

Discipleship Sermon Series - Feb/March 2025

Week Two: 'Life & Death'

Ephesians 2.1-10 / John 10.1-21

16th February 2025 – Revd Michelle Lepine

Summary of key points

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2.4-5)

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10.9-10)

The Christian faith is all about life, isn't it? Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are his precious sheep. He takes care of us and protects us from the wolves and thieves that want to harm or destroy us. Just like a shepherd gives life to his sheep, Jesus gives life to his disciples.

Jesus also says that he is the gate for the sheep to enter and that whoever enters the gate will be saved. Following Jesus is therefore a step towards God's promise of salvation and eternal life with eternal life meaning turning away from sin and towards fellowship with God.

But to do this we need to die to ourselves, to our old ways and the ways of the world and find new life in Christ, just as Jesus laid down his life for us on the cross. This is a theme which Paul invites us to explore across many of his letters. In Romans, Christian disciples are 'those who have been brought from death to life.' (Romans 6.13) In Philippians, he writes, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil 1.21) In Ephesians when we follow a path other than the way of Christ then we should consider ourselves to be without life for we can only be made alive in Christ. We can do nothing to earn this – it is by God's grace alone.

Our response is a simple one, yet at the same time hugely sacrificial. We simply have to surrender everything to Jesus.

Application questions for discussion

Read the Bible passages again, ideally using at least 2 different versions, and then consider the following questions:

- Reflect on the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. In what ways is this image useful for you in understanding your relationship with him as his disciple?
- Who or what are the ‘wolves and thieves’ in your life that threaten you from knowing life in all its fullness. What do you think are the risks that exist in the wider world?
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” What do you understand by this?
- How ready are you to surrender everything to Jesus?

Prayer activity

Write down 5 things that are good in your life and spend time in prayer giving thanks to God for the life that you enjoy because of his goodness and grace. Consider 3 characteristics or habits of yours which you know are not life-giving for you or for others. Imagine yourself laying them at the foot of the cross and ask for the God who loves and forgives you to help you as you seek to follow his ways more closely.

Plant some sunflowers or bulbs and watch them grow over the coming weeks. Continue to pray for your own journey of life from death, or the journey of a loved one.

Further reading (optional)

John Stott, *The Radical Disciple: Wholehearted Christian Living* (Inter-Varsity Press: Nottingham), 2010, *Chapter 8: Death*