

## **that you may have life**

John 20:30-31

April 23, 2017

*That you may have life ...*

That through your faith in him, through your faith in Jesus, you may have life. Then or now? Someday or today? After you die or here and now?

The gospel makes no distinction: that you may have life, then and now, someday and today. Life beyond death and life right now. Life right now that is eternal, eternal in quality, the kind of life worth having.

What is it that makes a life worth having? What are the essential elements of a life that is eternal? What kind of life does faith in Jesus give us?

Is it a healthy life? Is good health an essential ingredient of a life worth having?

I conducted a memorial service for Scott Siglin yesterday. Scott lived from birth with cerebral palsy. He was not blessed with good health. But he was blessed and his life was a blessing! He lived a full and interesting and inquisitive life. He loved and he was loved. He was a happy man, and he made the people around him happy.

Is wealth an essential element of a life worth having? Does having enough make life good and having more than enough make life better?

If that were true, having less would make life worth less, worthless, less worth having. But I have seen men and women in Haiti, men and women who had very little, very little, but were full of joy, full of faith in Jesus and full of joy because of their faith in Jesus, not joyful in spite of the lives they had, but joyful in the lives they had.

Neither health nor wealth are necessary requirements for a good life, and faith in Jesus is not a guarantor of either. These are not among the essential elements of the kind of life faith in Jesus gives. Then what are the essential elements?

Love. Love is the first. Love is a power, a great power, that unites at least two things, a lover and the object of that love. Which is to say that where love is, there is relationship, there is connection. And that's what I want to say about a life worth having: you are never, ever alone. When you are loved, you are never and never will be alone.

Faith in Jesus is trust in the one who loves you and is with you, always. Sometimes you may feel lonely or isolated or on your own, just you against the world, but you are not alone. Jesus is with you, and not only Jesus. Like Elijah found out when he felt exhausted and utterly alone, God is there, but God's people are there, too. You will never be the only believer alive. You will always, always, have companions on the journey, thanks to Jesus.

Love is essential to a life worth having. And hope. Jesus' life gives hope: exposing the weakness and worthlessness of power and greed and self-righteousness. Jesus' faithfulness gives hope: not being deterred by threats or temptations, doing the right thing simply because it is right. And Jesus' resurrection gives hope: love is stronger than death, love is stronger than fear, love is stronger than anything that divides us.

Today may be hard. Today may be a struggle. Today may be bad. But Jesus promises a tomorrow, a tomorrow God will give, God's gift of a new day, God's gift of a day when things, all things, will be new. And that makes today, every today, filled with possibility, filled with hope.

Love, hope, and ... This last ingredient of the kind of life Jesus gives is a little harder to put into words. It is a life free of boundaries, a life free of walls, a life where walls are torn down and boundary lines are crossed. Which is to say that a life lived in a safe enclave surrounded by people pretty much just like me is not a life worth having, not the life God intends for us, not eternal life.

God made all of us, and God made us to be together, to be ... together. Seeing Jesus is essential, entirely necessary, to a life worth having, and Jesus will meet you in the face of someone not like you -- a stranger, a foreigner, an immigrant, a refugee.

That's why we are doing this, thinking about men and women, our brothers and sisters, in Nicaragua and Liberia, Korea and Haiti, Germany and Scotland, Moldova and Burma. When we belong to Jesus, we belong to each other. The life Jesus gives is a life that we share, a life that we are meant to share, a life that becomes eternal as we share it.