

The Source of Abundant Life - John 10:1-18

Sunday, August 6th, 2023, 5:30 p.m.

I typed in the words, “Abundant Life” on Youtube the top result that came up was an hour long video with 22 million views. It’s a self-help video with “I Am” affirmations that promise “a new you” in 21 days. They are affirmations for health, wealth, happiness, and abundance. Then I scrolled down a few results and found a 3.5 hour long video with 6.4 million views. It’s video with swirling, atmospheric music where they claim to be playing 888Hz, 88Hz, and 8Hz and they make it seem as though listening to those frequencies will bless you with infinite abundance. But then, mixed into the search results are also songs, and sermons from churches that mention the term “abundant life”.

That phrase... “Abundant Life” I hear it used by Christians a lot, but what does it mean? Is it found in the Bible? And does it mean what people think it means? Tonight I plan for us to take a biblical look at that term “abundant life” and make sure we’re understanding and applying it correctly in our lives.

So I want to start tonight by reading a part of John Chapter 10.

John 10:1-18

1“Truly I tell you, anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber. 2The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t know the voice of strangers.” 6Jesus gave them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

7Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. 9I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.

11“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. 13This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn’t care about the sheep.

14“I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, 15just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep. 16But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. 18No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

There it was buried in the middle of those verses. That's the one and only mention of the phrase "abundant life". So what's going on here? Jesus is painting a mental image here in these verses. He describes people that He has come to help, that's the sheep that He's referring to. And then there is this safe area, where food and water are available for the sheep. And then there's the area outside of this walled off area. And there's dangers out there like thieves, or you could imagine maybe wolves things like that who want to harm the sheep. And the point Jesus is making, is that He is the gate. Just in case we missed it, He says it twice. He's the gate between the area of safety and abundant life, and the area of danger and death on the outside. I love how Jesus says the sheep can come in and go out. He's not locking them in, and He's certainly not locking them out. The door is open, but the sheep need to want to come in and find the care, protection, and ultimately life that is available to them. I mean who wouldn't want that right?

But what if they didn't recognize the danger outside of the open gate. In this mental image that Jesus is painting, we're the sheep. And something that we need to keep in mind is that there is an enemy that is actively trying to steal and destroy your abundant life with Jesus. The thief is strategic and crafty. He'll hop over a back wall somewhere and try to blend in so that the sheep are comfortable with him. He will do anything he needs to, in order to take advantage of you to harm you and your relationship with God. And we're given instruction throughout the Bible about what we need to be doing to protect ourselves from this thief. The thief will try to attack Christians to sabotage a full, abundant life with Jesus. But we don't need to live in fear, we just need to resist him.

James 4:7-8

7Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The closer we are to God, the easier it is to resist the enemy.

This makes me think back to high school. In grade 10 I failed math with a grade so low that I wasn't allowed to go to summer school to make up the class. I sometimes attended class, but on the occasion that I was there, I wasn't really listening or paying attention. And my mark reflected the work that I did. So in Grade 12 I was taking that Grade 10 math class again. Which meant none of my friends were in that class, so I didn't have the distractions I had before. I sat close to the teacher and listened to everything they taught and I applied it to the assignments. And I passed with a mark in the high 90's. When I submitted myself to the school work, and when I put my attention on the teacher and what they were saying. I didn't need to worry about the thought of failing the course again. The promise of God's word is that the enemy will flee when we resist him. Resisting temptation is difficult. Resisting the temptation to sit with my friends and talk through the class was hard to avoid. But it became easier to avoid when I was close to the teacher, and when I was applying myself and using what they were teaching me. And in the same way the temptation that feels impossible to

avoid, is made easier when we're closer to God. So stay close to God. If I did sermon points, that would be a good one to write down.

So if that's where the phrase comes from, what does it mean to have abundant life? Life in abundance means more than you've ever seen, heard about or could ever imagine...

1 Corinthians 2:9

But as it is written, What no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived—God has prepared these things for those who love him.

What an incredible promise! The plans God has for those who love Him are beyond our imagination! It's like writing a check for a million dollars just to pay for a piece of candy. God's purpose and plan for us is unrealistic overkill. Way above what is necessary. The world offers a cheap substitute of temporary pleasures, but they usually end in guilt and shame. For sure, every desire and craving the world offers will eventually pass away. But these glorious riches that are beyond our ability to comprehend, they will last for all of eternity... And Jesus is the gate we need to go through to receive them.

But be careful who you're listening to and what they're saying about this abundant life that Jesus wants to give you. There are people out there who will try to tell you that if you're not healthy or wealthy, then you're not experiencing this abundant life. And chances are pretty high that the reason they'd give you is because you're not giving enough money to them—I mean God. Jesus absolutely wants to give you abundant life. Don't hear me wrong. But the life he's talking about isn't necessarily a few extra 0's in your bank account. The glorious riches, the ones that are beyond our ability to comprehend, they will last for all of eternity. And they will be given to those who know his voice. They will be given to those who follow Him. The abundant life that Jesus is talking about is eternal life with Him forever.

So Jesus is the Source of Abundant Life, and He's opened the gate for us to receive it, all we need to do is make 3 easy payments of... No wait... that's not how this works. It's not like one of those "as-seen-on TV" products, you know the ones? Where they give you the best sales pitch they've got for their new and incredible product. They'll go on and on about everything it can do. And the last thing they ever tell you is the price. They want to wow you. They want to impress you. They want you to call the number on the screen. And then at the end of the ad they finally announce the price. And you think to yourself, "They want how much for that!?" And then right before you change the channel, they surprise you, and tell you, that you actually get 2 for that price... if you act now. And just like that they've sucked you back in and you're back to imagining how many tomatoes, or bricks, or steel toe boots you're going to be cutting with the knives when they arrive. Right!? you know the ads I'm talking about right?

Here's the thing. When it comes to the abundant life that Jesus is talking about—unlike in those ads—I'm not trying to fool you, or pull a fast one. The truth is, it was costly. How much did it cost? Well, the abundant came by one specific act: The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. Abundant life came with a cost. The reward is free and available to us but it means adjusting the way we live our lives. It means completely surrendering to follow Jesus. Look how Paul put it:

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Many people desire abundance. That's clear when you do a search for the term online. But when they think of abundance they think of money, time, freedom, love, or blessings. But very few people are prepared to lay down their lives for those things. If we want to walk in the resurrection life that Jesus offers, we must surrender to Christ, and let Christ live in us. Until you are able to lay down your life in surrender, accepting that: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," you will never know true abundance. The key to the abundant life Jesus has to offer, is found in surrender. Surrender your life to Jesus and walk in the fullness of His plan for your life.

Luke 9:23-24

23 Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it."

If you want to have abundant and eternal life with Jesus, that is exactly how to have it. There is a big difference between believing in God, going to church, doing good things, and giving your life in surrender to Jesus Christ. This is an area that I think most Christians have room to grow in. In our lives, we're taught to work for what we want. If we want something, get out there and make it happen. We don't often talk about surrendering things up. That's a foreign concept these days. If you try to live your own life and incorporate Jesus into it, you'll never know abundant life. Just like there's more to being a Christian than going to church, or doing good things. There's more to being a Christian than getting into Heaven when you die. If that's what we're teaching our kids, then what do we do with them once they've made the decision to follow Jesus? Well then we need to be teaching them to follow Jesus. Right? But when they look around they see other Christians being selfish, scratching and clawing for what they want, or feel as though they deserve. Can you see how that would be confusing for them to see that happening all around them, but then read Jesus saying, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." If we're just squeezing Jesus into the cracks of our lives. Think of the example we're setting...

The abundant life Jesus provides is available. The gate is open, but we need to choose to go into it. But even when we choose to go into it, we need to be sure we know the voice of our Shepherd. We need to listen to—and do—the things He says. I believe the abundant life that Jesus talks about begins before we go to Heaven. I believe the abundant life begins when we live the way Paul described: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," When you follow His voice, When you die to yourself, When you pick up your cross, And choose to follow Him no matter the cost. Make Jesus the Lord of your life... Know what He did and said,

and follow Him. Choose to walk through the gate and receive His abundant life.

Let's Pray.