

John 5:9–13
John 17:6–19

To Life!

What gives you life? Or maybe put another way, what is life-giving to you? I would hazard to guess that many of you would respond with grandchildren! But going beyond that and to touch on many age groups, some might respond with being creative, writing music or poetry, painting, weaving, woodworking, knitting, dancing, baking or cooking, all can give us a sense of something that is more than just us. When we create it feels like an extension of ourselves. Really not a wonder as we are created in God's image. We are ourselves created by our loving Creator. So being creative, making, building, imagining can all be life-giving activities, part of being human.

Some people truly have life-giving work, this can be those in the medical professions, those who teach and bring understanding and meaning to our world, or really anything that builds a better world in terms of the well-being of others.

It is natural that people look for life in all kinds of places, circumstances, and even look for life in other people. The hope is that looking for life in that way is done so that it brings joy to our lives. It may be through work, social activities, or relationships, and looking for life or ways to appreciate and enjoy life in this way is truly a gift.

However, at times we lose our way and end up looking in all the wrong places for things that we think will make us feel alive. It may be that one turns to alcohol or drugs, sex, gambling, and addictions of many and varied sorts. Some may find themselves in toxic relationships that denigrate the well-being and value of one or another. And seeking help to find one's way out of that behavior or lifestyle takes courage, much courage. If you see yourself in any of what was just shared, please seek out help, you are worth it.

Thing is, we are all worth it. The whole of the reading from John 17:6–19 is a beautiful prayer of Jesus seeking protection and hope for God's people. The prayer was spoken in regard to Jesus disciples, but we continue to be disciples of Jesus and more broadly speaking all may claim these words even as they come to know and love Jesus.

Jesus was a real-life person who lived, died, and rose again, ascending into heaven to return to the Father, sending the Holy Spirit to guide and nurture each of us in our understanding and responding to all that God has done through Jesus in our lives. Our response is to love and be loved. To love God and to love others. To love God and be loved by God.

And this is where we come back to the words from 1 John in chapter 5. Here the writer speaks of testimony. God's testimony of God's love for us is shown in Jesus. The gift of

God is the ability to believe in Jesus and in the belief that we are given eternal life through believing in Jesus. In this scripture, and really all of scripture, eternal life is not only about some great beyond, eternal life is about life right now, life that is abundant – abundant in hope, joy, love, and peace.

Now you might be saying, how in the world can that be possible given the situation in my home, my family, with my friends, and the mess the world is in? That is the thing about faith, belief in Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives...all around us may seem to be out of control, or at least out of whack, but God is steadfast. God's presence through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's love as demonstrated in Jesus, is something beyond the workings of this world and yet it is within our grasp. Using the words of Eugene Peterson in *The Message*, "Whoever believes in the Son of God inwardly confirms God's testimony...This is the testimony in essence: God gave us eternal life; the life is in his Son. So, whoever has the Son, has life; whoever rejects the Son, rejects life."

The life spoken of is an eternal and internal life, one that cannot be controlled by human circumstances. This is life that is internalized, trusting that the one who created you has a vested interest in your well-being. It is a parent child relationship of love, but one that is also a parent child relationship that is all grown up. A relationship that recognizes and realizes the complexity of living our human life, but is not restrained by the confines of bodies that age and decay or the frailty of human interaction, decisions, and consequences.

For the last few weeks we have spent time looking at portions of scripture that come from this writing of 1 John. Over and over again the emphasis has been on the commandment to love God and to love others. To love those who love God and to reach out to others and share in life-giving ways our love for God and for others.

This is how we show that we love God, and show that we trust God's testimony about Jesus, we love others. We find our peace in Christ. We find our hope in Christ. We find our example in Christ. We find our power in the love of God and then by looking for how God, through the Holy Spirit, is at work within us, in our church, in our homes, and in our communities.

We look for God and we find ways to participate in changing the world through the love that is outpoured into us and flows from us to every single person we encounter.

No one can give you concrete proof of God's love in Christ, yet the experience of God internalized into our whole being as we live out our lives trusting in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the love of God and belief in Jesus, can transform who you are, how you interpret the world around you, how you function in your relationships, and give you eternal life right now. This kind of life no one can take from you. It is a part of you because the life of Jesus is in you. You carry the life-giving seed of God within you.

Today may you go from this time of worship confident that God is with you, God is within you, and in love for God and love for all, you are transformed, filled with joy, hope, and peace in believing that Christ is in you. Go from this time of worship filled with God's love and go to love others in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.