

John 10:10b-18**The Holy Gospel according to John the 10th chapter**

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Savior and Lord Jesus Christ – Amen.

I love listening to podcasts. They are these great bursts of information, news, and entertainment that you can sign up to receive automatically on your smartphone or other electronic devices each week.

One of the podcasts I most look forward to receiving is actually a show that can be heard on CBC radio called *Under the Influence*. Has anyone ever heard an episode before?

It’s an arts and culture show hosted by Terry O’Reilly that explores the inner most workings of the world of advertising. Each week the show explores why we make the decisions we do, and how we are influenced by the words, colors, and ideas of the advertising industry.

I love to listen to this podcast in particular because it gives you a first hand look behind the scenes. Similar to Dorothy pulling back the curtain on the wizard of OZ to unveil a small man – this podcast reveals why we buy into the messages multimedia bombard us with each and every day.

Messages that tell us that we would simply have more friends if we would just spend 30 seconds a day whitening our teeth.

Messages that promise to increase our productivity if we would only upgrade to the latest iPhone, iPad, and Mac Book Pro to more seamlessly and professionally communicate with our colleagues.

Messages that tell us we would simply lead healthier happier lives if we would just hop on the latest super food bandwagon by eating more kale, quinoa, or those berries no one can seem to pronounce the name of.

Messages that promise us abundance in every sense of the word – if we would just swipe our card at the prompting of the cashier.

Because isn't that what advertisements and consumerism are all about? Tapping into our deepest desires to be accepted, respected and loved – all somehow wrapped up in the idea that we can simply buy, trade, or earn our way into a valued place in society. It's a temptation I'm more than sure we have all experienced throughout our lives – and of course there's a cost to buying into this temptation – and sometimes it comes to harm us in more ways than we might have thought.

The cost of giving into this temptation time and time again is when it leads us to believe that we will never be good enough, worthy enough, or happy enough unless we purchase whatever eye-catching thing comes across our screens. A lie that lures us into believing there is something lacking deep within us, a sense so profound that we will buckle beneath its weight, buying whatever might satisfy our need.

But, perhaps the hardest cost to swallow is that this is a lie we come to perpetuate and believe whole heartedly. Whatever we come to aimlessly consume to brighten our mood, or to help us ignore the stress or grief that is going on in our lives, it never fills the void we feel growing deep inside. Yet – we continue to try to buy, spend, and earn our way out of this emptiness. And it doesn't take long before we begin to wonder if we will ever feel fulfilled in our life again. If we will ever find that abundance we keep seeking to find.

Abundant life.

That phrase as much as any in the Bible, captures what most people I know long for. Not just more life, but abundant life. Not just more stuff, but real life. In our gospel lesson this morning Jesus makes a promise, a huge promise, a life-changing promise, that we need to hear today.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Jesus doesn't promise us cars or whiter teeth – he promises us that he is willing to put his money where his mouth is. Or more accurately, he is willing to put his life where his

promise of abundance is: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." And "I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."

The abundant life Jesus speaks comes at a great cost – but its not a cost any of us could ever hope to repay to God.

Jesus, the good shepherd, lays down his life – telling us that we are in fact enough and that nothing on heaven or on earth will ever change that.

But what is really important to note about the Jesus of John's Gospel, is that he doesn't lay down his life in order to make some kind of payment to God or to satisfy God's wrath or to pay the penalty for sin. Jesus, in John's Gospel, is the revealer, the One who comes to make the invisible God visible, approachable, and accessible. Jesus comes to reveal that God loves the whole world, period, without exception.

In this passage from John, Jesus comes, to set the record straight – to pull back the curtains, to reveal the truth: that we are already beloved, that we are already enough, and that no high status job or big bank account or list of achievements could ever make us more deserving of God's love.

Yet this simple fact can be so hard for us to truly believe. We hear so many messages in our lives that are devoted to trying to tell us that we are not enough, that we are not worthy of love, that we need to earn our acceptance before we will ever truly fit in.

Which is why we should listen all the more to Jesus' message for us this morning – a message set to counteract the lies we have come to believe: "I lay down my life for the sheep," he says. "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

Jesus comes to show us that God's unconditional and abundant love is something we've already been given – and that now quite simply it's time to start living into this amazing promise we have received – and sharing it with others so that they too can be set free.

In other words, Jesus didn't come just for the original group of disciples. He came also for us, and we are now invited to hear and believe this message of grace and acceptance and to share it with each other and all those whom we come to meet.

Jesus' message of love needs to be said again and again, to break the chains that come to bind us from truly being set free. But this message of love and acceptance shouldn't just be shared by your pastoral team, but by all of us gathered here as followers of Christ - because we need all the help we can get! And if we don't remind ourselves of this message, who will?

And so this morning I'd like to help you begin this process – last week we worked on our witnessing – and I can promise you that this won't be nearly as difficult. What I'd like to you to turn to one person near by you and say these simple words:

"You are a beloved child of God, and you are enough."

That's it.

I'll give you a moment to share these important words with your neighbor.

This is part of what it means to be the Body of Christ - to remind each other of God's promises and speak Jesus' message of love, acceptance, and grace to each other. And, who knows, maybe having had the chance to practice saying these words to each other we'll find the courage to say them to others in our lives as well.

These words remind us of the abundant life we have been called to live. A life founded in the love and promise of God – who would come to tell us in word and deed that we are enough, enough to love, enough to die for, enough to live for. Thanks be to God for that message for you, and for me. God's message of abundance for all. And may this be so among us Amen.