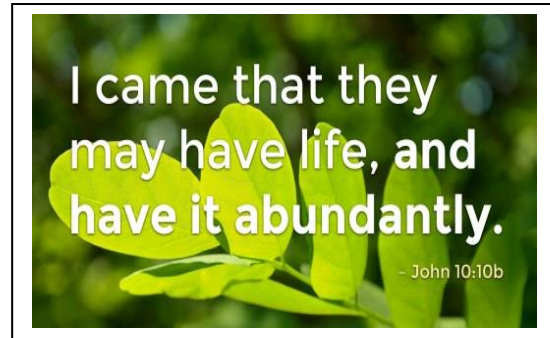


**Sunday April 16<sup>th</sup>**

**The Abundant Life.**

**2 Corinthians 6:3-10**

**Revelation 21:10-21**



2 Corinthians is like a personal letter from Paul to the Corinthian church, and it is relevant today for all of us who believe in the Gospel. Paul is responding to those who are criticizing his message and ministry. It was like a character assassination.

I would like you to take a few minutes to consider this question.

“I feel good about my life when.....”

If you answered the question as: “I feel good about my life when external circumstances are not difficult and when others validate me” then you would be pretty much right where the Corinthians were.

But Paul offers a different perspective on how to evaluate his ministry and it offers us a different perspective to look at if we desire to be more dynamic and effective in our ministry for the Lord.

And if we skip ahead to our reading in Revelation, if you have ever read this book, we breathe a sigh of relief when we enter this final section. There is a strong emphasis on the fact that time is short, Jesus is coming soon, we should not be complacent. There are only 2 categories of people in the end – those who “go on washing their robes and entering the city – and those kept outside it.

The dark clouds will permanently roll away and the sun, as we know it will be replaced by Jesus, the Son, the glory of God. Christians have received new bodies and a new environment to live in. The heavenly city has come down out of heaven and is sited on the new earth.

**Don't you want to be one who is welcomed freely into God's new kingdom? The day of opportunity is still here but you must get on the train now before it departs from the station.**

To find the abundant life in Christ, we need to be Co-workers with Him working to achieve His mission; not Co-dependants, who allows others to determine their identity, including society.

**Who tells you who you are, Christ or the society you live in?**

Paul made a bold statement in our reading. He said: "In everything we do, we show we are true ministers of God." We are to be tools to be used by God and love as He loves.

Every day, unbelievers observe us – at the shops, cafes, neighbours, in groups we may be part of – we cannot let any careless or undisciplined actions lead someone to reject Christ.

In my devotion that other morning I read this wonderful fact from Dietrich Bonhoeffer – **Your life as a Christian should make nonbelievers question their disbelief in God.**

We all experience times of discouragement, indecision, financial burdens, family conflict, church conflict, health issues. How we respond in these situations reflect what we believe.

Sadly, many who say they are Christians, have given over the authorship of their life to the world. Society has become the main author of the book of their lives.

If your name is at the top of your book of life, then you can spin it any way that makes you look good and your life will be so much pulp fiction,

If God is at the top, you may be in for a roller coaster ride, but the book will be a much better read.

If you had to employ an ambassador for Christ, would you choose a person who was always in trouble, always getting picked on, never standing up for themselves, never taking credit for anything, always looking back to Jesus? Or would you choose someone who has impeccable appearance, skills, a life of ease, getting honoured by others?

Paul did not hide anything from the Corinthians, he was an open book. But the Corinthians had closed their lives off from Paul and had pretended like they didn't really know him for who he was – their spiritual father and guide. They had pulled away from him.

I wonder do you ever pull away from God. When you are tempted to sin, or wallow in pity, do you build a wall around you, to try to block out the voice of the Holy Spirit?

There is pressure on Christians around the world to dissociate with the values of Christ and associate with the values of this world. Are you willing to experience discomfort in this age to help others experience comfort in the next age?

If you could find someone who was willing to die for you, what would you be willing to do for Him. Would you be willing to “endure affliction, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonment, riots, sleepless night, hunger?

Jesus was the one who gave His life for our life. He died in our place. Considering what Jesus did for us, the trials and difficulties we face today shrink in comparison.

Imagine coming to the end of your life and remembering that you never told another person about the never-ending love of Jesus!

Imagine coming to the end of your life and realizing that you had always heard about Jesus’ love and compassion, but you had never truly experienced it!

Jesus invites us to be co-workers with Him in working in the Kingdom of God. Paul tells us that today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to volunteer and be a co-worker with Christ.

We are apprentices of Jesus Christ, to be transformed into His image so that we can effectively share His love and gospel. Sometimes that’s going to mean being misunderstood and abused. We need to realize that how a Christian appears to the world, is not reality.

If you are waiting for a better sale on salvation, there isn’t going to be one. The day of salvation is here until the advertisement expires and God will no longer offer it. None of us know when our life will end, so we cannot waste another minute existing outside of God’s love. There are no rain checks in the next age.

It might mean you experience difficult things, but as you depend more and more on the Lord and realize more and more your purpose, then those difficulties are put into a context and you start looking for the things like the “enriching” you do, despite the way the world looks at you.

Let us remember, we are working together for the Kingdom of God. You may be listening this morning and think, I am not doing anything great for the Kingdom. But each of us is working out our salvation.

How are we doing this? We are doing it by being together as a Body of Christ. We encourage one another. We live together in community, caring for each other. We help each other in our love for Jesus and His Church. These are all aspects of working out our salvation.

We are running the race; we are crucifying our flesh so that we might love God and our neighbours better. This is what we are called to do as Christians and followers of Jesus Christ.