

Living The Abundant Life

Good morning, family. Thank you, Joe, for that wonderful word. Let us commit this time to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, we thank You so much that Your Word is living. Just like in the times of Joshua, You are wanting to speak to Your children right now. As I present Your Word, let it present itself, Lord, as Joe encouraged, that Your Word does not return void, and we can have confidence in that. Your heart wants to be expressed, and we know that You will. I am Your vessel for You to use for this next 30 minutes and forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

It is wonderful because the burden that has been on my heart is all about body life and how we should be living in the very body of Christ itself. Joe gave a very good example in examining the life of Joshua, and then seeing how all these blessings in our lives are actually meant for one another. We will begin our story in John 10, and the burden on my heart is the abundant life that Christ has given to us.

John 10

This story from John 10 is very fascinating because it is sandwiched right between Jesus healing a blind man and then Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. In the first few verses in John 10:1-6 Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees. In the previous section, Jesus went ahead and healed this blind man, and the Pharisees are like, "Oh, what is going on? This is happening on the Sabbath; this cannot be!" So, they summoned the blind man, and after talking with him, they kicked him out of the synagogue. Jesus later went and found the blind man and conversed with him, saying, "Yes, I am the One who healed you." The blind man was rejoicing with great joy. The Pharisees were around, and Jesus started to speak to them. That is where it begins in this first part of John 10, where Jesus gives them a picture of this sheepfold, which represents the people of God. There is a flock of sheep, there is a fence, and there is a door. Jesus said to the Pharisees and to the Jews that there is one true Shepherd who comes through the door itself. There will be some that will try to come other ways that are not the door. Those are the thieves and robbers, and they did not understand at all, but He was kind of speaking of them in some way.

We May Have Life and Have It Abundantly

John 10:7-11: "Then Jesus said to them again, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.'"

Some things that we just learned from that brief reading is that as Jesus is expounding more to these Pharisees, is that He Himself is the Door. Not only is He the Shepherd, but

He is also the Door. All who come through the Door of Christ will be saved. You are His sheep, and you are entering into His people. Many that came before Jesus, who claimed to be the door, who claimed to be the way, are the ones who are the thieves and robbers who come to steal, kill, and destroy. We also learn that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He goes on more to explain this in the following verses. But for time's sake, we can just know that He is the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep. Once again, the burden on my heart today is that Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly.

The Abundant Life

What is this abundant life? We might often think that Christ came so that we can have eternal life. Yes, but as Joe was mentioning earlier, He gives us all these blessings so that we can live for our God and to live for one another. This abundant life is something we are going to be diving into today. If you can turn with me to Philippians 1:21-24.

To Live Is Christ

What is this abundant life? This letter to the Philippians, written by Paul, is very interesting because he was imprisoned at the time, but he testifies to these Philippian believers that his chains have actually turned out to be a great blessing and that the whole palace guard actually had come to know that the reason for those chains was because of Christ. What a testimony that is! Because of that, many of the saints Paul writes to were emboldened to share the gospel even more. Sometimes we might think it would be the opposite, where if we see a brother or sister of ours who is being persecuted, we may think that we will run and hide. But no, it has the opposite effect because when we see someone who is that bold for the Lord, it encourages us as well.

In verses 21-24 Paul writes: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you."

So, Paul is saying, "I really want to go and be with the Lord now. I do not mind if I die, because that is a far better thing. But if I do remain, it is for your sake." The question we are trying to answer is this: What is this abundant life that the Lord has given us? I think Paul does very well to explain it in verse 21: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." There is a hint of living that is Christ Himself.

Christ Who Lives in Us

Galatians 2:20-21 was shared last week, which is wonderful how the Holy Spirit works. We know that Paul has established that to live is Christ. This is the second part that gives us more of that answer of what is this abundant life. The context of this section is that Paul establishes that the law has brought judgment and death, and because of that, Christ has brought us new life.

Verse 20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved

me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

He is talking about the law which does not give you any righteousness at all, but it is faith in Christ that does. The second part that gives us a hint into what is this abundant life is that it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. When you combine those two, “to live is Christ” and “to die is gain,” and then “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,” it becomes very clear that when Christ was speaking in John 10 about giving life and life abundantly, it was talking about giving His very own life to us. He has come so that we can have Christ living through us. To live is Christ, and I am the one who does not live by my own self anymore, but it is Christ who lives in me.

The Call to Body Life

The Bible does so wonderfully in explaining so many aspects of what this means. I do have a couple of verses picked out just to give us a simple glimpse into more of this body life, more of this real life that God wants us to live. We can go all our days professing to be followers of Christ, but if there is not that real life that Christ has given us, it means nothing.

In Philippians 2:1-11 Paul says: “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This abundant life, which is of Christ, is in each of us who are in Him. Christ is our perfect example. It is a common saying that Jesus is our example if we are to follow Him, because He is the Good Shepherd. The wonderful thing is that Christ really is that picturesque perfect Man for us. When we look to Him, it actually humbles us. What a great thing it is to have a role model like Jesus Christ! What we just read here in Philippians is that we learn we are called to have a like mind. What is this? It is the mind of Christ, as I Corinthians 2:16 says. It is the same mind we believers should have. We also need to esteem others higher than ourselves and look out for the interests of others. Easier said than done, right? But this is a reality; this is what God has called us to. He does not just tell us to do something and then not provide life for it. We can always remember the example of Christ as Paul is urging the Philippians to recall the example of Christ, who

humbled Himself and became a Bondservant. So if our Lord Jesus lived like that, He calls us to live exactly like that as well.

Many Members, One Body in Christ

Romans 12:3-5: “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”

More on this abundant life is that not only should we humble ourselves, not only should we think less of ourselves than we ought to, but we also need to recognize that each of us who are in Christ have a measure of faith. There is a bit of Christ in every person, and this will go on later to show us that every person has a role in the body of Christ. This abundant life is not just for some to have some super life and then for others to just sit back, but it is that everyone has been given a measure of Christ Himself, and it is something in which we can rejoice.

Practical Examples of Body Life

Be Impartial Toward One Another

Now let us get into some very practical examples of what it looks like in this body life and this abundant life. This is a super practical letter written by James to the Jewish Christians.

James 2:1-4: “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”

The Lord tells us that we should not be biased towards one another. This is very hard-hitting because I am very guilty of this myself. The world tells us to give special treatment and attention to the rich, to the famous, to the people with a lot of charm, to the smartest brains, but we ought not to be that way, brothers and sisters. That is not the abundant life the Lord has given us. What did our Lord Jesus do? Recall how He sat with the tax collectors, prostitutes, and the most rejected of society. Once again, we know that this abundant life is the very life of Christ that is in each of us, and He sets this life as an example when He was on earth. He dwelt with those that society rejected, those that the religious elite of the day said, “We want nothing to do with them.” Brothers and sisters, we must not think like the Pharisees. We must not be like those who appear so holy that we reject the ones that Christ wants to come to Him. The Pharisees thought they had all the knowledge in the world, but they did not have this abundant life that Jesus came to give to us.

In Humility Give Gentle Reminder

It is funny because we even read in Galatians 2 that Paul had to give a gentle rebuke to Peter because there is a short little story there of how Peter, when he was around the Gentiles, would sit and eat with them. But then when the Jewish Christians pulled up, he got scared and disassociated himself. We read here in James that we ought not to be partial, or else we are being partial to Christ Himself, because there are many members in the body, and each one has a measure of Christ. It is funny that Peter, the person to whom Jesus said, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church," that even he needed to be reminded. That is a good example for us if we find ourselves being guilty or if some brother or sister is showing some partiality. We can just give a gentle reminder.

II Timothy gives us a great example of how a servant of the Lord must be gentle and humble and able to teach, but also in humility, correcting those who are in opposition.

Jesus Washed the Feet of His Disciples

So, you thought James was practical, but we will look at John 13. This perfectly expresses body life.

John 13:13-17: "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Washing feet is not something we do in modern day, but I do have a short little story to tell. It was around three or four years back. I went to a Toronto youth conference during the summertime, and when me and my friends walked into this room, we saw tubs of water sitting around. We were like, "What is this for?" The workshop leader told us, "You guys are going to wash each other's feet." We were dumbfounded. We had just come from rest and recreation, which meant a lot of running, and we were all sweaty. Now we were being told that we needed to wash each other's feet. That was a very humbling experience. There were groups of four, and we just took turns filling the basin with water and quite literally washing one another's feet.

The reason Jesus set that example for us, not only because they had dirty feet back then, but also because it is your place of utmost humility when you are performing a task like that. The Lord tells us later in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Conclusion

To end our time, the abundant life that Jesus, our Lord, has given us is His own life that can be lived through us towards one another. He has left His Holy Spirit with us, so that is made possible. The fruit of it is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All of these are the fruits that come when we

live that abundant life. The steps are quite simple. We just take a look at our Lord Jesus as an example, and that should bring us to utmost humility in a way that allows us to not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to, in a way that allows us to not give special preference or treatment towards one another, and that we will be loving enough to wash one another's feet. The Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He has many other sheep that He wants to bring into the fold. With this abundant life, we can go out and share it with those in our life.

Let us pray.

Lord, thank You that You are a Shepherd that saves to the uttermost. You are One that has not only given a little bit of life, not a lot, but an abundant amount, to where it is Your very life that can be lived out on this earth through us, Your people, and Your sheep. Lord, Your Word is just so full of how You call us to live, and it can be overwhelming. But Lord, let us just start by going to You, the Good Shepherd, the great example for each of us, and everything will just flow. Thank You that You did not leave us on our own. You truly have an intention in Your heart that we will have a true life as believers, that we will not just be people running around with head knowledge, that we will not be like the Pharisees who thought they knew You but missed You when You came. Let this abundant life be lived through us this week, today, and forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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