

Sermon for April 26, 2015
John 10:10b-18

“I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Abundant life—isn’t it something that we all long for? We want more than just more life—we want abundant life. The dictionary defines abundant as existing or available in large quantities; plentiful. But we just don’t want more things, we want a real life. And in this passage Jesus makes us a huge promise, a life-changing promise. But Jesus isn’t the only one trying to make us life-changing promises. Look at most of the ads that we’re subjected to day in and day out. They try to promise us an abundant life—more money, more possessions, more friends, more—you fill in the blank. Whatever we can think of; someone’s tried to sell it to us!

But it costs us something to buy into what they’re selling us. First, we need to believe that we’re lacking in something; that we’re not good enough and we don’t have enough. We need to believe that we’re not good enough to be loved, respected and happy as we are unless we have their product. The only way the ads work is if we believe that we are lacking and insufficient. And of course the only way to overcome this is to buy their product!

The second cost is that this is all a lie. Whatever we buy—new, expensive cars, perfume, clothes, diets—may be good things, but they will only fill our sense of need for a short period of time. Then we’re disappointed again and we go out and do some more shopping or worse—we drink too much alcohol, eat too much food, spend the night with the wrong person; hoping against hope that this time it will be right and we’ll be accepted.

Hear again the promise that Jesus makes to us: “I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Jesus makes us much more than a promise; he gives us his life. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” Why would Jesus do that? Why does the good shepherd lay down his life? Jesus does this to show us that we are loved, that we are worthwhile. Jesus shows us that God loves the world, all of it, no

exceptions. Jesus shows us that we don't need any of what the world is trying to sell us to be worthy of God's love. We already have God's unconditional and unending love!

But that's so hard for us to believe. We hear so many messages about how lacking and unlovable we are unless we earn our acceptance. But one of the great things about being a pastor is the chance to tell you how wrong the world is and how much we are loved by God. God loves us so much that the only begotten Son, the Good Shepherd lays down his life for us to give us abundant, everlasting life.

Today two of our youth, Ethan and Zander, will be affirming the promises made for them at their baptisms. I want to read to you now their faith statements. Right now in their lives they can't believe there will come a time when they don't believe how much God in Christ loves them, but those of us around them know that those times do come and the promise is hard to believe. But Jesus' message goes on, "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

Jesus didn't just come for the people who heard the original message; he came for us too! We are invited to hear and believe this message of grace and acceptance, but even more we are invited to share it with others who are finding it hard to believe or who haven't heard it yet. Jesus' blessing to you all today is this: "You are a beloved child of God and you are enough." Take this message home with you, bury it in your heart, repeat it to those who need to hear it, tell it to those who haven't heard it yet and remember that you are enough to love, enough to die for and enough to live for.