



SUNDAY SERMON

A Life Worth Wanting

Good Morning Dear Friends... It's good to be back together! For months I have had this preaching date on my calendar but always with a tiny question mark beside it... Not sure if this baby had something else in mind. This morning, I am grateful that he has allowed me to keep our date... but check in with me later this afternoon and I may be singing a different tune.

One of the reasons I am so glad I get to preach this morning is because this Gospel passage is just one of the best. Am I right? Who else loves the words we just heard this morning?

It's not every Sunday that Jesus says exactly what we like hearing. What Jesus? You want me to not worry? You want me just to be in the moment and enjoy today? Well Gosh Jesus, I was planning instead to worry about everything going wrong in the world and in my life today, but if you really don't want me to - I guess I'll just find something else to do with my time.

I wish I could end this sermon right there. Folks um – Jesus says that worrying is stupid so let's go get some ice-cream. In one sense, that sermon wouldn't be entirely wrong... but it wouldn't be entirely right either.

This cheery, light-hearted Jesus we're encountering this morning is doing much more than offering us soothing, encouraging words for the lives we find ourselves leading. This morning we hear Jesus throwing open the escape hatch, and pointing us to a way of life that undermines everything we have been taught to believe in our individualistic, consumeristic culture. In flowery language that is deceptively inviting - Jesus confronts and tears down a simplistic world view that suggests that life primarily is about acquiring things like food and clothes.

Food and clothes – foundational elements for all humans we'd agree. But just sit with the notion of food and clothes a minute and you realize that our relationship to food and clothes is about much more than mere sustenance and protection from the elements.

Just two chapters earlier in Matthew's Gospel we learn that Jesus' first temptation after his 40 days of fasting in the wilderness is to turn some stones into bread. Now no doubt, Jesus is famished and very much could have used some bread, but Jesus doesn't turn the stones into bread... Instead he responds with a quote from the Hebrew Bible: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every words that comes from the mouth of God." Now what is Jesus doing here with this rebuttal? Theologian Miroslav Volf believes that in this exchange Jesus is re-teaching a lesson the ancient Israelites learned in the wilderness – that life is

continued

DATE

Pentecost 13
Sunday, Sept. 8, 2019

PREACHER

The Rev. Amy Molina-
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about so much more than satisfying one's physical cravings. Of course, humans need and deserve literal food, but to make life about acquiring bread is to completely misuse the gift of life. On this point I imagine we're all in agreement "Duh – Life is about so much more than trying to acquire bread!" And to that I would push back and say does your life affirm that truth? When I look at my own life I am forced to ask - Am I sure the orientation of my life is about more than acquiring "bread?"

After surveying contemporary Western faith and culture Volf would suggest that you and I have more of a bread problem than we acknowledge. He writes of all us collectively: "We have made our greatest temptation into the chief goal of our lives and the main purpose of our major institutions: to create and enjoy ever more sophisticated varieties of "bread."

Today a life fueled and motivated primarily by the promise of "ever more sophisticated varieties of bread" may be a fun life, it may even be a nice life, but according to the teachings of Jesus such a life is beneath you.

So what is the type of life that is worth living? What does a life that is worthy of our God-Given Talents, Eccentricities and Passions even look like? Before we jump to the answer let us savor for a moment that we've finally allowed ourselves to ask the question. This alone is an accomplishment. David Foster Wallace has described well the plight of those of us who live in a modern, fast-paced, entertainment saturated society - "It's not just that we don't know how to live meaningful lives; We don't even seem to be able to focus for very long on the question."

Life itself distracts us from spending time with the question "What kind of life is worth wanting?"

So right now I'm going to invite us to spend a couple minutes wrestling with this question. Take 30 seconds of silence to ponder the question that we rarely have time for... "What kind of life is worth living? And then after your silent reflection I'm going to invite you to turn to your neighbors in your pew and spend the next 2 minutes exploring this question as people of faith.

Thank you for beginning to dig into this all important question. Of course I doubt that anyone in here is done with this question. To fully answer this question, you and I need way more than a 2 minute discussion, we need nothing less than the Holy Spirit herself. To help us hear, internalize and discern the voice of God we need a set of skills and practices that we don't ordinarily use every day. Practices that infuse our lives with meaning. Practices that serve to benefit all of creation. Practices that transform life itself into a life worth wanting.

Luckily for us the church offers us such practices! - Last year Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, the head of the Episcopal Church in America and Accidental Celebrity following the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex unveiled "The Way of Love," 7 Practices for a Jesus Centered Life. Our presiding bishop has asked all of us to commit ourselves to following the way of Jesus focusing on 7 Ancient Christian Practices which are: Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest.

None of these practices are new-fangled ideas – these tried and true Christian practices are at the heart of what it means to be a people of faith. Now more than ever the world needs us to be practitioners of Christian practices. The world already has more than enough bread chasers. Amen.