

Sermon The Meaning of Life: Part 4 Why are We Here? (cont'd) August 23, 2020

In the Disney classic movie *Jungle Book*, the bear, Baloo, explains to the man-cub Mowgli, all about the bare (bear) necessities of life: Honey from the bees; ants to eat from under rocks; How to properly eat a paw-paw; the importance of not getting stressed out over things beyond your control. He continues expanding on the pleasures of scratching your back on a tree; slides into the pond and declares, "Oh man, this is really living!"

It's a cute song and I bet the record player inside some of your heads began to play it while I was talking about it. But is that the secret to life? Is that the sum total of the meaning of life? Just relax and enjoy the things that come to you in life? It's a pretty good start, actually. However, God has more in mind for us. He has a lot more life to give us. In John 5:26 the apostle writes, "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." He adds, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4) God intends for us to have that special life that is only found in Jesus, which includes a bit more than enjoying honey-covered ants and scratching your back on a tree trunk. As John 3:16 teaches, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." God loves us and wants us to have his life, so much so that Jesus became one of us and sacrificed himself to the flames of hell that we would have this life from God.

Because of his faithful service that he rendered to the Father on our behalf, Jesus can rightfully say, "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25) and "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) Jesus' purpose in all he did was to bring us the life of God as he explains in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

After Jesus fed the 5000 and everyone was looking to him for food to fill their stomachs, Jesus reminded them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry." (John 6:35) To the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well Jesus proclaimed, "... whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14) That sounds good to me – really good. You too?

Let's dig a little deeper into what Jesus has in mind here. Jesus speaks about the importance of following him. He says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) What are we to do? We are to follow Jesus. What does it mean to follow Jesus? For starters, it means acknowledging him to be our Lord. In John 5:24 Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." Alright! Now we are getting somewhere.

Our life of following Jesus begins at baptism. St. Paul describes this truth, saying, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from

the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) God wants us to have this newness of life. He gives it to us at our baptism. He gives it to us with the purpose that we would live in it always, remembering who we are, what God has now made us, and following in the path Jesus has laid out for us. In our baptism we were inseparably joined with Jesus. The apostles writes about how this is important. He says, "Whoever has the Son has life;" (1 John 5:12)

However good and right it seems Baloo may have been, there is more to life than simple pleasures:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17

That sounds pretty good too. It's quite difficult to enjoy your chicken dinner when life has got you tied into a bundle of knots. Paul here gives us some pointers. First, always remember what God did for you at baptism. He reconciled you with himself through Jesus. He no longer counts our trespasses against us – he has given us the righteousness, purity and perfection of his own son. Hang on to that truth and make it a reality in your everyday thought, word, and deed. Second, let that assurance give you the peace of God, remembering he knows every last little detail of your life and is moving you along a path of his design. And combining those blessings of baptism with the assurance of his eternal presence in our lives leads us into the joy that can only be known by the people of God. That adds yet one more quality to the life God desires for us:

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may *abound in hope.* Romans 15:13

God has given us lives to be lived in hope. Building on what God has already done for us, we rest in the hope that he will complete the good work he has begun in us and we will see the fulfillment of all the other promises he has made that are still yet to come.

What now? How do we live in this life Jesus obtained for us at the cost of his life and unimaginable suffering? First off and to repeat, all of us who are baptized believers already have this life. As we are taught in Colossians;

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:3

We have died in the sense that the old nature we were born with no longer holds us in the chains of sin and death. It is considered as good as dead, and we are free from our previous slavery to it. Next, God calls us to fight tooth and nail against sliding back into the mindset that we are still slaves to the old nature. That old life is not to be resurrected in us, but is to be considered as dead:

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:39

The old self is set on the pleasures of this life; comfort, material possessions, money, power, status, all the physical pleasures, and self-absorption. So Jesus tells us to not let that old self get the upper hand and set the tone for how we live. We live in the new life Jesus bought for us and walk in the footsteps he has left for us to follow. Jesus warns us:

And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Luke 12:15

Again Jesus teaches:

For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Luke 12:23

Most of us can think of and add a host of other passages from the Bible where we are encouraged to focus on following in the way of Jesus and leave our old ways and the fallen world far behind. Those among us with some experience at this can attest that living in this new life from God is never easy. However, it is worth every inconvenience and trouble, every tear, every sacrifice, and every penny. It is like Jesus says, living water that wells up to eternal life.

We pray God bless us with his Spirit that all this may be a reality in our lives, and we may know the true meaning of this life God provides for us to walk in with peace, joy, and hope. I plan to wrap up this series next week where we will move from who we are, through why we are here, and take a look at where we are headed. Until then, the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

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