

“Real Life”

Philippians 3:7-15

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Bob Luman wrote some very positive and happy lyrics back in 1960. He said, “In every other song that I’ve heard lately some fellow gets shot And his baby and his best friend both die with him as likely as not. In half of the other songs some cat’s crying or ready to die. We’ve lost most of our happy people and I’m wondering why. Let’s think about living, let’s think about loving, let’s think about the whoopin’ and hoppin’ and boppin’ and the lovie, lovie dovin’. Let’s forget about the whinin’ and the cryin’ and the shootin’ and the dyin’ and the fellow with a switchblade knife! Let’s think about living! Let’s think about life!” Well, I don’t know about the whoopin’ and hoppin’ and boppin’ and the lovie, lovie dovin’, but I do know that we need to think about living and we need to think about life.

Brianna sang,

“Some days life feels perfect
Other days, it just ain’t workin’.”

Life is more than the time we spend between conception and death. Life is a quality as well as a quantity. So whether life feels perfect or less than, with the good and bad, life is good and it is worth living.

“So speak life, speak life
To the deadeast darkest night
Speak life, speak life
When the sun won’t shine and you don’t know why.”

We will check in with Paul for insight about life. “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;” Philippians 3:7-15 (NASB).

So, what does that suggest about life? Let's consider some truths as we think about life.

I. THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN JUST THE HERE AND NOW!

- A. Paul looked forward to that life beyond this. He knew this earth life is not all there is. Without being so heavenly minded he was no earthly good, Paul always had eternity in mind. He looked forward to resurrection.
1. But many imagine that life is just a string of moments, just a period of time between birth and death and then it's over, finis, kaput! Contra that, Jesus told this parable, "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'" Luke 16:19-26 (NASB). The account of the rich fool and Lazarus shows that we will continue to live either in torment or in pleasure after we die.
 2. Many imagine that life is measured only by what we can possess and feel and own and control here in this world. But Jesus said, "Beware! Don't be greedy for what you don't have. Real life is not measured by how much we own." Luke 12:15 (NLT).
 3. Many imagine that life merely amounts to getting as much enjoyment, pleasure and pizzaz out of life as possible. But Solomon tried it and wrote, "I said to myself, 'Come now, let's give pleasure a try. Let's look for the "good things" in life.' But I found that this, too, was meaningless. 'It is silly to be laughing all the time,' I said. 'What good does it do to seek only pleasure?'" Ecclesiastes 2:1-2 (NLT).
- B. But genuine life is always associated with, and centered on, Jesus Christ.
1. He said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." John 10:10 (NASB).
 2. Paul said, "To me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21.
 3. He said, "For in Him we live and move and have our being." Acts 17:28 (NIV).
 4. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in Me and will never perish." John 11:25, 26 (NLT).

5. He also said, “I am the way, and the truth and the life.” John 14:6.
- C. The Psalmist noted that there is more to life than just the here and now when he said, “I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness. They seem to live such a painless life; their bodies are so healthy and strong. They aren’t troubled like other people or plagued with problems like everyone else. They wear pride like a jeweled necklace, and their clothing is woven of cruelty. These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for!” and “All I get is trouble all day long; every morning brings me pain. . . . Then one day I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I thought about the destiny of the wicked. Truly, you put them on a slippery path and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction. In an instant they are destroyed, swept away by terrors. Their present life is only a dream that is gone when they awake. . . . I was so foolish and ignorant – I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you. Yet I still belong to you; you are holding my right hand. You will keep on guiding me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny.” Psalms 73:3-24 (NLT).
- D. There is more to life than the here and now. An old man was talking to a young boy. He asked, “What do you want to do when you are older?” The boy answered, “I want to go to college.” “What then?” asked the old man. “I want to be a doctor.” “What then?” asked the old man. “I’ll get rich.” “What then?” asked the old man. “I’ll buy a big house and a big car.” “What then?” asked the old man. “I’ll marry and have children.” “What then?” asked the old man. “I guess I’ll die.” “What then?” asked the old man. “What then?”

You see, in the here and now we must prepare for the there and then; the hereafter; eternity. There’s more to life than just the here and now.

II. LIVING WITH PURPOSE IS THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE!

- A. Paul’s purpose was to know and serve Jesus Christ with all his being and to attain to the goal God had set for him in Jesus Christ. He knew where he was going in life. He lived with purpose. So should we.
- B. What are your dreams, hopes, aspirations, goals? What is your purpose? Not all purposes are of equal value or benefit:
1. There are noble and ignoble purposes, worthy and unworthy purposes, selfish and altruistic purposes.
 2. There are purposes which relate only to this present world and purposes which aim at eternity.
 3. There are purposes which benefit other people and there are purposes which exploit them.
 4. There are purposes which glorify and honor God and purposes which dishonor Him.
 5. We ought to choose purposes like these:
 - a. To be the best husband, wife, father, or mother we can be.
 - b. To be the best, most productive employee we can be.
 - c. To share the responsibilities and involve in the ministries of this congregation by becoming willing to sacrifice and serve.

- d. To not just make a living, but to make a life.
- C. How can we live with worthy purpose? What will move us forward to the desired end?
1. Strive to excel at whatever you do. Give everything you've got to the task at hand. "Good, better, best! Never let it rest until the good is better and the better is the best."
 2. Get out of your comfort zones and try something new: learn new skills, step up for new ministries and services for Christ and the church.
 3. Pick a direction in life and hold to it unless the Lord leads you otherwise. Stick to your convictions and don't deviate. Live with resolve and commitment.
 4. Determine to do what needs to be done when it needs doing. Don't wait until a more convenient time. Be available to the Lord at any moment.
- D. Don't be like the three women who walked into a public restroom and noticed the water running in the sink. They began to complain about it and to criticize the inconsiderate, lazy individual who would waste water like that. They couldn't believe such stupidity. Then a fourth woman walked in and noticed the water running in the sink. She simply turned it off. There are complainers and there are doers in the world. Those who are doers live with a purpose. They get things done. They don't waste time complaining, they simply act and accomplish. Make that the purpose of your life for Christ and for the church and for all other areas of your life too. What is your purpose? What are you doing to achieve it?

Living with purpose is the only way to live.

III. IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO START LIVING!

- A. It wasn't too late for Paul to turn away from the past and to launch out living for Jesus. He wrote to Timothy, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." 1 Timothy 1:12-16 (NASB) It is not too late for any of us as long as we draw breath and think a cogent thought.
- B. Sadly, many people come up with all sorts of justifications for delay.
1. Some say, "I want to sow my wild oats and then get right with God." Problem is we reap what we sow and during harvest the grim reaper might appear taking away our time to get right with God.
 2. Others say, "I'm too young to start," or "I'm too old to start," or "I'm too tired to start," or "I'm afraid to start," or "I'm just not ready to start."
- C. The thing is, there's no assurance of tomorrow or even of our next breath. Don't be

like Felix who told Paul to go away until a more convenient time. The thing to do is

1. Recognize that now is the only moment we have and don't let it slip by.
2. Recall that this is the day of salvation, and we ought to seize it while we can. It is not too late.
3. Remember that procrastination is the enemy of performance, it is the strangler of starting. So start living; it is not too late.

D. Examples of some who knew it was not too late to do something:

1. George Bernard Shaw was 94 when one of his plays was first produced.
2. Benjamin Franklin was a framer of the United States Constitution when he was 81.
3. Grandma Moses started painting when she was 78 and when she was in her 90's she demonstrated her skill by painting on TV. When she turned 100 she had a party and danced a jig. When she was almost 101 she went into the nursing home but she wasn't allowed to paint so she hid the doctor's stethoscope and said she'd give it back if she could go home and paint again.
4. Echo Russell was 90 when she was baptized and for the next 5 years she told me many times that she wished she'd done it 80 years earlier!

So, how is it with you? Is something missing from your life? Are you wondering if this is all there is? It doesn't have to be that way.

You can find real life, abundant life, eternal life in Jesus Christ if you determine that from this day on through all your life you will live it for Jesus. Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Determine today to live for Jesus. Let's sing it, let's mean it and let's do it: Living for Jesus: That's life. PRAY / INVITE