

June 2, 2019

John 10:1-13

"Where Jesus Is, the Grass Is Greener"

Last week, we looked at two things Jesus does as our Good Shepherd:

First, he calls us.

The second thing Jesus does is he leads us.

Today, as Jesus calls us and leads us, we're going to look where he's leading us to. Verse 10 says Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly. Today we're going to look at what that means.

To get us started, here's something you might want to keep in mind:

No matter what you experience or go through in life, because Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, you are always going to be okay.

That's the context in which to understand verse 10 and the abundant life Jesus promises.

Jesus is saying, if you want to find the greener pastures that so many people talk about but never find, then follow him. He's the Good Shepherd.

Jesus will lead you there.

How many of you know who Barbara Walters is? Years ago, she interviewed actor Richard Dreyfuss after some awards show. She asked him, "If you could have one wish, what would you wish for?" Dreyfuss replied:

Every time I have a birthday, every time I blow out candles, every time I see a shooting star, I wish the same thing...I wish for inner security.

That is both sad and instructive. Sad that he doesn't have it, and instructive because I think he reflects what a lot of people are feeling inside.

Several years ago, a survey asked men what they cared about most. Men didn't care most about an abundance of material things or a trophy wife or a high paying job. What men wanted most was tranquility at home. In other words, they wanted peace. They wanted inner security.

We can have that. We don't have to wish for it. When Jesus calls you by name, that is what he brings into your life. When the Good Shepherd finds

you, you find peace...you find joy...you find satisfaction...you find inner security. In other words, you have life and have it abundantly.

Here's the thing. Sometimes we think of the abundant life in the stereotypically materialistic way Americans often understand life. In that worldview, of course abundance means jobs, money, bank accounts, possessions, health, status, and comfort. Certainly that's what Jesus wants for us. Right? What else could abundant life mean.

If people's minds are already leaning in that direction, it's a short walk to the prosperity gospel. John 10:10 is both the most common passage used to bolster proponents of prosperity as well as, when properly understood, to refute the prosperity gospel.

First, a nutshell version of the prosperity gospel. The Billy Graham Association refers to it as, "An aberrant theology that teaches God rewards faith - and hefty tithing - with financial blessings." Here's another description:

Prosperity theology is a religious belief among some Christians who hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes {even in the form of buying the preacher's books} will increase one's material wealth. Prosperity theology views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, He will deliver security and prosperity. Positive confession and visualization are important elements to prosperity theology.

Preachers and Bible teachers like John Piper, Francis Chan, and John MacArthur have clearly condemned the Prosperity gospel. To be fair, Prosperity preachers give some good counsel. They make excellent points about being people of character and integrity. There's a lot of inspiration and positive attitudes that will help with everyday life. There are good and helpful words in what prosperity teachers say. It can be deeply moving and encouraging. But it's just not good theology. In fact, John Piper once said he has *hatred* for the Prosperity gospel. And here's why I pay attention to his intentional use of the word *hatred*. The Bible says we are to hate what is evil. That's all Piper needed to say.

So, knowing what the abundant life is not, let's look at what it is.

The word *abundant*, in the Greek, means "exceedingly, very highly, beyond measure, a quantity so abundant as to be considerably more than what one would expect or anticipate." Jesus promises us a life far better than we could ever imagine. Paul puts it this way 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 him.

But before we dream of lavish homes, huge bank accounts, and more toys than we could ever use, remember, we're trying to get at what Jesus means. **1 Corinthians 1:26-29** has something to say about God's priorities for us:

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of

God.

Economic status is not a reflection of a person's faith or God's favor. The abundant life has nothing to do with material things.

Here's something you might want to write down:

Abundant life is eternal life, a life that begins the moment we come to Christ and receive him as Savior, and goes on throughout all eternity.

Here's how Jesus puts it in his prayer in [John 17:3](#):

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Notice what's left out here. Nothing about health, wealth, prosperity, family, occupation, or length of days. Those things will or won't happen in a believer's life, to one degree or another. But they are certainly not another gospel or a goal or a sign of one's walk with Jesus Christ. Knowledge of God is the key to a truly abundant life.

When Jesus talks about abundant life, he talks about spiritual abundance.

In fact, for Jesus, and so it should be for us, an abundant life is not

determined by duration but by a relationship with God. I love how John Piper addressed it. Speaking to a group of over 1,000 college students, addressing prosperity theology, he captured the true Gospel in a painfully beautiful way:

"I'll tell you what makes Jesus look beautiful. It's when you smash your car, and your little girl goes flying through the windshield, and lands dead on the street...and you say through the deepest possible pain, 'God is enough.'"

As Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:2-3, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

So far, we've seen how the Good Shepherd calls us and how he leads us into the abundant life. Finally, the Good Shepherd does these things by laying down his life for us. As Jesus says in verse 11, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

The Good Shepherd's voice is clear. His direction is clear. And now, more than anything, his love is clear. Jesus died for us. What does the Good

Shepherd do? He does what I need. He calls me. He leads me. I'm a sheep. I need a shepherd. I need help. I can't do life on my own. Something is going to have to influence my life. Someone is going to influence my life. Who am I going to trust? **I'm going to trust the One who laid down his life for me.** We need Jesus Christ as the shepherd of our souls.

So, do you want to enjoy greener pastures?

- Listen to the Shepherd.
- Follow the Shepherd.
- Trust the Shepherd.

Jesus Christ knows you and he loves you. The pastures will always be green when you are with the Good Shepherd.