

"The Life Well Lived"

Text: John 10:22-30

May the God who gave his own Son to pay our sin debt also now grant to each of us a love and dedication toward those things that are truly worthwhile. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

The English language, both spoken and written, is never static. It is always moving, shifting, fluctuating. Think lava lamp. Nothing is ever really added or subtracted (there are, after all, only 26 letters to work with) but those letters are continually being assembled and used in different ways. The latest Oxford Dictionary lists over 47,000 words as obsolete, and about 1100 new words or usages are added each year. Nor is this a new, tech-based phenomenon. Although 20 years ago no one talked about "googling" something or "texting," William Shakespeare is credited with creating 422 completely new and different words that are still in use today – common words like admirable, accessible, bedroom, buzzer, cheap, disgraceful, disgusting, employer, farmhouse, football, generous, homely, howl, lonely, motionless, obscene, pious, resolve, and over 400 others that simply didn't exist until Shakespeare made them up. It makes sense, in a way, that our language will always change, since human thought and societal trends are constantly shifting.

You know this instinctively, because you've heard new words like "woke" and "selfie," and you get how they represent changes in our society. You may have also noticed that the language of death also tends to shift over time. In our circles, no one seems to talk about a "funeral" anymore; it's always a "victory service." And no one wants to say "died." The "loved one" has always now "passed away." Along these general lines, one rather new phrase that has suddenly gained traction is the "celebration of *a life well lived*." You usually hear it at funerals (I mean, "victory services") in an effort to comfort the survivors. We all get the sentiment. Everyone understands that life on earth is a finite quantity, so the best the godless can hope for is to comfort themselves with the idea that the "dearly departed" packed as much as humanly possible into the time they had. That, to the world, is what makes a life "successful." (Another word that Shakespeare made up, by the way.)

I'm not sure how the world quantifies "a life well lived." What must a life include to qualify for that classification? My sense is that they just take

pretty much any old life and apply the label "well lived." But what about us, Christians? What about you? Would you label your life as "well lived" if the Lord were to call you home today? What would be important for you to add, if you could?

This is the general question we seek to answer on this Confirmation Sunday: What, for the child of God, constitutes a life well lived? The text that will form the basis for our study is found recorded in the Gospel of John, the Tenth Chapter:

ESV **John 10:22-30** *At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."*

This is the Word of God. That our God would through the study of these words spiritually strengthen us for the work, the life, that lies ahead, so we pray: **"Sanctify us by the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

It would be interesting to hear who, if anyone, would pop into your mind when you think about a "life well lived." Do you know someone who has almost literally done it all, who has pretty much crossed everything off a swimming pool-sized bucket list? Maybe someone like our current President? He's one of the richest men in the world, even after having gained and lost multiple fortunes. By all accounts he's happily married, has five children and ten grandchildren, with another on the way. He hosted, and owned, the Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants, starred in his own television show, has a star on the walk of fame, hobnobs with the elite, has travelled the world, lives in a mansion, and has been elected President of the United States twice. Oh, and he's been shot. Obviously many don't care for the man, but would his qualify, at least by the world's standards, as a life well lived?

Broader question: *Are wealth, fame, and power the ingredients that combine to make a successful life – a life well lived?* Is that what we want for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, or for our Confirmand this morning? It's actually rather shocking just how many parents want *exactly that*. What is it that God's children want? A better question: What is it that God wants for his children?

Everything changes *dramatically* when we reverse the direction arrow, doesn't it. The world's focus is always on self. What's in it for me? What can I get out of this life? How do Christians go about reversing that natural tendency? It starts with the recognition that there has really only been one life that has truly been well lived. Curiously enough, the world categorizes that life as an abject failure.

Consider the facts as the godless know them. As far as anyone knows, Jesus lived his entire life within a 50-mile radius of Jerusalem, and he lived that life in what we today would label abject poverty. His associates were the outcasts of society. He never published anything, had no formal education, and his career lasted only three years before he was condemned to death and executed on a Roman cross at age 33. He died with only the clothes on his back and abandoned by his entire inner circle of followers.

And yet how do you explain that, still today, all of recorded time is reckoned according to this man.

No one would deny that Jesus was a "man of God." The Gospels (including our text) certainly portray him as a man singly dedicated to "religious pursuits." No Christian would ever deny that Jesus' earthly walk represented a life well lived. Not only did he have no sin of his own, he alone was able to offer the necessary payment for our sins. Human beings, once they have sinned, have no currency to offer the Righteous Judge as any sort of sin payment. Nothing we could ever do could undo the damage of our transgressions. We were and are lost apart from the work of Jesus as our substitute. Had he not lived the life he did, we could have no life at all. Certainly then, from our perspective, his was the very best life ever lived.

But what about from Jesus' perspective? His was a life of untold suffering that benefited always and only others, never himself. The godless have a question they ask when someone dies: *"Did the one who has 'passed' get at least most of what they wanted out of life?"* Amazingly enough, Jesus' answer would be yes, because his life wasn't

about himself; it was about everyone *but* himself. He *got* what he wanted out of life because he gave what he did.

We are not surprised when we read in our text that Jesus was found walking in the temple in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication. That is, after all, a fitting place for a "man of God" like Jesus. Yet it's important to know how are we supposed to *react* to our Lord's dedication. There is always a temptation to imagine that since Jesus was so dedicated, we don't have to be. Since Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves, therefore we are now free to be about our own business, rather than our Father's.

Jesus himself provided the full and complete payment for sins and thereby reconciled sinners to God. Only he could do that. Yet that payment is of no benefit to the individual who never hears about it. That's where we come in. Sharing the gospel is not Jesus' work, it is ours. And "ours" does not mean "others." It's yours and mine. Our confirmation students aren't trained in God's Word only for themselves. They are trained for lives of service to their Savior and to others. Jesus entrusted Christians with more than just the *possession* of the message of the gospel. He left us with the *proclamation* or *dissemination* of that message. It is left to us as Christians to communicate to the world exactly what Jesus has done also for them. This is the focus, the goal, the burden that should be felt by every single Christian every single day. The Holy Spirit has chosen not to work faith directly from heaven. He works through the Word that Christians have been commissioned to share. Since our Savior has given us the sharing of his good news as our life's work, doesn't it stand to reason that that would be the key component in the Christian's definition of *a life well lived*?

The actual converting of souls, by the way, is not part of our job description. We are called to share what we know. Only the Holy Spirit, working through the Word that we share, has the power to convert. Our text proves that. Jesus was the master communicator, yet the Jew refused even Jesus' unique message, which included miracles. Every single miracle delivered a clear message to all who saw or heard of them. That's also why, when his enemies demanded that he tell them if he was the Messiah, Jesus said what he did in our text: ***"I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock."*** You and I aren't going to perform miracles, but we have our lives, which speak volumes. A life well lived will certainly include both words and

actions. Everything that Jesus did was part of his singular goal, which was to provide for mankind a perfect Savior.

What then, again, would constitute a *life well lived* for you and me? If it's not earthly wealth, power, and popularity, what exactly is it that will leave us with no regrets when God calls our time of grace on this earth to an end? One thing is certain. It can't be all about earthly things. Those things all end here, on this earth, and there is a whole eternity after this life. That means, in part, that every life that ends with saving faith in the human heart is a *good* life. No matter what you and I have or don't have in this life, no matter what we achieved or didn't achieve, no matter what we experienced or didn't experience, to die in Christ constitutes a good life – because eternity with our God will surely follow.

That's a *good* life, but is it a *life well lived*? It would be enough for *us*, but what about everyone else? The *life well lived* can't be just about us and our own salvation, because in his Great Commission Jesus taught us to be concerned also about others - about "all nations" in fact. The *life well lived* then includes the sharing of the message by which we ourselves have been brought from death to life. It has as its primary purpose the sharing of the simple truths about Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who has already paid for the sum total of the world's sin. The *life well lived* means participating in the awesome process by which human souls are rescued. It means sharing the gospel, by which others are enabled to hear these words of their Savior with the same comfort and joy that they also now provide us: ***"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."***

Let this truth fill you, direct you, comfort and encourage you. Recognize then that a good life is one where we die in the Christian faith, and that a *life well lived* is one where you participate, in whatever small way, in the rescue of even one other human being. In the end, absolutely nothing else will matter. Amen.

ESV **Acts 20:17-32** Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ ¶ And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

ESV **Revelation 7:9-17** After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." ¹³ ¶ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

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Confirmation Sunday – May 11, 2025

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 422 (Blue Hymnal)

"The Lord's My Shepherd"

The Order of Service –Page 31ff. (Blue Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Acts 20:17-32) God in his Word not only refers to his children as sheep but warns of the wolves that will continue to threaten us. Paul here warns us that sheep should expect to be attacked by these "**fierce wolves**" that seek our eternal destruction. The remedy or defense is to continue to teach and hold to the "**whole counsel**" of God's Word.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 78 (Blue Hymnal Page 83)

The Second Lesson: (Revelation 7:9-17) What great benefits are ours when we use the Book of Revelation as that for which it was intended - a book of comfort for God's New Testament Church. Our second reading gives us a profoundly comforting picture of the Last Day. How perfect and exciting will be that day for those that are God's. God preserve us in the faith that he himself has created in our hearts.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed (Projected on Screens)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 164 (Blue Hymnal)

"The God of Abraham Praise"

The Sermon – Text: John 10:22-30 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"**The Life Well Lived**"

The Offertory – (Project on Screens)

The Confirmation Hymn – 631 (Blue Hymnal)

"Our Lord and God, Oh, Bless This Day"

The Confirmation of Wyatt Fettig

Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 211 (Blue Hymnal)

"Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Blue Hymnal page 38)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Blue Hymnal page 41)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 547 (Blue Hymnal)

"It Is Well With My Soul"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (30) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Communion
	-11:30 a.m.	– Fellowship Meal
Wednesday	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Wayne Eichstadt has returned the call to Messiah of Eau Claire, WI. Pastor Frank Gantt has returned the call to St. Stephen of Mountain View, CA. Faith Lutheran of Manchester, MO has called Pastor Aaron Ude.

Confirmation Sunday – Today's service has been designated as our annual Confirmation Sunday. This year's Confirmand is Wyatt Fettig. Yet it is fitting that all here this morning use this opportunity to renew our own personal commitment to our Savior-God and to rededicate our lives to his service. All are also encouraged to remain for the fellowship meal following the service this morning.

Mother's Day Flowers – A member of St Paul has again provided flowers for all of the moms in attendance this morning. Both members and guests are invited to take a flower home with you after the service this morning. Moms also be aware that if your husbands did not buy flowers for you, it is very likely only because they knew flowers would be provided at church.