

**Sermon:** Live life or lose life, which is the right way?

**Reading:** John 10:1-10

**Introduction:**

Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full"  
**(Jn 10:10).**

This wonderful verse, some interpret to mean, live your best life now, enjoy yourself in this world today. This fits well with the thinking of contemporary culture but is this what Jesus is saying, what do you think? Taking this verse on its own, in isolation, I can understand how this conclusion is reached.

However Jesus also teaches, "Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"  
**(Matthew 10:39)**

Is this a contradiction in scripture? Is it a clash of teachings, a conflict of ideas, or a dichotomy of philosophical ideals on how to live life as a Christian? Context is everything! Did you know, we can make Scriptures support almost anything we want it to? Its easy, simply taking verses out of context and we can justify just about anything from a scriptural perspective. This is why context is so important, without understanding the context all we have is a pretext!

**Pretext** definition, is finding a reason that gives justification of a course of action that is not the real reason for the comment. Finding the verse of scripture which fits with my life style is a powerful way to continue in our sin and justify it. So did Jesus mean, having life in its fulness?

**Context:**

Its helpful when asking questions of scripture to consider the context. To help us avoid taking verses out of context and creating a pretext, we need to read what preceded the verse and what proceeded it. So turn back a page or two and do a little background reading. Here we discover Jesus is confronted by the religious leaders who are irritated and infuriated with him. The confrontation between Jesus and the leaders is quite heated.

Often we have a pictures of Jesus as mild mannered, gentle and meek, someone who avoided upsetting people, never confronting or challenging anyone. Actually just being nice to everyone! Is that your Jesus? Reading chapter 8 of John's gospel we see a Jesus who is bold, courageous, not afraid to speak out and stand for truth. Consider these words from Jesus to the Pharisees...

'You belong to your father the devil and you want to carry out your fathers desires',  
**(Jn 8:44).**

Jesus is basically saying, it is not God's work you are doing but the devils! Confronting the religious leaders saying your out for yourselves. It's a heated exchange. Jesus then says,

'He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.'  
**(John 8:47).**

This touched a raw nerve in the Pharisees. By the time we reach the end of chapter 8 the people picked up rocks ready to stone Jesus, wanted to kill him **(John 8:59).**

As Jesus is our example, does this sound like someone who is living life to the full, pleasing himself by having his best life now? I don't think so!

In chapter 9 Jesus heals a man who had been blind since birth. Some attempted to discredit the miracle saying this is not the same man who was blind. The Pharisees investigated this miracle for themselves by interviewing the man and his parents. The parents confirmed the man as their son and he was indeed born blind.

Tensions are increasing in Judah. The people are divided in opinion over the identity of Jesus. Some see him as a good teacher, others a prophet and the disciples as the Messiah. I imagine the disciples wonder at times if Jesus is the Messiah as they didn't expect following Jesus would be this difficult!

Jesus says to the man later.....

'It is for this reason that he has come into the world, 'so that the blind will see and those who see see will become blind'

**(John 9:40)**

How does this compare with our walk as Christians? Becoming a Christian is challenging at times, as it will place us at odds with culture and even with our own families. Following Jesus is not an easy walk when we follow him wholeheartedly. Does this life of challenge and disruption sound like the disciples are living life to the max, enjoying their best life now?

### **Verifying Identity**

The tension is increasing over Jesus identity, some can see him for who he is and others reject him, refusing to see and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. In our culture we know how important it is to prove our own identity. We have passports, birth certificates, job references etc. Proof of identity is important. How could the people know if Jesus was the chosen One? Is it possible to know? The answer is yes!

The Scriptures tell us what to look for in the identity of the Messiah..... this is how you will know him

Born of a virgin

Born in Bethlehem

Called out of Egypt

Called a Nazarene

Descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Descended from King David

Who else could make these claims but Jesus? To be born in one place (Bethlehem), called out from another (Egypt), named from third (Nazarene) and be called a son of David, descendent of the king? Matthew and Luke tell us the events in their opening chapters. Jesus credentials check out. Jesus identity is verified according to the scriptures,

When we read chapter 10 in context, we discover Jesus making bold claims to his identity as Israel's Messiah. This is shocking and dangerous. Jesus uses an Old testament phrase which refers to the identity of God as 'I AM'. (Remember the burning bush when Moses asked who shall I say sent me?) Now Jesus is applying this to himself, 'I Am the Gate' and using another reference reserved for God as The Good Shepherd. There can be no mistaking Jesus identity so what he says is important and we need to listen and follow.

Read Chapter 10: 7 says,

'Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief only comes to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.'

**(John 10:7-10)**

### **Voice of which shepherd?**

We live in a world with so many competing voices. The media and advertising industry continually informing us how to live life to the max. The credit industry encourages us to live life now by having today what we cant yet afford. Voices of culture competing with God's word, calling good evil and evil good.

Which voice(s) are we listening to? Are we listening to the voice of Jesus in context or are we reinterpreting his words from a pretext? It's an important consideration as our very souls depend on it. We must learn to listen and discern the voice of the Good Shepherd. This is done only through prayer, reading and studying the word and spending time around God's people in biblical fellowship.

### **The Good Shepherd**

I love the idea of the shepherd knowing the name of his sheep, calling each by name.

Come on black eye,

Come on snowy

Curly and Sue come on

Limpy your always the slowest but we will wait for you.

The sheep of the Good Shepherd listen only to his voice and follow him.

The good shepherds after guiding their flock into a pen, lay across the opening (doorway) once the sheep were all safely inside. This meant none can leave nor anything enter without the shepherd's knowledge. The shepherd becomes the door. If something entered the pen and had not come through the shepherd, it was there with malicious intentions. Jesus says that which climbs in is only a thief or a robber, it has come to kill, maim or destroy. The good shepherd looks after his flock. No wonder Psalm 23 is a favourite of so many with this wonderful imagery. God is the Good Shepherd.

### **But which Door?**

Have you ever considered what our culture says about doors?

Atheists - say there is no door (as there is no door keeper, meaning there is no God)

Pluralists - say there are many doors (It doesn't matter which door we choose)

Universalists - say there are no doors

However Jesus tells us the door is narrow, and he is the door.

Jesus is the gate (door) for the sheep. Listen again to his words, 'I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved' **(John 10:7)**. This is a bold statement. Jesus is declaring himself as Israel's Saviour and there is no other. For I Am the gate for the sheep and there is no other.

Jesus says, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

**(Luke 13:24)**

Make every effort means that we must strive to enter and striving can be hard and challenging when we strive for something. So it doesn't mean it's an easy time. Its important to also remember doors have a number if functions, they keep out, lock out and

shut out! The welcome depends upon the door keeper, remember the wise and foolish virgins?

'Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir open the door for us  
But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'  
**(Luke 13:24-25)**

So its crucial we not only strive to enter through the narrow door but also listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, for there are many voices that will mislead us and lead us astray, only One voice shows us the way.

Chapter 10 reveals to us the way to heavens glory and life itself is only through Jesus alone, for there is no other way. Not convinced then read Acts as Luke puts it this way.....  
'There is no other name on earth or heaven by which we must be saved.'  
**(Acts 4:12)**

### **God's flock**

Who becomes the flock of the Good Shepherd? Those who have repented and been baptised, for the forgiveness of sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Only these have the right to enter the sheep fold as they have come through the right door, following and trusting the voice of God and no other. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads His flock to green pastures of safety and rest and gives his life to protect them.

Knowing he has our best interests at heart even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we need not fear because the Good Shepherd has promised to lead us and walk with us, never to forsake us or abandon us. There is a wonderful joy in understanding this. When we spend time in prayer, worship, praise and study of scripture we learn to discern the voice of the Shepherd. Knowing The Good Shepherd is to know life and to know life in its fulness. Nothing else compares to all that God is and when we are in the presence of God, we truly begin to know the life Jesus was speaking of.

### **Summary**

We find life, not by spending and indulging on ourselves in life before we leave this world as some may think, but we find life when we lay ours down and give our lives to the Shepherd of our souls and trust Him to lead us in the ways of righteousness for His names sake and then we find peace and rest for our weary souls. Now that is good news. **Amen**