

Life in Christ

Prayer

This week as I worked pastoring our community and dealing with life's issues, I found myself looking around.

What do you think I saw?

- I saw a community full of unhappy people
- I saw so many dissatisfied people that it was disheartening
- I saw people with an emptiness inside themselves
- I saw people with little self-worth
- I saw people who had lost their very identity

When you walk around this week, take a moment and look outside yourselves to those around you. You will see people trying just about anything to find happiness, joy or even a simple sense of satisfaction to their lives. They are so lost and alone...

When you look at the Shambhala crowd in our village this week, do you see rockers, druggies, head cases or people who are searching for something, anything to fill that emptiness within?

What do you hear about as you go through your daily life each week?

This week alone, I have heard about divorce, suicide attempts, recreational drug use, alcoholism, pornography addictions, and depression. Turn on the news and you will hear about all the crime, prostitution, sexual slavery, and tragedies of murder and killing all around you.

If that's not enough there are emotional and psychological disorders to draw our compassion and heart to...

So what is the solution?

As I look around I see people trying the same things over and over... I have been down some of these roads and they dead end. What are they you might ask....

Okay, ill tell you, but you might not like it...

- **Placing your security in money and stuff alone**
 - Now there is nothing wrong with gaining wealth and providing for your future, but it should not be your only mode of coping with what life will bring. You need more security than just financial instruments.
 - Why this focus...
 - Perhaps you grew up not having anything

- Perhaps you fear who will take care of your needs when you are older
 - Perhaps you know people who have had to eat cat food
 - Perhaps you are afraid to depend on the charity of others
 - Perhaps you are concerned about medical costs

- **Coping with life by trying to put as much pleasure activities in as possible**
 - Now there is nothing wrong with having fun, but it is dangerous if you are putting so much effort into pleasure activities simply to avoid the rest of your life
 - Why this focus...
 - Life is short, don't know when I am going to die so eat drink and be merry
 - Doesn't matter what I do to my body or mind today with substances because, I am going to live hard and die young.
 - Life has been so sad or tragic that the person tries any means necessary to put up a shell of pleasure around themselves.
 - I remember when my Dad played professional music in the clubs. Everyone was up for the party, there was more beer on my Dad's amp than the whole band could finish. But when the lights went down it was all plastic people and fake friends.
 - More often than not, this group of individuals does not die young and are the ones who wind up friendless eating cat food.

- **Creating an empire of power or prestige for yourself**
 - Moving up through the ranks is fine; progressing is good. Take it from personal experience, success can slowly steal your time away from your families. It can rob you of watching your children grow up. It can destroy marriages.
 - When I was in the martial arts. I was well respected, I have a masters degree in Tae Kwon Do and I was BC Provincial Grand Champion two years in a row... When I went into schools at the coast, whole classes would stop and bow to me. Dozens of black belts. I participated in the half-time show at the grey cup game in BC place. You would think that would be enough prestige wouldn't you? But folks... it was empty. People respected me for what I could do for them, or what they could get. It was never me... it was position. It was empty.

- You can work your way up to be the big boss, but in the end what do you achieve?
- I have heard it said that he who dies with the most toys wins... I disagree, It is the person who has invested it something beyond this world that really wins.
- **Self Enlightenment through mysticism or religious ritual**
 - Spiritual people want spiritual answers and growth.
 - Yoga
 - Meditation
 - Self-Enlightenment
 - Witch Craft
 - Religion (Not relationship) – Religion can be controlled
 - People like this want something more than what they are. They are unhappy in themselves.

Okay pastor... So where is all this going?

Proverbs 14:12 CEV Says:

“You may think you are on the right road and still end up dead”

Proverbs 14:12 NKJV Says:

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”

So... What is the answer? What do we do about these life-robbing problems that make life so unfulfilling?

Jesus said in John 10:10 CEV

“A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest. I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep”

Friends today we are in a battle. A battle for your soul – yes! But, today we wage a battle for your mind!

This is what Paul is telling us when he says in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ESV

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ”

Jesus knew we would face this issue inside our selves! This is why he said he came to give us life and life more abundantly. I want life to the fullest!

Are you settling this morning for trying to fulfill yourself by selecting a choice from the multiple fail list?

Remember the list we discussed?

- **Placing your security in money and stuff alone**
- **Coping with life by trying to put as much pleasure activities in as possible**
- **Creating an empire of power or prestige for yourself**
- **Self Enlightenment through mysticism or religious ritual**

There ARE other choices... It is sad that there are so many out there, some even in churches, who don't know that an abundant life is available to them.

Jesus wants his children to have a life full of happiness and joy. You can be at peace and celebrate not in religion, but in genuine relationship with him and each other. Will there still be problems... Yup! But you won't have to face them alone. You won't have to struggle and strive to prove yourself, because you are already accepted into the highest echelon there is! You are a child of the King!

Those who have found this life value love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, compassion, purity, humility, modesty, faith, character, wisdom, enthusiasm, dignity, optimism, confidence, honesty, and a relationship with God...

Friends an abundant life is full of things that money can't buy and it's full of joy and fulfillment that cannot be taken away.

What do we really value this morning?

Isn't every other approach just an attempt to achieve that which Jesus freely gives us, when we adopt his ways?

I have heard again and again people say that they would live in Christ, but they have too much to lose, or too much to give up...

Yes there is a lot to give up... Let's look at it for a minute...

You would have to give up selfishness, hatred, lust, un-forgiveness, envy, jealousy, fear, drunkenness, sexual immorality, discord, fits or rage, dishonesty, greed, gossiping, slander, pessimism and despair... Wow! What a tragic loss...

Okay, okay, pastor so why are you trying to lay on us that live in Christ is the only way to a happy life? I have seen happy people who don't live in Christ...

I have to reply that we need to look closely. The people who find even a modicum of happiness in their lives are applying principles of living in Christ even though they don't have the life benefits that go with it.

Every person that I have met who has been somewhat happy outside of living for Jesus includes in their approach Kindness and Integrity. They also avoid negativity, pessimism, despair, alcohol abuse, drug abuse and so on... They have in fact found a part of the answer, but to really live abundantly, being totally fulfilled and happy they NEED Jesus. It is so sad, they are almost there, but it is only temporary and limited. How can it be otherwise if they are spiritually dead?

Ephesians 2:3-5 HCSB

"We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!"

We come alive in Christ!

1 Timothy 6:17-19 HCSB

"Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good reserve for the age to come, so that they may take hold of life that is real."

Did you catch that we can enjoy! It's all good, but not the focus of life!

Matthew 6:25-29 HCSB

"This is why I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these!"

Friends, Today do we believe that God's got us taken care of?

Now... I want to be very honest here.... Living abundantly is NOT easy. It requires us to die to ourselves and live in Christ.

So what can I expect from living in Christ?

Well...

- You can look forward to eternal life
- You have the hope of being reunited with your loved ones for eternity
- You recognize that failure is simply something that happens not a person and certainly not you!
- You receive strength and joy
- You receive optimism
- You find your identity and worth in Jesus
- You find peace in yourself and with God
- You discover that you can experience joy in your relationships with others, but you find that real happiness comes from helping others
- You find when someone says something mean, you compassionately look for why they would say something like that instead of reacting
- You proclaim who you are in Jesus and use your talents to glorify God and to help others

After 50 years of living on this earth, 44 years of that a Christian, I have tried different approaches but I have discovered the path to abundant life. It is not in riches, prestige or pleasure. It is in Jesus.

This morning my friends, I invite you along on this wonderful journey with Jesus.

Prayer