

1 Timothy 6:6-19, Luke 16:19-31  
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
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*“They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.”*

So what is the life that really is life? This phrase from Paul to Timothy has been stuck in me all week. The life that really is life.

Which of course means... there's also a life that looks like life but isn't.

And we know that life. The treadmill. The grind. The endless chasing of more more more. The curated image that looks perfect on the outside but feels hollow when the door closes at night. The work emails, the endless scrolling. And of course, we've all heard the countless stories of people interviewed towards the very end of their lives and never once has anyone said I wish I had spent more time in meetings. Yes that's a life. But it's not the life that really is life.

This morning, we get two scriptures in conversation. Paul's words to Timothy. And Jesus's parable of the rich man and Lazarus. One is encouragement. The other is warning. Paul says: Be rich in good works. Be generous. Be ready to share. Take hold of the life that really is life.

Jesus tells a story of a man who feasted every day but couldn't bother to notice Lazarus right at his gate. Two voices. One invitation.

Paul first. He says: We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. That's not cynicism, that's clarity. The temptation is always to think: just a little more. Just a little safer, a little richer, a little more secure. But Paul says that's a trap. A snare. A shadow. Instead, do good. Be rich in good works. Be generous. Ready to share.

That's what it means to take hold of the life that really is life. For Paul, real life is freedom. Real life is open hands, not clenched fists.

And then Jesus. He tells a story that could be ripped from our own headlines. One man clothed in purple and fine linen, eating well every day. Another man covered in sores, lying outside the gate, longing for crumbs. And the tragedy isn't just that one man is rich and one is poor. The tragedy is that the rich man never even saw Lazarus. He steps over him, walks past him, lives right beside him, but cannot be bothered to learn his name.

And that blindness, that chasm at the gate, becomes permanent in the next life.

So we put Paul and Jesus side by side. Paul says, be rich in good works. Jesus shows us the man who wasn't. Paul says, be generous, ready to share. Jesus shows us the man who

couldn't spare even crumbs. Paul says take hold of the life that really is life. Jesus shows us the man who clutched the life that isn't. Do you hear how they bounce light off each other?

Now let's talk about you and me and us. What does the life that is not really life look like today? It's the grind, the constant hustle. It's measuring your worth by your productivity. It's thinking more possessions will finally quiet the hunger inside. It's numbing yourself so you don't have to see the Lazarus at your own gate, the neighbor on the corner, the lonely elder in the retirement home, the immigrant family being ripped apart, the text from a hurting friend you keep ignoring. That's life. But it's not the life that really is life. So what is it, then? What is real life? It's not one thing. It's not just suffering. It's not just joy. It's not just fulfillment. It's all of it, held together by love. Real life is sitting in a hospital room with someone you love, holding hands, even when you can't fix a thing. It's joy that is shared around a crowded table, mismatched plates, candles dripping down, laughter spilling out. It's the freedom of giving something away—money, time, energy, and realizing you feel lighter, not poorer. It's losing yourself in worship, in song, in beauty, and tasting abundance. It's a queer kid being welcomed home, safe and celebrated. It's looking the cashier in the eye, calling them by name, and recognizing their dignity. That's the life that really is life. You know it when you touch it.

And here's the thing. Paul gives us the phrase. But Jesus gives us the content. The life that really is life is the entire teaching of Jesus. When he blesses the poor and the merciful. When he says life doesn't consist in possessions. When he teaches us to pray, thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven. When he heals the broken and forgives sinners. When he says, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. When he lays down his life on the cross. When he steps out of the tomb, glorious and free. That's the life that really is life. People in recovery from addictions know what I'm talking about. People who are finally free to live into their sexual and gender identities know what I'm talking about. People who have unshackled the chains of their own self-imposed prisons know what I'm talking about. And it's never too soon and it's never too late. My friend, let's call her Marta, got sober from alcohol addiction at 77 years old, after 6 decades of alcoholic drinking. She had ripped across the lives of her family and friends like a tornado. When she finally got sick and tired of being sick and tired, she became, in her 8<sup>th</sup> decade of life, the person that God always intended her to be. The peace and serenity that exuded from Marta was almost Saintly. When someone asked her why it took so long for her to get sober, she took a slow, measured breath and said, "Baby, I got here as fast as I could." This is the life that really is life.

Jesus says: Those who lose their life for my sake will find it.  
This is the life that really is life.

Jesus says: One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

This is the life that really is life.

Jesus says: Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself.

This is the life that really is life.

Jesus welcomes children. Eats with sinners. Touches lepers. Blesses the poor. This is the life that really is life.

Jesus says: I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

This is the life that really is life.

Jesus says: I am the resurrection and the life.

This is the life that really is life.

Jesus carries the cross. Pours himself out. Still forgives.

This is the life that really is life.

And on the third day, Jesus steps out of the tomb. Radiant. Free.

This is the life that really is life.

So here's the invitation. Take hold of it. Don't let it slip past you. Don't settle for the counterfeit.

Don't miss Lazarus at your gate.

Don't waste your days clutching shadows. Take hold of the life that really is life, the life of generosity, the life of seeing, the life of sharing, the life of loving, the life of following Jesus. Take hold of it. Live into it. And let it take hold of you. Right here right now. Take hold of the life that really is life. AMEN