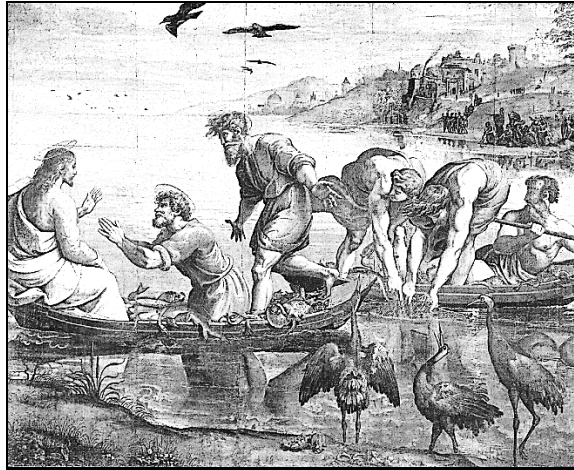


THE ABUNDANT LIFE



Scripture:

Psalm 138

¹I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; ²I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything. ³On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

⁴All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth. ⁵They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD. ⁶For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me. ⁸The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Luke 5:1-11

¹Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ²he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



THE ABUNDANT LIFE

This passage from Luke describes part two of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

By this time, Jesus, as an infant, has already been identified by Simeon and Anna in the temple of Jerusalem as: “A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to the people Israel.”

Then, on their way back home from their trip to Jerusalem for the Passover, Mary and Joseph lost Jesus. The family was traveling with a group and they assumed he was somewhere among their entourage. After searching for him for four days, they found him back in the temple, at age twelve, teaching in Jerusalem. When they found him Jesus said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Some people would say Jesus was being rude or “cheeky” to his Mom. But his parents didn’t yell at him. The Bible says, “They did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.”

Notice it says that he was “obedient to them” after they had a “home alone” experience. Jesus still showed honor to his earthly parents and went back to work in Joseph’s carpenter shop.

JESUS BECAME AN ADULT

When Jesus became an adult, he began teaching, preaching and healing. At this point in his ministry, Jesus is now recruiting to help him spread his message of love. He demonstrated the importance of gathering community support to share in his healing ministry. He came so that we could have life and have it abundantly as it says in John 10:10. Jesus says: “... I came so that they may have life and have it abundantly.” He didn’t come to start a new religion. He came to show them the Way to abundant life.

ABUNDANT = PERISSOS

The word “abundant” in the Greek is *perissos*, meaning “beyond measure, excessive, a quantity so abundant as to be considerably more

than what one would expect or anticipate.” In short, Jesus promises a life far better than we could ever imagine, as in 1 Corinthians 2:9: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love God.”

The apostle Paul tells us that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, with a power that is at work within us.

**Jesus came as the Prince of Peace,
as a counselor, a healer, a reconciler,
a redeemer, as God “with us” in the
flesh to bring the kingdom of God
to earth as it is in heaven,
a kingdom of harmony,
love, and justice for all.**

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT ABUNDANT LIFE

In this passage today, Jesus decided to teach about abundant life from Simon’s fishing boat in the lake. This location probably gave him better acoustics so the crowd on the shore could hear him more clearly.

It doesn’t say exactly what he taught them, but we can assume it was similar to his other teachings about caring for one another; especially for the poor, the sick, the disenfranchised, and the vulnerable in society. He emphasized abundant life for all, not just for the few.

I believe Jesus knew that his message would attract many to him like the multitude of fish who easily came to the nets of his disciples. It says that Simon Peter, James and John were astounded by his catch. James and John were sometimes called the sons of Zebedee. But other times they were called the sons of thunder, because they had a reputation for being strong and rebellious, but also compassionate.

MY THREE BROTHERS

My three brothers were also known in a similar way in my small town. Their infamy came in handy one time when I was trying to protect someone from being bullied. I was probably around twelve when I stood up to three

teenage boys and told them to stop bothering my elderly friend. The boys said, “Who do you think you are?”

And I said, “If you don’t stop, I’ll sic my three big brothers on you. I’m Cindy Alloway.” And they ran off! I thought, “Whew! I’m glad that worked!”

That was an early example of abundant life for me. When I had a chance to protect someone who was vulnerable to abuse, it felt good for both of us. Abundant life is the Way of Jesus and what he taught in all his ministry.

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF ABUNDANT LIFE

Whenever there is an opportunity to bring healing, justice, peace, and mercy, you are planting the seeds of abundant life. That is why Jesus’ disciples were willing to give up their previous lives as fishermen. Even the sons of thunder could see the benefits of spreading the way of abundant life. It promotes healthy living.

HEALTH MINISTRIES

In the Parish Nurse certification course that I took many years ago, the Health Ministries curriculum included this passage about abundant life for their vision statement. The goal for all health ministries is to help people have abundant life. It isn’t the prosperity gospel, which is about material wealth. It is the gospel of love and healing which involves spiritually resilient good health.

Whatever promotes health and wholeness also promotes living abundantly which fosters the desire to share that abundance with others.

That is why our health ministry has promoted the idea of building a garden labyrinth in our church front yard:

- To promote healing and wholeness in body, mind, and spirit.
- To inspire people who pass by to take some time to focus on their health and wellbeing while walking and praying at the same time.
- To help meet our nearby community’s need to recover from the trauma that still remains from the firestorms.
- To encourage centering oneself in God.

PROMOTING ABUNDANT LIFE

Life abundant is life that finds its purpose in serving God by helping others.

We currently promote abundant life in many ways here at Church of the Roses. When we feed breakfast to hungry high school students, when Presbyterian Women get together and support one another, when the sewing group gives quilts to the hospice agencies, when we support the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts making blessing bags, we are promoting abundant life. No matter how small the act, if you are acting to bless others and help them feel the unconditional love God has for them, you are promoting abundant life.

But abundant life doesn’t mean it is always an easy life. When lived honestly and fully, abundant life involves both joys and sorrows. It is a simple life, trusting that we are loved by God no matter what struggles come along during our journey of life. Abundant life is realizing we are not separate from God or from others. To live abundantly is to live true to ourselves, and to help others find their own abundant lives by helping to meet their basic needs. It is a realization that we are all connected and when one part of the world suffers, we all suffer.

An abundant life is a life that can accept peacefully life’s imperfections and disappointments. Simon Peter, who was a very skilled fisherman, was greatly humbled by the miraculous amount of fish Jesus caught. He suddenly felt unworthy to be in Christ’s presence because he could see that Jesus was capable of bringing a true abundance to life in a divine way. But Jesus responded to Peter’s declaration of his unworthiness with, “Do not be afraid...” Jesus had a plan for Peter to have an abundant life, and to teach him how to recruit others to share in that way of life.

Our God is a God of second and third and fourth chances. God never gives up on us even when we give up on ourselves. That is why embracing the idea that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God is such a liberating concept.

When you feel forgiven and peaceful, you are free to live an abundant life and naturally reach out to share your spiritual wealth.

ABUNDANT LIFE IN HARSH CIRCUMSTANCES

I am grateful that I have been taught about abundant life in the harshest of circumstances shared with me by Kenyans who live in shacks with dirt floors. The Christians I have worked with in slums in Kenya always smile, and despite the difficulties they face in their daily lives they often say, "God is good all the time!"

I have heard faithful testimonies from tornado disaster victims in Joplin, Missouri who believed that they were found under the wreckage of their homes because God was encouraging them to not give up calling for help. I have been with orphans in Haiti who inspired me to have a deeper faith because they enthusiastically thank the Lord for providing them with one meal a day.

Abundant life isn't about having the nicest house on the block and a cool car. It is about faith, hope, and love. And it is about participating in God's kingdom.

Jesus is still looking for participants to spread abundant life, people who will take seriously their divine responsibility to care for the earth and for each other in loving, sustainable ways.

May you answer God's call to receive and share the abundant life. Amen

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen



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