

## Sermon – Living Abundantly

### Prayer

We are coming into a time when the church has been called to take action. We are called to bring our community to Christ; yet let me ask a question... If you were to go out onto the street right now and ask the folks there about Christianity and the church, what kind of response would you get?

... Many times I have done just that. What I have heard are things like:

- Churches are all talk and no action
- I don't need their condemnation
- I don't want to be preached at by someone who doesn't even believe what they are saying
- They always look down on me
- I don't feel welcome
- If there is a God, he sure isn't my friend
- I don't need that nonsense

Even in some churches when the pastor gets to the 10 minute mark, many people will start mentally channel surfing, be bored or go to sleep. In fact, an hour and a half with God may be too much for some people. **What is it going to be like when we get to heaven and it is all God, all the time?** I realize we all have busy lives, I am not stupid, but we live in this world but are not of this world.

### **How many people know that I watch the clock to be considerate of your lives?**

It is true; and yet be advised here and now, that I will make no apology for the Holy Spirit deciding to break up our routine or our schedules.

Maybe not in our church here, but be honest with yourself, as you get close to the end of a church service, have you ever looked at your watch eager for the service to be over? Has your mind ever wandered to what is next in the day instead of spending the time with God? Is he worthy of your time? If he knows everything and nothing is hidden from him, how do you think he feels?

Here me! I am not about condemnation, because the past is the past and condemnation is a tool of the enemy, but self-awareness and conviction are of God.

Besides, there is often a perception that all we do in church is look towards the great hereafter, that we simply stand here or flounce about and spout the same old rhetoric and pious garbage. I mean how can one help themselves from seeing the church this way? Our modern media has made a joke of the church. We are exposed to it all the time. In the movies, Christians are usually portrayed as prissy, prudish and pious. We are seen as people who have no grasp of reality and are delusional in their faith. Or we are viewed as catholic fathers with giant crucifixes who go from town to town battling demons. Scary thought that... The majority impression that Hollywood throws out though is that we are a bunch of redneck, uneducated people. I kind of like the redneck idea as I love the guys and gals from duck

dynasty, but we are far from uneducated. In short, society has portrait us as a people who have completely lost touch with reality.

Some people have had bad experiences with the church and by word of mouth, others believe those bad experiences unedited and biased. Regardless of our best intentions some people perceive the church as self-serving. They see us as a group of people only concerned with our own people, who put their pastors on a pedestal, give their money for bigger buildings and purchase fancy churchy decorations. They see us as people who will excommunicate them for asking a question, and for questioning why we believe what we believe.

### **Isn't that sad?**

What is worse is that they DO have a case. The truth is that in many churches there is a lot of self-centred behaviour. There are many churches that do not have a vision but are content to remain within their four walls and only fellowship with the people they are comfortable with. There are many Christians who are yet immature and do not know what church is all about and insecurity in their leadership that reacts to challenge. I say, let us not ever be that church! Let us change the perceptions of those on the street and combat the image that Hollywood has given us. Let the experiences of real people touch real people. Let us battle the false image of the church that the enemy is spreading.

What does God want his church to be?

- The church is the way by which God's grace is made known
- The church is the instrument by which Gods Love is spread to Humanity
- The church is the method by which people hear the good news of the Gospel of Jesus
- The church is the place of fellowship and equipping of his people

And YOU are the church...

### **John 10:10** King James Version (KJV)

<sup>10</sup> The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

### **Ephesians 3:20-21** King James Version (KJV)

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

### **Romans 12:2** King James Version (KJV)

<sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

### **Mark 16:15** King James Version (KJV)

<sup>15</sup> And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

The church is central in God's grand plan for humanity it is the mechanism by which his redemptive love is shown to his people.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:10-11

### **Ephesians 3:10-11** Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Then God would use the church to show the powers and authorities in the spiritual world that he has many different kinds of wisdom. God did this according to his eternal plan. And he was able to do what he had planned because of all that Christ Jesus our Lord had done.

**As a church we have defined our mission:**

- **To Worship God**
- **To Love all People**
- **To Embrace Community**

Loving people is not just an emotion, even though that aspect is important. Love encompasses compassion, determination, tolerance, endurance, support, faith, and a lot more. Love requires not just admiration from afar but active participation. To Love God is to participate in a relationship with him. To Love all people is to participate in a relationship with them. God is Love so therefore Loving God requires relationship and involvement with people.

Do you want abundant life?

### **Matthew 25:31-46** Contemporary English Version (CEV)

#### **The Final Judgment**

<sup>31</sup> When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all of his angels, he will sit on his royal throne. <sup>32</sup> The people of all nations will be brought before him, and he will separate them, as shepherds separate their sheep from their goats.

<sup>33</sup> He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup> Then the king will say to those on his right, "My father has blessed you! Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created. <sup>35</sup> When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick, you took care of me, and when I was in jail, you visited me."

<sup>37</sup> Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, "When did we give you something to eat or drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear <sup>39</sup> or visit you while you were sick or in jail?"

<sup>40</sup> The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."

<sup>41</sup> Then the king will say to those on his left, "Get away from me! You are under God's curse. Go into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! <sup>42</sup> I was hungry, but you did not give me anything to eat, and I was thirsty, but you did not give me anything to drink. <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger, but you did not welcome me, and I was naked, but you did not give me any clothes to wear. I was sick and in jail, but you did not take care of me."

<sup>44</sup> Then the people will ask, "Lord, when did we fail to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in jail?"

<sup>45</sup> The king will say to them, "Whenever you failed to help any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do it for me."

<sup>46</sup> Then Jesus said, "Those people will be punished forever. But the ones who pleased God will have eternal life."

Why do churches shrivel or become ineffective? What will we say to our God?

### **Proverbs 29:18** King James Version (KJV)

<sup>18</sup> Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

#### **No Vision...**

Churches struggle for a while and then they go into maintenance mode. If we focus only on worship, preaching or evangelism we fall apart as people go out the back door. They have only experienced a portion of what God has in store for their lives.

#### **So what is important to retain people in an abundant life in the church?**

- Worship
- Education
- Evangelism
- Fellowship
- Ministry and Extended Ministry (Missions)

When a church does not exercise these five ministries of God's grace, it wallows. As a body we can't put all of even most of our emphasis on only one aspect - we need the fullness and the diversity of a life in Christ.

Now some may say: "Pastor, that's too much, or that's too hard." As unpopular as it may be, all I can say is: "yes, it is hard, but let us look at what God has said in Ephesians 3:20"

### **Ephesians 3:20**

Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>20</sup> Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us;

### **Zechariah 4:6**

New King James Version (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> So he answered and said to me:

"This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel:  
'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'  
Says the LORD of hosts.

Do we take God at his word? Is he a God that he should lie?

Abundant Living in Christ is in his church. We simply need to do what we are called to do. If you are not doing what God has called you to do in the body of Christ; in this Church right here, right now, then what is the body missing?

**Let's look at the attributes of abundant life...**

### Worship

***Will you be involved in worship?***

If I am going to church to get something out of worship but find out on arriving that I am expected to "give," I will be one frustrated guy. Unfortunately, that is what is happening in the typical church service. People walk out the door frustrated because they didn't "get." The reason they didn't is that they were not there to "get," but to "give."

What I must not do is leave the church blaming my failure to worship on the poor singing, the boring sermon, or the noise from the children in the next pew. I am in charge of the decision whether I will worship, and no one else. If I wish to live abundantly I must worship God.

**Psalm 118:1** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **His Steadfast Love Endures Forever**

**118** Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever!

### Education

***Will you be educated?***

Many people struggle with not having a teachable heart. I learn from people I meet every day. If we stop learning we stagnate.

**2 John 1:9** English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

**Proverbs 1:7** English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;  
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

### **Proverbs 10:17** English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,  
but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.

*Will you be an educator?*

### **John 21:17** English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

### Evangelism

*Will you evangelize?*

Jesus doesn't want anyone to be lost. In 2 Peter 3:9 we read:

### **2 Peter 3:9** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>9</sup> The Lord isn't slow to keep his promise, as some think of slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wanting anyone to perish but all to change their hearts and lives.

People can only come to repentance when they know what to do. They need to come to knowledge of the truth. In 1 Timothy 2:3-4 we read:

### **1 Timothy 2:3-4** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>3</sup> This is right and it pleases God our savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Because of what Jesus has done for us, we have an obligation to share the truth with others. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:16:

### **1 Corinthians 9:16** King James Version (KJV)

<sup>16</sup> For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

How are we going to justify our actions before God on his return, if we have not spread his good news?

### Fellowship

*Will you Fellowship?*

What does the bible say? Is this important?

### **1 Thessalonians 5:11** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>11</sup> So continue encouraging each other and building each other up, just like you are doing already.

### **Hebrews 10:25** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>25</sup> Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.

### **Hebrews 10:24** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds.

### **1 John 4:11-13** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us. <sup>13</sup> This is how we know we remain in him and he remains in us, because he has given us a measure of his Spirit.

Time is our most important and most costly sacrifice of praise. Are we willing to give it to him?

Last point here... If you are shy or don't like people... Suck it up, buttercup! You're a child of the king a member of the royal priesthood.

### **Ministry and Extended Ministry (Missions)**

*Will you fulfill your ministry?*

### **Ephesians 4:11-13** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>11</sup> He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> His purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ <sup>13</sup> until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son. God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.

*Will it be easy?*

### **2 Corinthians 6:3-10** Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>3</sup> We don't give anyone any reason to be offended about anything so that our ministry won't be criticized. <sup>4</sup> Instead, we commend ourselves as ministers of God in every way. We did this with our great endurance through problems, disasters, and stressful situations. <sup>5</sup> We went through beatings, imprisonments, and riots. We experienced hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger. <sup>6</sup> We displayed purity, knowledge, patience, and generosity. We served with the Holy Spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup> telling the truth, and God's power. We carried the weapons of righteousness in our right hand and our left hand. <sup>8</sup> We were treated with honor

and dishonor and with verbal abuse and good evaluation. We were seen as both fake and real, <sup>9</sup> as unknown and well known, as dying—and look, we are alive! We were seen as punished but not killed, <sup>10</sup> as going through pain but always happy, as poor but making many rich, and as having nothing but owning everything.

### **Conclusion**

God has given us all a huge part to play. The problem with most churches today is that they won't play it. This is my challenge to each person here today...

Seek what God wants you to do.

Pray about it and get involved.

Many people are involved here already and I am so proud of each of you, but the need is great and the workers are few. God has provisioned his church for his great work. You might be an apostle or a prophet. You may be an evangelist or a pastor, you may be a teacher or a helps worker, it doesn't matter what you do as long as you're doing what God intended for you to do. Be diligent, be studious, be steadfast and diligently seek that which the Lord has for you. There is nothing more rewarding. If you want to claim God's promise of life and life more abundantly, you need to find who you are in his great gospel message.

### **Prayer**