled in by a sense of lifelessness

-we pursue wealth, power, success

-yet with all we gain, there is a sense of death

-we see it in our dullness, our cynicism, our boredom

We feed the dog, pay the bills, watch the news, head off to bed—so we can do it all over tomorrow

-we head off to our work—to that which we assume will bring ultimate fulfillment, life—and end up wondering—

-is this all there is?

-we come to realize—in time--that sin is more than turning our backs on God—it is turning our backs on life

-Jesus came for this purpose--to breathe life back into us

-to offer what we do not have

2-HE CAME TO OFFER LIFE THAT IS ABUNDANT

- for those who take up Jesus' offer of life—Jesus offers more than life
- He offers life at the highest level

-Jesus did not say—I have come that you might exist—barely
-Jesus came to save us not merely from death—He came to save us from dullness

- but looking at some Christians—you would think Jesus said something like that
- I have come to offer life at its most unexciting level

But Jesus came to offer just the opposite—

- He came to offer something that is over and above
- a life superior, extraordinary
- as Willard puts it—LIFE TO THE LIMIT

-meaning...

A-LIFE THAT IS ETERNAL

- life that transcends time—that is everlasting
- life that can never be diminished, stolen
- life that does not have an expiration date
- life that therefore has eternal significance—life that counts for eternity—rather than merely for this earth

B-LIFE THAT IS FORGIVEN, CLEANSED

- no longer stuck in death's grip of shame

C-LIFE THAT BEARS FRUIT

- as opposed to a life of barrenness

D-LIFE THAT HAS FLAVOR

- we are called to be the salt of the earth!

E-LIFE THAT HAS PURPOSE, MEANING

1-life that transcends our personal purposes—finding a career, moving up the corporate ladder, accumulating goods—all of which becomes tinny, thin, over time

- Jesus came to offer a life to be lived—according to His purpose
- a mission to be pursued
- a passion to be had
- He came to save us from corrupt souls—as well as flat souls

2-life that takes on God like proportions
-life that “presses all the way in and all the way up to the ultimate purpose of God—and joins Him in it”-Piper
-Isa 43:6-7-we were created for life at another level—living for His glory—
created to magnify Him by making Him look like who He really is

3-life that is called rather than driven

4-life that is significant rather than merely successful

E-LIFE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- makes waves
- for Jesus came to offer life that is radical
- fire in the soul kind of stuff
- life that McManus describes as “an uprising”
- and such living is dangerous living, wild, unpredictable
- dangerous to the status quo—dangerous to the world—dangerous to institutions—to old wineskins—to dull and boring religion—to monotonous culture
- life that gets us in trouble
- life that turns the world upside down

- yes—a life like Jesus
- life that steps out in faith--keeps us on our knees

Let’s make sure we understand this—Jesus’ offer of abundant life is not synonymous with a nice life

- it is life that is holy disrupted—where Jesus turns our lives upside down in order to make them right side up
- life that has certain hazards—frontier verses suburban—traveler versus tourist

- He invites us to follow Him on a path that is uncertain, unmapped—that is intended to be an adventure

- on a path where we are at once alien, adventurer, explorer, warrior
- a path where the miraculous may await to be unwrapped

- a life filled with the winds of the Spirit

Illus-sailing—when the sails are not filled—the boat is “in irons”

Jesus came to save us from a life “in irons”

- domesticated, banal, stuck
- to give us a life worth both living and dying for

3-HE CAME TO OFFER SOMETHING THAT IS NOT AUTOMATIC

- He came to offer to offer something that “might”—not “will” be
- I have come that you might have life—not will have life

-it is experienced by those who make a decisive choice to receive what He offers-5:40

- this life will not come unless we take the initiative and pursue, lay hold of it
- a pursuit that becomes life long—as Paul reminded Timothy
- I Tim 6:12-lay hold of the eternal life to which you were called
- I Tim 6:19-take hold of the life that is truly life

pt -that we have life in any sense is first of all up to God
-but it is up to us to receive it

Finally-

4-HE CAME TO OFFER SOMETHING THAT WILL CONSTANTLY BE ATTACKED

- for once we have life--there are forces intent upon robbing us of this life
- a-life stealers who want to slip into the pen
- here in this context
- Jesus warned of thieves devoted to stealing, destroyers intent upon destroying

The worst being religious types

- who are not interested in life—but in rules, regulations

Who live as if Jesus said—

- I have come to exhaust you with a long list of demands

b-sin itself—under the guise of life

- works to constantly deaden us
- for sin is a parasite—that taps its host for sustenance
- wherever sin shows up—it leeches the color, wit, and energy out of life

CONC

We must therefore resolve—as Jonathan Edwards—resolved to—“live with all my might, while I do live”

