

The title for today's message is: **"Life Abundantly"**

Jesus said: **I came that they may have life and have it abundantly**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Jesus started out saying to His disciples: **"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.**

Now as you sit here in the sheepfold, also known as the congregation, Jesus is asking you one thing, "which way has the teacher come in?"

Did the teacher entered through the gate, or has He climbed over the wall?
I know, what difference doe's that make?

Well in fact it makes a lot of difference, here in John chapter 14 Jesus makes it very clear. He said; **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

Look after Jesus rose from the dead he had one simple command that He wanted to give to His disciples.

The command was this; **"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.**

Look, it is the sole purpose of a true shepherd of Jesus Christ, to do one thing, and that is to preach Christ, as the only way to salvation.

Now, when it comes right down to it, this is one of the most important message in all of the Bible.

If I were to come into this congregation and teach you how to be great parents, but teach nothing of sin and grace, it would profit you nothing.

You might compare it to a shepherd who built up a huge shelter within the sheepfold, but never took his sheep through the gate.

If we were able to grow by leaps and bounds through wonderful programs, yet didn't hear of Christ, it would be for not.

You might compare this to a shepherd who went out and found lots of sheep, but never led them into the sheepfold.

If we were able to feed the poor and build a building three times this size, of an ancient sheepfold.

Yet all the while leaving the people without the Gateway to heaven, what good would it do?

Now, the parable in our text for today is the prelude to that of Jesus being the Good Shepherd.

Here Jesus is talking about himself as the door to the sheepfold. Jesus is saying that those who enter the sheepfold, must enter through Him.

That He is the gate, the door to the sheepfold. And those who enter any other way, are nothing more than thieves and robbers.

Then Jesus says that He will lead the sheep because he knows them by name.

And because He knows them by name, the sheep will follow, and they will come out, and go in, and will find pasture.

Then Jesus says: **I came that they** (meaning His people) **may have life and have it abundantly.**

A fulfilled life, a life not without sorrow or pain, but a life filled because we have Jesus as our guide, our shepherd.

Look, Jesus is our leader, and we follow Him because He calls us by name through our baptism. That's right, He leads, and we follow.

Something very interesting happened, a tourist in Jerusalem actually noticed something unusual about the shepherds.

You see instead of the sheep being led by a shepherd at the front of them, they were being driven by a shepherd behind them.

The tourist curiosity was aroused so he said to the guide; "Look at that shepherd. He is not leading the sheep.

He said: He is driving them, and, poking them, and whipping them! I thought a shepherd was supposed to lead his sheep."

You're right," answered the guide. "A shepherd does lead his sheep. But that man is not the shepherd. He is the butcher."

That's right, we can be driven by the "devil" to do all sorts of things we know we shouldn't do, but Jesus leads us to a full life in Him.

He leads us out of the sheepfold to find pasture, which means Jesus leads us in life.

And we return to the sheepfold, the church, to find comfort and rest. But we must be careful least we think that following Jesus will mean a life of roses.

He will lead us through all sorts of terrains, and sometimes we might get hurt, sick, or go off on our own where we might get into trouble.

So, remember, life will not always be easy. But the thing we need to do is keep focused on Jesus, leading us.

And when we focus on Jesus, though we walk through valleys, over mountains, through rough seas, with our focus remaining on Jesus, life simply doesn't seem so bad.

For example: There's an old movie titled "Mr. Holland's Opus". Its the story of a musician who wants to be a composer.

But at the time becoming a composer wasn't possible. So he takes a job teaching music at the local high school.

He believed that teaching high school would give him time to write music, and to provide an income as he waited to become a composer.

One of his students, a redheaded girl who plays the clarinet terribly, even though she practices constantly every day.

Mr. Holland worked hard with her to help her along. He discovered she was the youngest in her family, a family where everyone excels except her.

Unlike her family she tried so hard, yet failed. So just as her family she too considered herself a failure.

One day she told Mr. Holland that she's going to give it up, she also told him, if he knows anyone who wants her clarinet, he can give it to them.

As she walks away, Mr. Holland asks her, "Is it any fun?" With a shrug, she answers, " I wanted it to be. "

He said: "You know what we've been doing wrong? We've been playing the notes on the page. She then asks, well what else is there is to play?"

Mr. Holland said: "There's a lot more to music than notes on a page. Playing music is supposed to be fun he said.

Its about heart. Its about feelings and moving people, its something beautiful, because its about being alive.

He said: I could teach you notes on a page. Yet I can t teach you that other stuff. So Mr. Holland takes away her music and tells her to play without it.

She tries yet each time she would come to the point where her clarinet squawks and squeaks, so she starts to kick herself for her failure.

"What do you like best about yourself? he asks. With a shy smile she says," My hair, my dad says it reminds him of a sunset."

"Play the sunset he said. She closes her eyes, and begins to play, really play, not just the notes, but music.

She's so amazed her eyes pop open and she stops. Mr. Holland says, don't stop so, she plays on. This time it was fun.

Mr. Holland had put her focus on something bigger than notes. She started playing music.

Even though she was playing the same notes, it became something bigger, something grander.

This is what it means to be lead by Jesus. Life is grand my friends, sure, the rough parts will still be there, but Christ, will lead us through.

What was it Jesus said: **I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.**

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.