

GOD’S KINGDOM AGENDA: LIFE (John 10:10-11, 14-18, 25-30)

You probably don’t know her name, but you have seen her, and you have heard her speak if you have been around awhile. I’m looking out at you, and it appears to me that most of us have been around a good while.

Her name was Clara Peller. She was born in Russia in 1902, but she emigrated to America with her family when she was young. She lived most of her life in the Chicago area. She worked as a manicurist in a Chicago salon for 35 years. She got into commercials at the age of 80. After doing several local commercials, Clara hit it big when she was hired to do a series of commercials for a national, restaurant chain.

If you have been around awhile, you remember her iconic line: “Where’s the beef?” The Wendy’s Hamburger chain hit gold with those commercials. Wendy’s sales shot upwards. Their senior vice president for communications, Denny Lynch, boasted, “With Clara, we accomplished as much in five weeks as we did in 14 ½ years.”

With her new-found fame, offers poured in for Clara to appear on this and do that. Her contract allowed her to do commercials for other entities, so, Clara signed a contract with the Campbell Soup Company to do a commercial for Prego Plus spaghetti sauce. In the commercial, Clara examines the Prego sauce, and after wondering “Where’s the beef?” she declares, “I found it! I really found it.”

The executives at Wendy’s weren’t amused, and they fired the octogenarian actress. When asked for her response, Clara said, “I’ve made them millions, and they don’t appreciate me.” Those advertising executives, no doubt, regretted their decision because after Clara’s departure, Wendy’s sales went down, and it took them another five years to recover, by which time Clara had already passed. She died in 1987 at the age of 85.

Have you ever looked at your career, your marriage, your life and wondered, “Where’s the beef? Where’s the meaning? Where is the fulfillment? There’s got to be more to life than this, isn’t there?”

In John 10, Jesus addresses the kind of life we are looking for and the kind of life He came to give. I have entitled today’s message, “God’s Kingdom Agenda: Life.” God is all about giving life, true life, life that is truly alive.

Last week I said that *know*—k-n-o-w—is a big word in the Bible. This morning we will be looking at another four-letter word—life—and it, too, is a big word in Scripture. The English word *life* shows up 560 times in the version of the Bible I use, the English Standard Version.

One thing I have learned is that Greek is a far, more expressive language than is English. It is more precise. For instance, consider the word *love*. There’s another four-letter word. We use that word *love* for all kinds of things. I love God. I love my wife. I love my children. I love this church. I love cookies. I love golf. I love television. I love watching golf on TV while eating cookies.

While the NT only uses three words for *love*, the Greek language has as many as eight words for *love*. Each word expresses a different kind of love.

Likewise, there are six different Greek words for *life* in the NT while in English we

rather clumsily just have one. Let me give you three of those six. One is βίος. We get the word *biology* from that word. It is used just 9 times in the NT and speaks of physical life. ψυχή is another important word. We get the word *psyche* or *psychology* from that word. It is used 101 times. Many times, it is translated as *life*, but more often it is rendered as *soul*. The most used Greek word for *life* in the NT is ζωή. It shows up 135 times in the NT. It is life that is real. While βίος may deal with the length of one's life, ζωή speaks to the height and depth of life.

Of the 135 times ζωή is used, almost half the times it comes from John's pen. While John uses it 13 times in 1 John and 16 times in Revelation, he uses it 38 times in his gospel. The last two verses of John 20 are widely seen as the theme of John's gospel. He tells us why he wrote that account. The end of John 20:31 reads, "so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." God wants you to have ζωή, and it becomes yours, it becomes mine, when we believe in Jesus.

God's Kingdom agenda is that we have life. We are going to look at several verses in John 10 in an effort to learn about this life and what Jesus does for us in regard to that life. There are four truths I want to emphasize.

Jesus Came to Give Us Abundant Life

Look at the contrast that John presents in John 10:10. I want us to focus on the second half of that verse. Let's look at the pronouns. The "I" is Jesus. Who are the *them*? The them are the sheep, and who are the sheep? The sheep are those who belong to God. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are one of the sheep, and Jesus came to give you not only life, but abundant life.

What do you suppose the world thinks abundant life is? If you don't know Jesus, you might think that really living is:

- having lots of money,
- driving an expensive car,
- living in a luxurious house,
- wearing stylish clothes,
- eating at exclusive restaurants,
- traveling to exotic locations,
- socializing with important people, and
- going to exciting parties.

Let me read to you something Jesus said in Luke's gospel. In John 10:10 we have the word *abundantly*, but in Luke 12:15, Jesus used another form of that word. Jesus said, "Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

I find it interesting that in this verse, Jesus uses the word βίος. He is saying that possessing all that this world offers does not give you true ζωή.

Tony Evans said:

You may have everything else going for you, but if you do not have the life of God in you, you are dead. You may be good-looking and dead, healthy and dead, rich and dead, sophisticated and dead, popular and dead, but dead is dead.

Jesus came to raise you from your spiritual death and give you, life—abundant life. Arne Garborg was a Norwegian author. He was born in 1851 and died in 1925. He once said:

[With money], You can buy food, but not appetite; medicine, but not health; soft beds, but not sleep; knowledge, but not intelligence; glitter, but not comfort; fun, but not pleasure; acquaintances, but not friendship; servants, but not faithfulness; grey hair, but not honor; quiet days, but not peace. The shell of all things you can get for money. But not the kernel. That cannot be had for money.

Everything of true value comes from the gracious hands of God. He is the One who gives us abundant life—a life that is truly worth living.

There is a second truth I want you to know.

Jesus Died So That His Own Could Have Life

Look at John 10:11. Notice also vv. 14-18. Five times in the span of these verses, Jesus talks about laying down His life. He is referring to dying voluntarily. Jesus' life was not taken from Him. He purposely gave His life.

On Thursday, Space X, one of the companies founded by Elon Musk, launched the largest and most powerful rocket ever built. It stood just under 400 feet tall and had twice the thrust of the Saturn V rocket that took man to the moon. Thankfully, the rocket had neither cargo nor occupants because four minutes into its flight, it exploded. Space X announced that the rocket experienced “a rapid, unscheduled disassembly.” That is a euphemism I have never heard. If something undergoes a rapid, unscheduled disassembly, it means, it exploded.

I want you to know that Jesus' death was neither rapid nor unscheduled. We are told in Revelation that He was the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. That means Jesus' death was planned before man was created. God knew man would sin, and we would need a Savior. Jesus was born so He could die on our behalf.

In John 17, Jesus is praying to His Father. In less than 24 hours from that point, He would be dead, and He knew it. He prayed, “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do” (John 17:4).

Jesus' death was neither a blunder nor an accident. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter told the crowd which had gathered that Jesus was “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23).

What was the purpose of this plan? What was Jesus' death meant to accomplish? I said last week that I have a lot of favorite verses. Here is another one of my favorites. It is 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake, He (God) made Him (Jesus) to be sin, (why?) so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

That means that on the cross, Jesus took our sin. When we trust Him, He gives us His righteousness in return.

Some people pride themselves on finding and getting good deals. This is especially true of women. Early on, humans were hunter/gatherers. We still are. Women go out hunting for good deals. Then, they gather them up and bring them home in their SUV's or minivans.

When men buy a car or a truck, they go online and look for a good deal. If a man goes to the car lot, he talks with the salesman and haggles with him until he is convinced, he is getting a good deal.

The deal God offers is this: "You give Me your sin, and I will give you the righteousness of Jesus."

I dare you to find a better deal. If you took a high mileage jalopy to the dealership and you traded even up for a Cadillac Escalade, it would not be a better deal than this one.

If you traded your 1500 square foot house that needs a new roof for a brand new, 4000 square foot house with unbelievable amenities, it would not be a better deal than giving your sin to God and getting the righteousness of Jesus.

Jesus died for His sheep. He voluntarily gave Himself to those He has called to be His own.

My friend, Steve Haley, used to say, "When God called us sheep, He wasn't paying us any compliments." Honestly, sheep are stupid. They are wayward. They get into all kinds of trouble on their own. But Jesus, the Great Shepherd, loves His sheep, and He gave His life for us.

Jesus Gives to His Own Eternal Life

In John 10:22, the scene changes. Beginning in John 7, Jesus leaves Galilee and goes to Jerusalem for the latter half of the Feast of Tabernacles. Everything that occurs from chapter 7 through 10:21 happens during that visit. The Feast of Tabernacles was in October.

In John 10:22, Jesus returns to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. This took place in December. Where was Jesus between those two feasts? John doesn't tell us. Maybe, He went back to Galilee. Maybe, He went elsewhere. We don't know because we aren't told.

John does tell us that Jesus came back to Jerusalem in the winter. The winter was the rainy season which may explain why Jesus is walking in the colonnade of the temple. That was a covered area, a place you might want to be if it is raining.

Some of the Jewish leaders gather around Jesus. They are getting impatient. Look at John 10:24. They ask Him directly, "Are you the Christ?"

Let's look at His answer (25-28a). It is not surprising that these men did not understand Jesus when He spoke. They were not His sheep. He was not their Shepherd. Since that trust relationship did not exist, they did not recognize His voice. If, however, you are one of His sheep, you will hear His voice, and you will follow Him. Jesus says clearly, "I give them eternal life."

What does eternal life mean? Well, it means a life that does not end. It means more than that, but it does mean that; so, let's start there. Can you imagine a life that never ends? That is so far beyond our experience. All living things die. Pet's die. House plants die. People die. We will die one day. That is the way things are on this present earth. It has been this way since Adam and Eve. God's word says, "The wages of sin are death."

All have sinned, and all will one day receive what they have earned.

Since Jesus promised that He would give His sheep eternal life, that means there is a life beyond this life, a life which will not end. In Revelation 21 we read about a new heaven and a new earth. When Jesus returns, we will receive a resurrection body, a body that is fit for eternity.

While that has not yet happened, the Bible teaches that this eternal life is a present possession. I have eternal life. It is not something I will be given some day. I have it right now. This indicates that eternal life is more than just a life that never ends. The life God gives is a life of love and joy and peace, and I have those things right now. So do you if you are one of His sheep.

How do you know if you are one of His sheep? You know that if you have done what you need to do to receive eternal life. Earlier in John, Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

All that is required is that you believe in Jesus. That means that you turn from whatever you have been trusting in; you turn to Jesus and trust Him. You rely upon Him. You look to Him for guidance just as a sheep looks to his shepherd. If you have done that, you are one of His sheep, and He has given you eternal life—a life that never ends, and a life that is full of hope and joy and love and peace and meaning.

The Chronicles of Narnia are a seven-book series written by C.S. Lewis. The final book of the series is entitled, *The Last Battle*. Near the end of that book, the central characters lament that they must return to their homeland, a place they called the Shadow-Lands. Aslan, the lion who represents Jesus in the series says to them:

“You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be.”

Lucy said, “We’re so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often.”

“No fear of that,” said Aslan. “Have you not guessed?”

Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.

“There was a real railway accident,” said Aslan softly. “Your father and mother and all of you are—as you used to call it in the Shadow-Lands—dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream has ended; this is morning.”

And as he spoke, he no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

This is the kind of life that God gives to His sheep. It is a life that never ends, and it is most certainly, a life that is worth wanting and worth living.

Jesus Promised We Cannot Lose This Life

Look at the latter half of v. 28 and through v. 30. These verses teach what is called “eternal security” or “the security of the believer.” It is commonly referred to as, “once saved, always saved.” I like to call it “the perseverance of the saints.” But whatever you call it, it means that when God gives you a gift, He never takes it back, and you can’t lose it.

I have a knack for losing my keys. We have a bowl at the house where we are supposed to put our keys. When we leave the house, we pick up our keys and we go on our way. That is a great system, but it breaks down when we, let’s be honest, when I fail to put my keys in the bowl on the way into the house. The next morning, when I discover that my keys aren’t in the bowl, I have to look through the house, checking pants pockets, jacket pockets, the top of the dresser, etc. until I locate my keys.

You may have other things that you tend to lose? Your cell phone. Your purse. Your wallet. Your glasses. The worst is when you park in a large parking lot, and when you get out of the store or theater or mall, you can’t remember where you parked, and it is cold or raining, and you are going up and down the aisles trying to find your car. Not that that has ever happened to me, of course.

I am glad that I don’t have to keep my salvation. If it was up to me, I would most certainly lose it. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, William Hendriksen made the point that if you or I could tear ourselves loose from the power of God, He would be dethroned, and the comfort of the assurance of salvation would be lost.

The assurance of our salvation is doubly certain. No one can snatch us from the hand of Jesus (v. 28), and no one can snatch us from the hand of His Father (v.29).

I realize that this is a controversial doctrine. Not everyone sees it the way I have presented it; so, in a sense of fairness, let me say, “They can believe what they want to believe, and I will believe what the Bible teaches.”

I could take you to other Scriptures elsewhere in the Bible, but since we are here in John, look at John 6:37-40, 44, 47.

In 1956, five American missionaries died violent deaths in the jungles of Ecuador at the hands of those they were trying to reach with the gospel. Amazingly, the widow of one of those men and family members of the others went back, and reached that tribe with the gospel.

In 1998, *Christianity Today* carried an article about 34 anthropology students from two state universities in the state of Washington who traveled to the jungles of Ecuador. They thought they were going to see Stone Age natives. That is not what they saw.

Stephen Saint, the son of Nate Saint, one of those martyred missionaries served as an interpreter between those students and the Huaorani people. The students discovered that the Huaorani are kind, civilized, and very different from what they had been just one generation before then. One of the students asked, “What changed these people?”

Dawa, one of the older women, spoke up, and Steve translated for her. She said:

Badly, badly we lived back then. Now walking God’s trail which He has marked for us on paper (the Bible), we live well. All people will die, but if living you follow God’s trail, then dying will lead you to heaven. But only one trail leads there. All other trails lead to where God will never be after death.

Dawa proceeded to give an altar call of sorts. She said: “Have you heard me well? Which one of you wants to follow God’s trail, living well?”

The students watched in silence, and then, one of those students raised his hand. Dawa clapped her hands and said, “Now, I see you well. Leaving we will see each other again in God’s place some day!” She looked at the others who had not raised their hands. To them she warned, “Dying I will never see you again if you don’t follow God’s trail. Think well on what I have spoken so that dying we can live happily together in heaven.”

Those 34 anthropology students from Washington state who were educated and sophisticated traveled thousands of miles to hear a primitive person tell about the life-changing power of the gospel. They heard about how that by believing in God she and her people were changed from being a violent people into a peace-loving people. And those students were challenged to believe in the God those people had trusted.

With Dawa, I call upon you to follow God’s trail which begins by placing your trust in God’s Son. His trail is the trail and the only trail of life.