

SERMON: A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TOUGH TIMES

John 10:10

The thief cometh not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Introduction

In this passage Jesus gives His mission statement. He came to earth so that we could truly live-not just exist. This passage has always been a blessing to Christians when it is read and taken seriously to heart. Today, it may be more meaningful as we live in these tough, challenging times. Yes, these are, indeed, tough, challenging time. Unless you have been living under a rock or in a cave, you have heard all of the bad news that comes to us daily. There are fires out west and floods in the northeast. Hurricanes, tornados and earthquakes seem to come in rapid succession. Then there are political unrest and the constant threat of domestic and foreign terrorism. The pandemic seems to enjoy toying with us; when we think we are about to gain control of it, a new variant pops up and there is a new, more vicious surge. To loosely quote Thomas Paine, "These are times that try men and women's souls." Marvin Gaye described tough times differently when he said, "It makes you wanna holler." I say, if you have to holler, make sure you cry, with all of your might, to the Lord God Almighty.

These words of Jesus can give great encouragement during these unprecedented times. They can keep our faith strong despite the turmoil that surrounds us. The first part of this verse describes the work of satan; the second part tells of the mission of Jesus. The implication is clear- Jesus can negate the attempts of satan to succeed in his evil plots. I am sure you have heard the phrase, "Encourage yourself." I do believe that each of us should encourage ourselves. However, we can only encourage ourselves when we believe the promises of Jesus. We can encourage ourselves when we believe, without the shadow of a doubt, that Jesus has our backs and that satan is destined to fail. In fact, he has already failed many times. He failed when Pharaoh's army was drowned in the Red Sea. He failed when Jesus refused to turn stones into bread in a self-serving way. Resurrection Sunday was his greatest failure. We must never forget that Jesus came to give us abundant life. There are many perks and benefits that come automatically with this abundant life.

What does this abundant life look like? Let me remind you of a few of the benefits of our Christ-empowered abundant life. This is just a review for many of us.

Exposition

1. We Have The Opportunity To Attain High Goals.

(Nothing Is So High That It Can Not Be Attained Through Prayer and Hard Work. Philippians 4:13.)
 (Acknowledge God in Everything-This Is The Key. Proverbs 3:6.)
 (Think Big-Start Small.)
 (Grow as You Go. Luke 2:40.)

2. We Have the Resources to Be a Blessing to Others.

(We Can Bless Others No Matter Our Condition.)
 (Peter Had No Money, But He Healed The Lame Man-Acts 3:6.)
 (Remember The Good Samaritan-He Was An Outcast.)
 (Victimization Is No Excuse for Not Being A Blessing.)

3. We Have The Strength To Endure Hardships.

(Nothing Is So Hard That It Can Not Be Endured.)
 (When The Going Gets Tough, The Tough Gets Going.)
 (Sometimes Tough Love Is Appropriate-Jeremiah 12:5.)
 (2nd Thessalonians 14; James 1:12.)

4. We Have Joy and Peace That Surpasses All Understanding.

(Nothing Is So Bad That It Can Take Away Our Joy.)
 (This Joy Comes From Our Perpetual Praise.)
 (When The Praises Go Up, The Blessings Come Down.)
 (When The Praise Go Up, The Joy Comes Down.)
 (Habakkuk 3:17-19; Philippians 4:7.)

Closing Thoughts

I am reminded of a story that is well known. (There are many versions of it. It is used quite often in ethics classes to spur debate.) A king wanted to reward three of his most loyal subjects. He said that he would grant each of them any wish that they wanted-but only one wish. The first asked to marry his beautiful, oldest daughter and the king complied. The second asked for a ton of gold and the king complied. The third subject hesitated for days. The king reminded him that he would only get one wish, but whatever the wish, it would be granted. He was the shrewdest of the three. His wish was that he would be granted a thousand more wishes. Because a king's words are law and a king cannot renege on his promises and maintain his integrity, much to the king's dismay, the third subject was granted the one thousand additional wishes.

Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will grant us our petitions according to His will and according to His riches in glory. We do not have to be shrewd or conniving to get blessed over and over again-it wouldn't work anyway. We only have to be "saved" through the sinless, precious blood of our Savior. We must simply trust and obey. Salvation affords us the abundant life that only Jesus can give. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory.

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