

How Do I Live a Full Life?

John 10:1-10

A full life! Life to the full! What does it mean? What does this mean to you? Today Jesus promises it for you, and to you. *What does he mean?*

Let's pray...

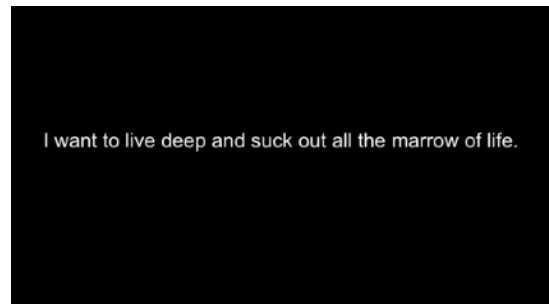
Living a full life. What do people mean when they say it? Here's how someone once described it:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I do not wish to live what was not life... I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.

Henry David Thoreau, "Walden", 1854

Thoreau named his book after a pond in the woods to which he escaped out of society.

This passage from Thoreau's book is quoted by one of the young students in the 1989 movie *Dead Poets Society*, where students at a very exclusive English college are given great licence by their English teacher, John Keating (played by Robin Williams), to explore fully life outside of the four squares of the dated textbook they study on poetry. Keating seeks to instil in them the freedom to think for themselves, to ask questions, and by doing so "to suck out all the marrow of life!"



But is that what a full life is? What is it to live and "to suck the marrow out of life" as a follower of Jesus? To live fully as God has prepared for us? Maybe it includes things like having the freedom to ask questions. What do you think?

Jesus promises today, and says to you and me, "I have come that they (my sheep/my people) may have life and have it to the full." Like Thoreau, we seek life, and to live it in many ways and places in the search for a full and meaningful life on this earth, in the society and the place where God has set you... has set us to be. We may do this in many ways including:

- Career/Calling
- Fulfilling Relationships
- Reputation & Status/ maybe its shown by having a lot followers on Twitter or Instagram
- Wealth and comfort
- Knowledge
- Health and long life free from pain



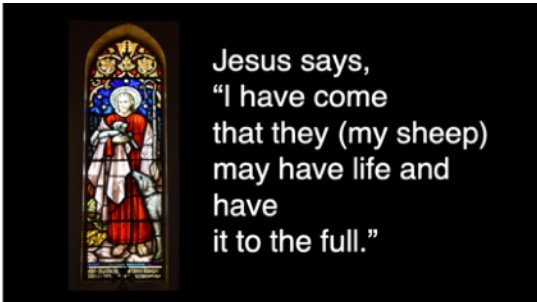
- Many of these things are expressed in society, media, and voices around us as 'full life'. And they may or may not be blessings which we personally receive.
- To know love, and to belong, are powerful ways that I have known something of full life. And they are gifts I can now offer others.
- What would you specifically add?

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• What would you specifically add?

Let's look, though, to Scripture and to the Good Shepherd, to learn more fully about the full life God has for us, and for the life he offers others through us.



Jesus says, "I have come that they (my sheep) may have life and have it to the full."

Jesus' sheep are those who trust his voice. The Good Shepherd is the gate and the gatekeeper, and the sheep hear his voice. They trust his voice. He knows them, and calls them by name and leads them. Jesus the Good Shepherd protects his flock. They listen to him. They follow him, and not the thief who would destroy them and their life. And the thief referred to here is

anyone or anything which leads away from Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Full life, then, is following Jesus and growing in his life, love, care and protection for all of life, no matter what it brings. John 10 is a continuation of the story in John 9, where we hear of a wonderful healing performed by Jesus to give sight to a man born blind. You may remember it from Lent when it was one of the gospel readings. In John 9, we hear of this man progressively coming to faith in Jesus as he is harried and hassled by the Pharisees and cast out of the Jewish worshipping community. It's these religious leaders who would take the man away from Christ. They cast him out of community because of his confession of faith in Jesus.

Our reading today follows on from this, as Jesus addresses the man and some of the Jewish religious leaders here.

Jesus is clear. To hear his voice, to receive his love and healing, to follow him, brings life. Everything that calls people away and stops people from coming to Jesus is the work of the thief and the bandit, the Evil One. So, to know Jesus for you; to hear his voice and to trust in him, is to have life.

And as we hear our other readings today, we are also reminded of Jesus' words which follow our reading, where he says:

I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

John 10:14-16

The Good Shepherd leads us in our lives individually and in community. We have a place of love and acceptance; a place to belong. "There will be one flock; one shepherd." Full life is lived in the love and care, and hearing the voice of the Shepherd. Looking to him in trust, to follow where he leads. And he will always



lead us to community, to be one flock.

It is in community that we learn and receive and grow so much in full life for us. To live life fully is to live it in community... in the community of the Good Shepherd. Take, for example, our Acts reading today as the Church, the flock of the Good Shepherd, was being formed with coming of the Holy Spirit.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:42

The disciples came together in worship to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, to receive his life, and to respond in prayer and life.

They belonged. They were accepted, and they accepted each other, centred in their faith in Christ. And the Spirit worked life into their hearts. The Spirit works life to the full in the lives of believers:

Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through 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 the goodwill of all the people.

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Acts 2:43-47a

Full life lived in community

- All were in common belief
- All shared with those in need
- All spent time together in fellowship with glad and generous hearts
- All worshipped together praising God

They lived in fellowship with each other, and they served people in need together. They spent time together in worship, and in sharing fellowship in homes. They witnessed to others with glad and generous hearts, and praised God. Their witness was seen by others. Full and fulfilling life guided by the Good Shepherd through the Holy Spirit.

And the result?

LIFE!

And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:47b

Full life. Loved, saved, healed, protected and led by God in life as disciples, and acceptance and a place to belong in the flock of Jesus. And we are free to think for ourselves as individual disciples in society and community. And we are called to think and act communally, just like those first disciples in Acts 2. That's one of the main reasons we're planning an open community day here at St Paul's later in the year, for example, as David B described for us last Sunday.

My first ministry was in Alice Springs, a place of great community in my experience. God called us then to Sydney, where I found so many people crying out for, yearning for genuine community. And the church of the Good Shepherd had genuine community to offer. A quarter of a century on, and I still find that people in our cities, in our suburbs, in our streets yearn for genuine community. There is so much loneliness, and we have such a precious gift. Not just a good community, but a community of the one who is truly good... the Good Shepherd who has life.

So let's continue to grow in knowing our Good Shepherd, hearing his voice and going as his community to bring his life.

Amen.

Video of the service including the above address: https://www.youtu.be/X76aV6b6_7k