

***“I came that they may have life.”***  
***John 10:7–10***

Over this Advent season, we have been looking at statements that Jesus made about himself and why he came into the world. We’ve seen that Jesus came into the world to seek and save the lost; he came into the world to bring a sword; and, he came into the world to do the Father’s will. Today, we are looking at a fourth statement that Jesus made about why he came into the world. In John 10:10, Jesus said this:

<sup>10</sup> *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*

**Jesus came into the world to bring life.** Are you experiencing life? You say, “Brian, I had a doctor’s appointment this week, he checked my pulse and I still have one, so I’m pretty sure I’m experiencing life.” You may have a pulse, but I’m still asking you, are you experiencing life? Are you experiencing the kind of life that Jesus is talking about here?

Today, I want us to take some time to think about the nature of this life that Jesus came into the world to bring to us. What is this life? What’s the source of this life? And how do we experience it? That’s what we are going to look at today. And so let’s start by looking at the nature of this life.

**I. What is this Life that Jesus Came to Bring?**

**This life that Jesus came to bring us is eternal life.** Thirty-six times in John’s Gospel, he uses this word, “life” (Greek = *Zōē*). Of these 36 occurrences, 17 times it is modified by “eternal.” For instance just a little later in chapter 10, Jesus says:

<sup>27</sup> *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”*

Or in John 11 Jesus says:

<sup>25</sup> . . . *“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

The life that Jesus came to bring is the kind of life that if we have it we will *never perish* (10:28). It is a kind of like that if we have it, though we die physically, we never truly die. This life that Jesus came to bring is eternal life.

Now here's the deal, eternal life is not something that has to do only with the future. It doesn't just start when we die physically. **For the believer, it is something we can experience in the here and now.** When you look at how Jesus describes it, he often describes it as a present possession. For instance in John 5:24, Jesus says this:

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*

Did you notice what he says? To him who believes, he *has eternal life*. Do you mind a little grammar here? The verb here is in the present tense, which means that this eternal life is something we have now. It is not just a future hope. Jesus goes on to say that the one who has eternal life *has passed out of death into life*. The verb in that phrase is in the perfect tense, which means that there is a completed action in the past that brings about a state of being in the present. That state of being in the present is eternal life. This is the life that Jesus came to bring. Are you experiencing this kind life?

Now to bring a little more clarity to what this life is exactly, I want us to look at how Jesus defined eternal life. **Jesus defined eternal life as a relationship with God.** In John 17:3 Jesus said this:

<sup>3</sup> *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

The life that Jesus came to bring to us is an eternal relationship with the God of the universe. This is a relationship that we will experience in eternity in a face-to-face kind of way with God like Adam and Eve did before the fall, but that also brings about a whole new quality of life for us now. This eternal life, this relationship with God, is a life that can be full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). It is a life of genuine satisfaction (John 4:14; 6:35). It is a life of walking in the joy of obedience and in a freedom in which we are no longer slaves of sin (Rom. 6:4).

This is the kind of life that Jesus came to bring us and he says that he wants us to have all of this in abundance. *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly* – "to the

full” as the NIV says it. Love to the full. Joy to the full. Peace to the full. Self-control to the full. Are you actually experiencing this life, not just in theory, but in reality?

Let’s go on and think a bit more about this life. I want to ask a second question and that is this:

## II. What is the Source of this Life?

It might seem like we really don’t need to look at this question because if Jesus came to bring life then obviously he is the source of this life right? Well, that’s true. Jesus is the source of this life. But I do think we need to flesh this out a bit. Look at John 10 again. Jesus says:

*<sup>7</sup> So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> “All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup> “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

Starting back in verse one of John 10, Jesus talks about sheep and shepherds and sheepfolds. In first century Palestine a sheepfold was an enclosure into which the sheep would be gathered at night for protection. They would typically be made of stone or a kind of mud-brick structure and they would have one opening, one door. Jesus says, “I’m that opening. I am the door.” In saying that he is the door, Jesus is saying that **he alone is the source of this life** (cf. John 14:6). That’s the point that is important for us to hear - Jesus alone is the source of life; there is no other.

In verse 9, he gets very clear about the implications. He says that *if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture*. In the metaphor when sheep enter into a sheepfold for the night, they are *saved*. They are protected from anything that might harm them if they were left outside the sheepfold for the night. Jesus is saying, if we enter through him, the door, we are saved eternally. We are saved from judgment. We are saved from all that our sin and rebellion against God deserved. We are saved from the power of sin that we might live a new kind of life.

Secondly, in the metaphor, Jesus says that the sheep will *go in and out and find pasture*. This is a picture of sheep being provided for. The shepherd leads them out into lush fields that meet their needs. For those who enter through the door of Jesus, this points to entering into a relationship with a Heavenly Father who meets our needs. There is provision. There is plenty. Jesus is the door to all of this – salvation and provi-

sion. Others may claim to open the way to God, but **Jesus alone is the source of this life.**

I think we get this when it comes to experiencing eternal life forever with God in the future. We believe that Jesus alone is the source. But when it comes to experiencing life now, we may say that Jesus is the source, but in reality we sometimes think that what we really need to be able to experience life is Jesus plus something.

Sometimes we look for life in a relationship. We believe that if we could be in a dating relationship, or if we could get married, then we'd really experience life.

Sometimes we look for life from money or possessions. We think that if we could have a better income or if we could acquire a certain possession, a house, a car, a new piece of technology that we'd really be experiencing life.

Sometimes we look for life from certain pleasures. We think that if we could take a certain vacation or retire in luxury or experience any number of pleasures then we'd really be living.

Sometimes we look for life in our accomplishments, from being successful. We think that if we can work hard and accomplish certain things and attain a level of success that we will really have life.

Now, I'm not saying that there is anything wrong with having any of these things, but none of these things bring life. Life isn't found by having Jesus plus something. Jesus alone is the source of life. Are you looking to Jesus alone for life?

Jesus came to bring life – a kind of life that is eternal, but that can be experienced in the here and now. He alone is the source of this life. This leads us to our final question and that is this:

### **III. How Can We Experience this Life?**

In thinking about this it is important to remember how Jesus defines this life. Jesus defines this life as a relationship with God. Remember what he said in John 17:3?

*<sup>3</sup> "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

And so, how do we experience that relationship? Over and over again, John says that **we experience this life through belief**. Right at the end of his Gospel, John says this about his reason for writing his Gospel:

*But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*  
John 20:31

John wrote what he wrote, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing, we would have life through him. To believe in Jesus is to believe that he came and died for our sins and that he rose again from the dead to give us new life. This belief is not just intellectual assent; it is full and complete trust. We stake our whole future on it. And so we experience this life, this relationship with God, by believing in Jesus.

Now, I want to look at John 10:10 again, because Jesus addresses a threat to experiencing this life. Jesus talks about a thief who comes to steal, and kill, and destroy. In the past when I read this verse, I always read this as a contrast between Jesus and the devil. And while it is an accurate description of the devil and what he seeks to do, in the context Jesus is talking about those teachers who came before him who proclaimed another way of salvation. In verse 8, Jesus says that *All who came before [him] are thieves and robbers*. In saying this he isn't talking about all the teachers who came before him. There were legitimate teachers who rightly pointed to Christ. Rather, he is talking about false messiahs, and corrupt priests and prophets, and even more specifically, in the immediate context he is talking about the Jewish religious leaders who were listening to him at this very moment (9:40). They are thieves and robbers who care nothing for the sheep.

Jesus was sharing these metaphors after the events of chapter 9. In chapter 9 Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth (9:1). The man comes to faith in Jesus and he begins to experience life. The problem with this for the religious leaders is that Jesus healed this man the Sabbath. And so instead of rejoicing with the man in his healing the Pharisees get into a controversy with the man about his healing, which escalates to the point where they kick him out of the synagogue (9:34). They didn't care about him. They were only concerned about upholding their religious rules. In the context, Jesus is saying that the Pharisees are thieves and robbers.

The Pharisee's approach to God was legalism. They insisted that the way to God was by keeping their code of manmade rules. If you didn't keep the rules, you were rejected. Being healed on the Sabbath broke a rule. There are still plenty of "thieves and robbers" out there that want you to follow their rules. They insist that their manmade

rules are the only way to God. Sometimes we can get so drawn into this. There is something in us that wants to “earn it.” We want to earn our relationship with God. But Jesus is clear; life is not found in following manmade rules. If we go that way it kills, it steals, it destroys. We experience this life only through believing in Jesus. There is no other way.

Some of you here today know plenty about God. You know things about Jesus. But you have never actually expressed faith in Jesus personally. My hope for you this Christmas season is that you would actually experience the reason that Jesus came to earth and that is to give you life – eternal life and life of a new quality here on earth. You can’t earn it. You can’t work for it. All you can do is receive it as a gift by believing that Jesus died and rose again for you. When you do, John says you *have life in His name*.

And for all of us, my hope is that we would each experience this eternal life in the here and now. Remember that this life is a relationship with the God of the universe. To the extent that you trust God and develop your relationship with God, you will more and more experience this life.

As I close, I want to make one point about what this abundant life is not. The abundant life is not necessarily an easy or a problem free life. Some of you know that my sister died when she was 38 years old. On December 27, 1999, she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. Ten months later, on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2000, she died leaving behind a husband and five children. Her youngest child, Becca, was just six months old when Kim died.

As you can imagine, those 10 months were not easy for Kim. They were full of suffering and grieving and physical struggle, but in the midst of all of that there was life - abundant life. In the last days of Kim’s life she wrote some words to be shared at her homecoming service. I want to read a portion of that to you because you can get a glimpse of this life. Kim said:

I trusted Him to save me as a young child but I didn't begin to truly live for Him until college. Since then it's been the best adventure of experiencing true life! And that's to know Jesus!

How blessed I've been with the most precious gifts He's given me in my wonderful husband, Bob, and my five beautiful children . . . I cherish and love them so much. I'm grateful for each moment the Lord gave me with them. . .

In this struggle with the tumor, God's great love has met me. He's been there and has blessed and been good. In a quote by Verdell Davis, she says, *We will learn to celebrate in the midst of our pains only when we believe those pains are the tools of our transformation. This world is a training ground for eternity with God. His magnificent purpose is to make us holy as He is holy. He works within all the pains that make us cry and the joys that make our hearts sing to implant His character deep within.*

II Cor. 4:16-18 says the afflictions are momentary and light compared to eternity and that's where we need to keep our eyes - on eternity. St. Augustine said, "In my deepest wound I saw Your glory and it dazzled me." And I would add His love has dazzled me.

. . . the strength to go through this is knowing Him to be my loving FATHER, my Daddy, who promises to work all things out for my good because I love Him and am called according to His purpose Rom. 8:28 says. It's been in knowing that He is all-powerful and sovereign (nothing happens without Him allowing it).

I've experienced His loving arms cradling me at the darkest times. The body of Christ's love and unceasing prayers have poured forth His love to me and for that great testimony to you I lovingly thank you. . .

Finally, I urge you on to keep praying, and to believe God to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that we can ask or imagine. People are out there dying eternally with spiritual brain tumors. May the church pray for them and reach them with the love of Christ!

I'll be waiting to celebrate with you and I'm ready to go and run with Jesus!! Kim

In the midst of her suffering, Kim experienced God's love. That's life. In the midst of her suffering, Kim experienced a grateful heart. That's life. In the midst of her suffering, Kim knew that God was transforming her and implanting His character with in her. That's life. In the midst of her suffering, Kim experienced God as a loving Daddy who was taking care of her and cradling her in His arms. That's life. In the midst of her suffering, Kim didn't turn inward, right to the end she was thinking about others who needed Christ. That's life.

Those ten months were not easy for Kim, but she experienced life. She experienced a relationship with God that sustained her and gave her a quality of life in the midst of her suffering that could only be explained as God's life within her.

Jesus came to bring life. Jesus came to bring an abundant life for all of us, not just in theory, but in real and practical ways; when things are good and when things are hard. Jesus alone is the source of this life. There's no other door. And the only way we can experience this life is through believing in Jesus.

Jesus says to you, *I came that [you] may have life, and have it abundantly.*

Amen.