

As I look out at you this morning, I see the courageous, I see the dedicated, I see the committed and I see the faithful. For as Christians, we have made the choice to follow God's way, the way that embraces true life. This way of living is not easy. In fact, it is something that I know I fail at day after day, which is why I'm a practicing Christian, emphasis on practicing. Living as a Christian is downright hard because it requires our whole being.

We committed to this way of life when we were baptized. Now most of us were baptized as infants, so we must have had good parents and Godparents who modeled our faith for us. Some of us went on to be confirmed and took on the baptismal vows as our own. Look at the baptismal promises on page 302. We renounce three things: we renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness, we renounce the evil powers of this world, and we renounce all sinful desires. Not that we don't have sinful desires, but we try to stay on top of them and recognize them when they occur. Then we make three promises: to accept Christ as our Savior, to put our whole trust in his grace and love, and to follow and obey him as our Lord. These are significant promises - and they are hard to keep, which is why we make them in public because we need the help of

our community to keep them. Keeping these promises also requires our mind, heart, soul and body acting together, in concert, using every fiber of our being to embrace “real life” as Paul says to Timothy.

So what are some tools to do that? Let’s see what I have in this grocery bag. Well down here at the bottom, there are sneakers or running shoes, there are running shorts, there are breathable foot socks, and a sweat wicking shirt. These are my running clothes! I bring these clothes in the show that we need the the perseverance, dedication and skills of an athlete as we live into the Christian life.

I need these clothes to be as physically fit as possible - obviously I need a little work in this area. Living as a Christian, I must take care of the body I have been given for it is the only thing I had when I was born and it will be the only thing I have when I die. Committing myself to Christian service may mean I have to be able to lift 40 pounds, just ask Jess Davis how many pounds he hauls around in the Food Pantry! The Food Pantry is a life line to our neighbors, out of our abundance and that of our pantry partners, we meet their need.

It takes more than just my body however, to grab onto the truthful life, I need to pour my intellect and my heart and soul into it. Look at my

shirt - what does it say on the front? LIFE IS GOOD! The life God has given us, the eternal life that Jesus Christ has introduced into the world is indeed good. And Paul counsels us to be content with what we have. Our minds and our hearts have to be content with what we have so that we can guide our bodies in the right way - a way that is life affirming rather than life diminishing.

Being content with what we have is difficult when we live in a culture that depends on us buying more and more stuff. It leads to buying more than we need, it can lead to debt, it can lead to feeling trapped. This is not the real life God envisions for us. Further, obtaining more than we need has all kinds of unintended consequences.

In our society, we can't get by without a computer. It's time to buy a new one. Are you thinking of getting an Apple product? Do you do so because they seem to have good employment practices and they are a socially progressive company? Do you do so because its easy to use? Are you concerned that the laptops are produced in China where workers are exploited? Or that it uses a particular component that is very limited in quantity but has toxic qualities when used? And if you don't buy a computer made in China, does that adversely affect the workers such that they don't

eat. Working through these questions is hard. Yet these are the questions that we modern day Christians need to address if we are serious about living into the “real” life Paul is talking about.

We also address these questions and questions like it because Jesus is concerned that those of us who have been given much are blind and oblivious. We just don't see how what we use or how we use it affects those around us. So, according to Luke, we have Moses and the prophets, we even have a man who is risen from the dead. One tool then in my grocery bag is a Bible. Do we read it? Do we wonder about it, talk about it, and wrestle with it? Does it open our eyes to make us really see? Do we understand that eternal life is already happening? We don't have to wait for it until we are dead? And that we participate in eternal life in the here and now?

Eternal life, “real” life turns our world order on its head. “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,” says Mary, God has scattered the proud, cast down the mighty from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty handed. In the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus says “Blessed are the poor, blessed are the hungry, blessed are those who weep.” Jesus continues “woe to you who

are rich, who are full now, and who laugh now.” Why? Because the rich of his time and perhaps even ours are concerned only with themselves, their wealth is for their benefit and theirs alone. They have no regard for how the use of their wealth may exploit others or take resources away from others. They have had their reward. They have no need of God’s mercy and grace because they chose not to emulate the way that God would have us live.

In today’s Gospel, the parable is the most explicit about what the Kingdom of God is like. Let me be clear, the poor are not especially worthy because they poor. It is God’s way that God’s justice and mercy is extended to them, because they have no experience with justice or mercy from their fellow human beings.

Jesus does not have a problem with those who have monetary resources; his counsel, however, is don’t elevate money to the status of God, don’t love money for its own sake. Use what you need, and out of the excess care for the widow, the orphan, the poor, the dispossessed, regardless of whether they are blameless or worthy.

Later on in Luke, we will hear Jesus say that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to attain the Kingdom of

Heaven. So, its hard to share. Its hard to live the life of a Christian. It really does take single-minded dedication. We need a passion for our Lord in our heart, we need each other as a community to help feed our soul in worship, we need each other to identify our blind spots. Passion, commitment, perservance and God's help to use all of our being- that is needed for us as the people of the Way. We'll practice together.

AMEN.