

Laurentian Wesleyan Church
Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015
Message: Now You're Really Living.

Scripture: John 10:7-10, NIV

7 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.

9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Pray

Opening Illustration:

How do you know if someone is really living life to the full? Is it their happiness, their contentment? Is it the number of experiences they've had? Is it the amount of stuff they have? For some, they would say you're not really living unless you laugh a lot. So, let me ask you, did you get pranked this past April 1st?

Show Video of Spaghetti Tree.

Show photo of Joshua's Facebook post.

Years ago, when I attended a Silver Lake youth camp, we were sitting in a large circle sharing what God had been doing in our lives over the course of the week. We came to this one guy, and he stood up and sang, "All I wanna do, is have some fun." And sat down, thinking he was hilarious. I remember this awkward moment, because it was evident from his life that week, that this was probably the truth. That's what life was to him.

A few years ago, the rock band Eels had a song whose lyrics went like this:

Do you know what it's like to fall on the floor
And cry your guts out 'til you got no more
Hey man now you're really living

Well i just saw the sun rise over the hill
Never used to give me much of a thrill
But hey man now you're really living

Do you know what it's like to care too much
'bout someone that you're never gonna get to touch
Hey man now you're really living

Have you ever sat down in the fresh cut grass
And thought about the moment and when it will pass
Hey man now you're really living

Now you're really giving everything
And you're really getting all you gave
Now you're really living what
This life is all about

For many today, if what they thought was really living, as evidenced by what they're chasing after were put into one phrase, I suspect we all would have the same response as I did at youth camp. Shaking our head and knowing there's more.

You, no doubt, noticed our church sign on the way in. On the side facing Trout Lake Road I put this phrase, "Cross = Love". I love that simple statement, best seen with symbols like this.

(show on screen)

I hope you were able to attend the service at the Capitol Centre. What an awesome site to see 1000 people from different churches, all worshipping the same Christ. The Christ of the Cross. Suffering and sacrifice driven by God's love for you and me. So I asked myself, if the Cross = Love. What does the empty tomb mean? Well, you read it. The empty tomb = life.

Today, on resurrection Sunday, we celebrate our risen Saviour. Centuries before Jesus died, and rose again, the prophet Isaiah wrote about Jesus.

Isaiah 53:11, "After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."

Isaiah 53:11 NIV

Jesus took our iniquities, our sins, onto Himself at the Cross. And this verse says He will "justify many". That word "justify" means to be made right. What kind of life does Jesus bring to those who trust in Him?

1. The Real Life Jesus Gives Begins with a Fresh Start.

When we come to Jesus, and put our faith and our trust in Him, He gives us a fresh start. He wipes the slate clean. It's just-as-if-we've-never-sinned.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. -Galatians 2:20, NIV

Is this not huge with it comes to living life to the full. Whatever your past, whatever mistakes you've made, whatever guilt you carry. You can give it to Jesus and he'll let you begin again.

Listen. People can counsel you and help you deal with past hurts and mistakes. You can think positively and keep a good attitude and practice the best methods and technics for moving past the things that you've done or have been done to you. You can learn from these things and they can even help make you a better person. But listen friends, no one. Not me, not your parents, not the government, not a counsellor, has the authority to wipe your slate clean. But God does. He has that authority. He has the ability to take away the stain of guilt in your life and give you a fresh start. Yes, some actions may be irreversible in a human sense. We may need to work through the earthly consequences of our mistakes. But God has promised even then to help us

overcome them and make those things our strength, so much so that we'll boast about our weaknesses because of what God has done through them.

2. The Real Life Jesus Gives Brings Hope.

Human beings can live for forty days without food, four days without water, and four minutes without air. But we cannot live for four seconds without hope.

**“...he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.”
Isaiah 25:8 NIV**

Show picture of railroad tunnel.

Illustration: As you know, Chrissy and I lived in Brockville, Ontario before moving to North Bay. You may not know that Brockville is home to Canada's first railroad tunnel. And if you're like me, when I found that out, I thought, "why would they need a railroad tunnel in flat, near the St. Lawrence, Brockville. It's actually pretty neat. Since 1863 it has run from near the river, under most of the down, including city hall. It hasn't been used for several decades and most of it isn't open. But you can walk into the opening near the St. Lawrence and walk a few dozen feet into the tunnel until you reach a steel gate. On bright sunny days you can look down that dark tunnel and see a small light some 1700 ft away to the other end of the tunnel.

Isn't that what hope is like? When you're in the tunnels of life and darkness is all around you, you can still see a light at the end of it. There is always hope. But this hope is different than the world's hope. This hope comes with power and promise. This hope comes saying, "in this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). It comes with the fulfilled prophecy of Isaiah that God will wipe away the tears from all faces, he will remove disgrace and even defeat death.

Listen, I hate to break it to you, but every single one of you in this room, including myself, is going to die. We will breath our last breath...and then, eternity begins. How will you face this inevitable day? Will you face it with despair, confusion and uncertainty about what lies beyond. Or will you face it with the hope that only comes from the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. You can know this hope. Whether it is the difficulties of today or the inevitable mortality of our lives, Jesus' resurrection offers hope with teeth. Hope that actually works.

As the Psalmist says, "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

We have not been promised that life will be easy.
We have not been promised that life as a follower of Christ will be a cake-walk.
But we have been promised a hope that is real that reaches into eternity.

3. The Real Life from Jesus Is Full of Power.

Show picture of an electrical outlet.

Ephesians 1:18-20

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,
19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength

20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

The same power that defeated death lives in you and me.

I'm not going to pretend that the difficulties of life are easy or have any quick fixes. But I am going to tell you this. If God is fighting for you, who dare be against you. You're fighting with resurrection power.

Addictions. In the name of Jesus I pray they be broken in your life.

Disease. In the name of Jesus I pray for healing. For life to flow through each cell of your body.

Broken Relationships. In the name of Jesus I pray for reconciliation. He can make a way when there seems to be no way.

Depression and Despair. In the name of Jesus you've gotta flee. There is hope in the name of Jesus.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Prove it, you might say. Listen, Jesus was dead, and now He's alive. What does He have to do. He wants to bring you through it. Trust His power to do it.

Well, what if he doesn't. Well, see point number two. He will bring you through whether in this life or the next. But this is what you were created for. To have the dead, earthly things in us that have caused pain and hurt and despair to be put to death and us to be given new life through the resurrection power of Jesus.

4. Real Life from Jesus is for You.

Yes, yes, you may say. I know. It's for me. "For God so loved the world, and I'm part of the world." Wait a minute. This real life, this resurrection power is for you, personally.

I love these verses.

"And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."

John 6:39 NIV

That sounds pretty personal to me. What about this one.

John 17:20-21, NIV

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

That's you and I. Jesus prayed specifically for you and I.

This isn't just for you to find. It's yours. It's ready and waiting for you. It's been gift wrapped with your name put on it.

"I want this life for you." -God says.

John 10 says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

So the question I have for you is this, "Do you have this life?" This life of new beginnings, hope and power. It's hear for you.

If you don't, it's as simple and profound as the verse above this one. **John 10:9, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture."**

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

I want to play a song, and at the end of the song, if you have never put your trust in Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour. If you've never asked Jesus for this life He said was available to us, I'm going to ask you to stand right where you are and I'm going to pray for you.

Play "Because He Lives (Amen)"

Pray

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know I am a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead. I trust and follow you as my Lord and Saviour. Guide my life and help me to do your will.

**In Your name,
Amen."**