

- Greeting to all the friends and family of Manatee Life,

SCRIPTURE:

John 10:10 (NIV) – Larger reading: John 10:1-21

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

STORY:

A spectator watched three men at work. “What are you doing?” he asked the first man. “Working for ten shillings a day.” He asked the second man the same question. “Cutting stone.” But when he asked the third man, the answer was: “Building a cathedral.”

OBSERVATION:

The scripture lesson cited above from the Gospel of John is much loved and often quoted because of that one phrase that is translated in other versions: “... so that they can have life and have it abundantly.” I kind of like the NIV as it states “fullest possible way.” But, what does this mean – abundant life, a full possible way kind of life? What does that look like? How can it be experienced? Well, as in the simple story, the answer could be found in how you see what you are doing ... making a small pay, doing a simple task or building a grand cathedral. It all depends on one’s perspective.

Each Friday morning on the TODAY TV show Willard Scott use to wish people who have reached the age of 100 a Happy Birthday. Some of these senior citizens are still living independently, cooking their own meals and a couple of them are still driving (*which in my mind is a little scary*). Bless their hearts! But, does simply arriving at 100 years or surviving that many years make it an abundant life? Is an abundant life marked by the number of years lived?

I’ve heard it shared about a much younger person like a teenager or young adult who has passed away that though their years were few they had lived “a full life.” Actually I heard that over the span of just 15 days one Christmas in Temple Terrace as I held three separate funerals for teenagers from King High School. Each had died in separate auto accidents that were caused by someone who was drinking and driving. Their friends stepped to the microphone and stated, with much emotion, that they had lived a “full life.” Really? Maybe I have a different concept of what a “full life” should look like.

Those words or some rather close to them were also used during the funeral of one of my nephews who took his own life when in his 40s. David had much to live for, but the demons that come with depression finally over took him and he couldn’t fight them any longer. And, yet, his friends and fellow fire fighters spoke of David as having a “full life” even if it was cut short. From their understanding a “full life” was marked by a lot of different experiences and simply doing all the

things that a person likes to do like fishing, hunting and playing a little football now and again.

I would suggest that having a “full life” is not simply “packing” a lot of experiences into the years that we have been given here on earth. Rather, at least from my understanding of what Jesus was saying, an abundant and full life comes not out of experiences nor out of accumulating a lot of years, but out of a relationship with him.

A case in point was a little Catholic lady that I was asked to visit in the local hospital in New Port Richey, FL. She had to have both legs amputated because of cancer. While sitting in her room we talked about a lot of different things, but she never felt sorry for herself. This was her fifth stay in the hospital because of the cancer. I finally asked, “How do you feel about losing your legs?” Her smile could have stretched across a mile. She lifted her two stumps, patted them and stated, “This is the best thing that has ever happened to me! Having lost my legs has opened so many doors for me to share my Jesus with doctors, nurses and housekeepers at the hospital. And, some have come to accept him as their Savior. I couldn’t be happier!” Now that is a full and abundant life!

Now, blessings are a different matter. The people that Willard Scott honors have been blessed with a great number of years; the teenagers were blessed with some great friends who would miss them deeply; David was blessed to have had the opportunity to enjoy many of the things he loved in this life; but the little Catholic lady had the full and abundant life. May it be so for all of us!

QUOTE:

“The abundant life does not come to those who have had a lot of obstacles removed from their path by others. It develops from within and is rooted in strong mental and moral fiber.” - William Mather Lewis

PRAYER:

Dear God open my heart to your presence. Help me to allow your spirit to come in and dwell within so that my days here on earth will be full and abundant. Thank you for giving me opportunities to share your Good News through Jesus Christ with everyone you have placed in my path. Amen.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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Something has been laid on my heart and I’m inviting you to join me in prayer over it. You don’t need to know the specifics, but it would be a great blessing to achieving the purpose of our church. For it to happen it will take the direct power of God to bring it about because it would cost us about \$41,000 per year. If this is what God desires

then he will open up the possibility and make it happen. Just join me in prayer claiming God's great purpose before us today.
