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John 8

My new testament professor Rikk Watts was one of my all time favorite and most influential teachers. He wouldn't just teach a class, the words would burst from his mouth, knowledge and passion would just spill out of him. When he talked about who God was and in his words "What He was on about" he would tear up. In his thick accent Rikk would say, "God is on about life". He was Australian clearly.

Today, we are going to be talking about life, because this is what God is "on" about.

Before the creation of our natural world, there was life. God is and always has been alive.

When we think about life, what images come to mind?

Green leaves, sun beams, waves crashing, cells dividing, the hand that you are holding, children bouncing around, the flight of a bird, the laughter of your friends, a tender word, a soft touch.

Life or the feeling of being alive is what we long for, it's what we chase. It is what we grieve most when it is lost.

Life, in the fullest sense, is what God wants to give us.

We have a large section of scripture that we are looking at today. But we are going to focus on what Jesus says first that he "is the light of the world..." .

Because what does light do?

See.

It does a lot of things—but primarily, it helps us see.

By definition light reveals, energizes and guides: it's the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible and it is an energy that radiates and ignites.

In this case, Jesus is revealing or helping us to see the nature of LIFE.

It's a perception thing. Think of the movie the matrix. As you look at the scripture today he's basically just saying, you can't see me for who I really am, which means you haven't seen my Father for who he really is and you therefore can't go where I am going to because we live in reality and you don't.

If we do not see life for what it really is, we will miss it entirely.

Jesus is teaching us about the nature of reality by showing us what it really is. He wants to change the way we see life.

In our short sightedness, we Christians often make the mistake of thinking that the point of life is about an event in our future, our salvation. “Going to heaven when we die”.

But God came to earth, to change our vision for what salvation actually is — Salvation isn’t an event, it is a way of living. It is life *WITH* God.

Good, abundant, life is for us now — not just in the future.

Deut. 30:19-20a This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live **20** and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life...

We have a perception problem. We perceive this world and the things in it as life-giving.

This is why we need light.

We try to get life and meaning from our kids, our jobs, entertainment, stuff, politics, wealth, status, clothes, our looks, sexuality.

And that is not good.

But the great part about God is that he cares SO much about us that he came to earth to set the story straight —so that we could touch, hear and see HIM face to face in order to know for certain where life really comes from— that HE is the only way we can get in on life — forever.

Before we jump in — what IS life? How do we define it?

Bios is the greek term for physical life.

And the oxford dictionary defines that kind of life as having “the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity and continual change preceding death”.

Our scripture today is using the word zoe — which is a more holistic understanding of life, it includes the spiritual breath of life as something imparted, abundant and forever.

The real thing Jesus is getting at in today’s scripture is that He is the way to forever life or eternal living.

So, how do we begin to live eternally now?

Jesus is going to show us.

Light is revealing.

God gives us a story to follow and it reveals who He is, who we are in relationship to Him and where to go from there.

We are told that we are created, that we need someone else to give us life — because we don't have that kind of power within ourselves. So we need to get life from someone and somewhere else.

And, God reveals Himself as that someone else — “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of *life*.”

Light is also energy.

God reveals himself as the source of life and in our story he paints a very clear picture of what life looks like with Him. Life *WITH* Him is paradise, it is a garden — without strain, or toil where He is the primary sustainer. This is what the good life looks like, with Him as King in His Kingdom. Where we don't have to worry about a thing. All is well, life is as it should be.

I think we really need to sit with this for a while and consider what God is saying about Himself. How good He really is and he showed us that when he was here — examine Jesus' life. Food was provided, healing was provided, safety provided, everything was provided — even money for taxes was taken care of.

God is the one providing the energy that brings us to life.

But our story tells us, that we didn't want to live in that place.

My STORY is probably similar to yours.

I don't wholeheartedly believe the story.

Which created an identity crisis in me.

Because our self-perception is directly linked to who we perceive God to be.

If we aren't clear about who He is — we will not be clear about who we are and we seek meaning, worth, and purpose in life elsewhere

We live in a time when we are told to define ourselves and it is a burden too heavy for anyone to bear.

For me, I wanted approval. I was an overweight kid with a low self-esteem so I developed an eating disorder to get what I wanted. The more approval and attention I got, the “better” life was.

You might do this with your appearance too, or jobs, or kids, or stuff.

I was lost in life.

I did not have an accurate vision of God and therefore one for myself or my life.

Dallas Willard says that one of the biggest “misses” of the modern gospel is thinking that “being lost” has to do with not knowing where you are going.

But he says being lost has to do with not knowing where you are.

A map is useless if we don’t know where we are on it — even if you know where you are going. If we don’t know where we are, we are lost.

Jesus is the light in our story — he reveals himself, exposes where we are in relationship to him and guides us the rest of the way through it.

Jesus came preaching, “think again”. “Repent” — “change the way you think about life” and where you are finding it.

The “ultimate life” in today’s terms revolves around tending to our own gardens, and establishing our own kingdoms. Our jobs, our schools, our kids, our homes.

But the example of a good life in our story, is radically different.

It’s one where rather than establishing our own kingdoms, our own good fortunes, our own names — it’s all about losing our kingdoms so that we can get caught up in His.

There is a man named Charles Mully. He was born in 1949, the youngest of 10 children of an alcoholic father and an abused mother in a remote area of Kenya. At the age of six, Mully awoke one morning to discover that the rest of his family had deserted him in the middle of the night. He survived by begging. As a teenager, he was determined to find a way to improve his life. He walked 44 miles to Nairobi, where he continued to knock on doors, begging for food. He eventually found a family that was willing to take him in and feed him in return for washing dishes, scrubbing floors, doing the laundry, and other chores and he diligently saved his wages. His hard work continued to pay off

when the master of the house offered him a job at his agricultural company. At about the same time, a friend invited him to an evangelistic service that changed his life forever. He rose through the ranks into various management positions in the company. He eventually purchased a vehicle and established his own venture, Mullyways. He bused Kenyans between the capital and outlying villages. As his business grew, he added more vehicles until he had an entire fleet. Mully continued to diversify his entrepreneurial endeavors into areas that included oil and gas distribution, insurance, and real estate. Charles was a multimillionaire. Years later during a business trip, some kids on the street asked for some money to protect his car. He refused. He returned from his appointment to discover that his car had been stolen.

Mully wrestled with what had happened to him. It wasn't about the loss of his car. It was about why he had refused to give the kids any money. He felt the Lord telling him,

You will never let my children suffer. You have to rescue them and become the father to the fatherless.

He began selling his possessions and going out into the streets and bringing abandoned children back to his home to live with him and his family. Six years later he and his family were caring for over 300 children.. Today, his foundation cares for over 3,500 formerly abandoned children in Kenya.

This is a man who forfeited living his own kingdom for the sake of a better one.

He caught God's vision for abundant life.

Salvation is not just a future event, but a way of life that we are being invited to right now.

The part we play in this story is to believe it -- and then live as if we believe it.

We have the vision — life *with* God, where he is our primary sustainer, our source of life.

We have the means — that is this church, your pastor, your brothers and sisters, the disciplines of prayer, study, fasting, memorization, celebrating, so on and so forth.

But we need the intention — we need to believe the story and when we hear the words "follow me" actually intend to do it.

Everything in the bible that pertains to living with God is available to us. All that life.

Every time it talks about being humble, generous, loving, kind, joyful — even in the midst of pain and suffering. That kind of abundant life, is all for us. Right now.

If you didn't get that job you wanted, we can still say God is good — because we believe that He is the provider in our story. If we are struggling with anger we can walk out of it because we have confidence that God is the healer of pain in our story. We can walk away from greed, we can step out of our lust — because we believe God when He says he can change our minds — the way we think, what we love and therefore how we live — if we are willing to walk away from our kingdoms for the sake of His.

We say no to our way of thinking and embrace God's vision of what truly gives life.

So God, light us up.

Let's wake up tomorrow praying, "Not my kingdom but Yours. Give me confidence in You and your kingdom. May I live WITH you in your kingdom and then choose to actually do it.

Please pray with me: "God we forfeit life in our kingdoms in order to live in yours. Please forgive us for playing God and believing we are the way to live, and allow us to receive your life. We decide to start living with you today, right now. Send us your spirit to help us actually do it."

If you want to start living with God now, to forfeit your kingdom and receive His new life today and forever, I will be here to pray up front and maybe some other folks too.

Hear the words of Jude:

1:24 Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy, **25** to the only God, our Savior, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, Amen.