

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having goodwill to all people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

John 10:1-10

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Abundant Life

There are times where I wish I could win the lottery,
Or maybe just a fancy car.

There are times where I wish I could quite my job,
and sip drinks in the sand.

There are times where I wish I had friends galore,
we could go out every night.

I wonder, wouldn't that be a life, maybe even abundant.

Then I remember my family, my two children and my wife.

I remember life created.

Each day life is watching them grow and helping them mature,
And teaching siblings to love.

Each year is a celebration of life and love in close relationship,
an anniversary reminds and restores.

And I see life in the love of family, abundant life.

I look at this place, this congregation of faces,
at your individual faces.

I look at those that sing and those that pray,
at those who come and stay.

I am amazed at those who listen and those who speak,
at those who find faith for each new day.

And I see life as we worship, ears and hearts open.

I stand in the room, with the doctors and nurses,
at the side of the bed.

I stand beside the pain, the suffering and lost,
and all I have is a hand.

I stand in the end, I stand in the gap,
I stand in the ugly, mess.

And I see life in a touch and a prayer and a story.

What is life abundant, what is it that Christ offers?

Is it money, friends, possessions?

Where is the cool, still waters that quench my thirst?

Maybe in the encouragement of a friend.

Where is the lush, green pastures that feed me?

Maybe in hope of prayer.

And life, abundant life, becomes love.

Love of God that moves me from the mirror to the heart.

Love of family that moves me from things to precious time.

Love of ministry that moves me from small to abundance.

Love of neighbors that moves me from office to home,
to hospital, to street, to foreign lands.

Love that leads me to stand in the gap, between life and death,
word and world, pain and hope, lost and found.
Love becomes life, not perfect life they way I might think,
but perfect love they way Jesus has shared.

-Daren Hofmann, 5/7/17

Jesus promises abundant life to those who are his sheep. Jesus promises to bring us to green pastures to lie in and still waters to drink from. What does this life abundant look like to you, for you and for us?

I don't believe we can live a perfect life, not individually nor as a congregation. That is not even something I would want us to shoot for. But an abundant life is a promise I think we should not take lightly. The first obstacle is for us to name for ourselves what that life together looks like, what life abundant means here at White Lick. They say that hind sight is 20/20, and that may not be true for all of us, we all forget some things. But I believe it is easier to name life abundant by pointing to the past and where we have seen it before.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and those who follow the Good Shepherd must do so by trusting his voice and trusting that he is leading us to life abundant. But how do we trust what we cannot see? How do we trust in what we cannot hear?

But where can we go and what can we do to better hear and see Jesus? Well if that isn't the call of the church, then I'm not sure what is. We are the body of Christ. If you want to see the Shepherds hands, we must look at the church. His feet, we look to the church. His heart, we look to the church. And where does the church look to see Jesus? We look to his word and we look to the past and we look to those he has called to lead us in the present and future.

In part, the promise of life abundant is best lived out in a life that trusts the voice of the Good Shepherd. We read God's word through scripture, with an open mind and with questions and hopes and expectations. We come together, to worship and to pray and to listen for the Shepherds voice. We break bread at table and eat with one another that through our fellowship we might share his voice and strengthen one another in faith. We go out into the world each Sunday, a world were we are called to be the bearers of Good News but also detectives who are searching for where the Shepherd is leading us.

Life abundant, life with the shepherd, life that grows in us, life that is shared with others. Have you heard the voice of the Shepherd? Have you felt his life that manifests as love? Thanks be to God for the love that opens to us new life. Amen