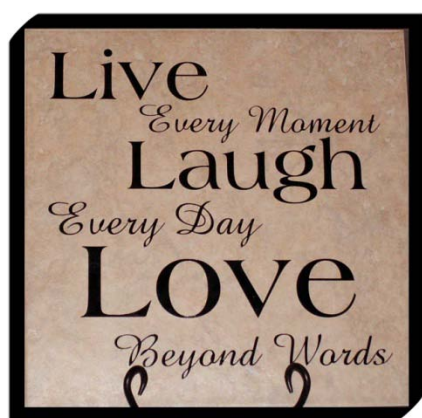


Osceola Sermon: Live Like Your Dying: Live, Laugh and Love
November 20th, 2011 Pastor Bob Vale
Single Unity Service with Thanksgiving Dinner following
A Day of Celebration: Unity Sunday

Biblical Focus: Jesus said in John 10:10b *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

I John 4:7-12 *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."*



I have seen this plaque hanging in shops and homes that I have visited. These phrases are important to us. As Nancy and I raised our children, as we taught them these truths of life as we walked each day stressing these principles to our children. However, there were days when we did not always live up to them.

Like the day my 5 year old locked the car keys in our vehicle and then closed the doors. Not much happy living going on that day.

Or the time our artistic 6 year old daughter Becca decided to use permanent markers to color the faces of her younger brothers. Not much laughter going on as Nancy scrubbed the faces of two young toddlers.

Or the time that our young teenage son decided to take the family vehicle out for a drive around town; before he had a drivers license and get into an accident. Not enough love to go around on that day.

As much as we tried to instill these qualities into the lives of our family, there were days when living every moment, laughing everyday and loving beyond words did not come so easily. However, most of the time there was plenty of living, laughing and loving to go around.

To Live; To Laugh; To Love- that's got to be what God wants most for all of us. That's got to be what will make a difference in the world. Jesus was fully human and perfect. Therefore we assume he was a man of all emotions; including laughter, loving, and living to the full.

Today I want to share with you three key points to living the abundant life in Christ.

1. Live Every Moment
2. Laugh Everyday
3. Love beyond words

Let's begin with Live Every Moment.

Jesus said in John 10:10b "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

What are the elements of living Every Moment?

1. A life of faith.
 2. A life of Purpose.
 3. A life of Service.
1. **A life of Faith:** Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

A Life of Faith

To live a life of faith is to see with your heart. It's to feel with your soul. To be guided by a hand that you cannot hold. It's to trust in a way that you cannot see. That's what faith must be.

About 8 years ago Nancy along with our children, took a vacation out west to see Yellowstone National Park. The sights we saw were amazing. We saw picturesque scenes of nature that took our breath away. The Old Faithful Water Geyser was magnificent. We witnessed amazing wild life such as elk, bears, moose and beautiful colored trout we caught while fishing. The entire place was eye-candy for the soul.

After spending a day at the park, we witnessed something more beautiful and more thought provoking than anything in nature. We saw two men in their forty's, who appeared to be the best of friends. Throughout their life, I would imagine they were rarely apart from each other.

You see, both men were disabled in unique ways. One man had three noticeable disabilities. He was blind. He was deaf and his speech was garbled. The other man only had two disabilities; he was deaf and because of his deafness, he could not speak; however he could see the world around him. These two disabled men were touring the Yellowstone Park all by themselves. It was amazing!

One might ask the question; how does a blind, deaf, mute communicate with a deaf mute?

What I witnessed next was a picture of one man giving his single gift of sight to his friend, so that he may see and experience the world around him. The man who was deaf but could see, used his gift of sight and knew sign language to communicate. However, his friend was blind and could not see his hands, read lips or hear a voice. Yet their communication to each other was as clear and understandable to each other, as anyone would speak to a friend.

The deaf man who had the gift of sight took the hand of the blind mute and began to use his own hand to motion sign language inside of the cupped hands of his blind & deaf friend. Word after word was signed into the other man's hand. It took a while to get messages across, but I could see expressions of understanding upon the blind, and deaf man's face as his friend described the world around him. At times there were smiles, raised eyebrows, deep breaths and unclear guttural sounds of joy. Our family watched in awe as these two men were on their own in the world with such limited abilities, yet communicating and enjoying life.

Then the blind, deaf mute took the hand of his friend, who could not speak or hear and responded back. He placed his hand into the cupped hand of his friend and shaped different hand signals of communication. He could not see his friend, he could not hear his friend and he could not speak to his friend. He could only feel his friend's hand and the motions inside to communicate. Yet that sense of feeling made all the difference.

Have you ever felt the hand of God working in your life? We cannot see God, we cannot touch God, we cannot hear the Lord speaking to us audibly, yet time and time again in my life, I have felt the hand of God in my life.

The gentle hand of God works within my meager limited spiritual abilities of faith, to communicate to me as I respond back to the Lord in faith. The best way I can explain it, is a feeling of presence, power and peace as God moves and directs my life through prayer, scripture reading, and listening to other Christians I trust and take advice from.

In the same way, as the one friend with the single gift of sight communicated to his friend who was a blind deaf mute, so also God communicates with us even though we cannot see the Lord, cannot audibly hear the Lord and cannot touch the Lord physically.

The closeness of these two dear friends uniquely touching hands to communicate also illustrates the need to be very close to God in our spiritual lives, if we want hear God's message and direction in our lives. To be distant from God is to perhaps miss His voice in our lives.

Yet by faith, our spirit inside our bodies hears the gentle whisper of God's voice and His hand moving in our lives. It takes practice and consistency of effort to become good at understanding the still small voice of God in my life. But a life of faith allows me to do so. **Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."** **A life of faith is a good life.**

2. **A life of purpose:** (What is your purpose? Are you enjoying the life God has given you, or is your purpose to make money, gather materialistic things in this world, to travel, to look good; to be successful, what is your purpose.)

Illustration: Hot Chocolate & Mugs: A group of college graduates, well established in their careers, were talking at a reunion and decided to go visit their old university professor, who was now retired. During their visit, the conversation turned to complaints about stress in their work, family responsibilities and everyday lives.

The professor offered his guests hot chocolate, went into the kitchen and returned with a large pot of hot chocolate and an assortment of cups & mugs - porcelain, glass, crystal, stoneware, plastic, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite. He told them to help themselves to the hot chocolate.

When they all had a cup of hot chocolate in hand, the professor said: "Notice that all the nice looking, expensive cups were taken, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. The cup that you're drinking from adds nothing to the quality of the hot chocolate. In most cases it is just more expensive and in some cases even hides what we drink. What all of you really wanted was hot chocolate, not the cup; but you consciously went for the best cups... And then you began eyeing each other's cups.

Now consider this: A joyful life is the hot chocolate; your job, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain a joyful life. The cup you have does not define, nor change the quality of your life. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the hot chocolate God has provided us.

God makes the hot chocolate, man chooses the cups. The happiest people don't have the best cups in life. They just make the best of everything that they have inside their cup. Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly. And enjoy your hot chocolate.

3. A Life of Service:

I Peter 4:10 **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”**

Rachel Remen once said, “Helping, fixing and serving others represent three different ways of seeing life. When you help others, you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. Fixing and helping may be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul.”

However, as a Christian, I see helping, fixing and serving as all works of God. When we help, fix and serve other in Jesus name, we become the hands and feet of God. (God with Skin On)

Thank you for serving to bring food in for the Christmas food baskets, thank you to those who fixed food for Hope Rescue Mission, Thank you for all that you do in the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

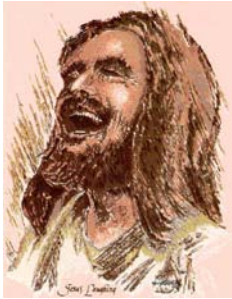
Laugh Everyday

Proverbs 17:22a: “A cheerful heart is good medicine.”

It's what Jesus does his whole life. He lives. He laughs. He loves. As I was preparing for this sermon, I began to look for a picture of Jesus I had seen in the past with Jesus laughing. I actually found a lot of pictures of Jesus in my Bible and around the church. Here are a few of the pictures of Jesus I took in.



No Laughing Jesus.
Jesus was not laughing when he gave the hand signal of love.
No laughing Jesus in the still black and white picture.
No laughing Jesus on the cross.
No laughing Jesus when he walked on water and pulled Peter up.
No laughing Jesus when he prayed at the garden of Gesemene
No laughing Jesus at the last supper.
No laughing Jesus when he ascended into heaven.
Was Jesus never happy?



Finally I found one picture of Jesus laughing that I have seen at different places.

All I could do was scratch my head and ponder. For that's one of the sad stories of Christianity! The Bible and The Church and our Christian traditions view Jesus as always serious and suffering in some way. Perhaps that is why he is called: The Man of Sorrows. We all seem to celebrate the suffering, sacrificial, Lamb, the innocent victim who gave his life as the greatest of all martyrs, the greatest of all saviors. Yes, all those qualities describe part of who Jesus was and part of what He did for all of us. And thankfully, what God still does for all of us. But the heaviness and the seriousness are only Part! They're never the whole, and perhaps not the Best!

The Bible does say that Jesus was perfect and in his perfection I have a sense that laughter must have been a large part of his life. I am sure he laughed with the children around him. I am sure he laughed when he fed the 5,000. I am sure he laughed when he told his disciples to cast their fishing nets on the other side of the boat; and when they did they caught so many fish their nets began to break. I am sure Jesus chuckled a bit when doubting Thomas touched his hands and side. I am sure Jesus laughed when he raised the friend whom he love back from death: Lazarus. There is no doubt in mind that he laughed constantly at his disciples and how they stumbled around to be good Jewish followers and did not seem to quite understand his message of peace, love and sacrifice.

The Bible does say that God laughs. In the Psalms it tells us about God's laughter. In the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes—we're told that certain things are appropriate at certain times. There's a time to plant, a time to reap, a time to build, a time to tear down; there's a time to dance, a time to sing, a time to laugh, a time to cry. Since God has, in his seasons, appointed appropriate times for laughter, and Jesus always did what was appropriate, it would seem to me that when it was time to laugh, he laughed.

Prov. 17:22a: "A cheerful heart is good medicine."

Doctors tell us that laughter is actually good for us physically.

Laughter is a powerful antidote to stress, pain, and conflict. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hopes, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert.

With so much power to heal and renew, the ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, enhancing your relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health.

Laughter is good for your health

- **Laughter relaxes the whole body.** A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.
- **Laughter boosts the immune system.** Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.
- **Laughter triggers the release of endorphins,** the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.
- **Laughter protects the heart.** Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Unfortunately, I have seen some Christians who just seem like they cannot laugh. Their lives seem to be full of seriousness. Have you seen these people before. They looked they've been sucking on a lemon.

I feel sorry for these Christians. Where is their rejoicing spirit? I know there are some here who have depression problems and it is my hope these individuals can seek medical help to bring back the zest of life.

Be a people of laughter!!!!

Love Beyond Words

John 15:3 Jesus said, **"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."**

Being deeply loved by someone gives you **strength**, while loving someone deeply gives you **courage**.

Jesus tells us as Christians to love our neighbor as ourselves.

A young high school girl named Hannah practiced for two weeks for the high school cheerleader tryouts. She had been a junior varsity cheerleader but wanted to move to the top squad. Only three varsity spots were available in a school of about two thousands students. And Hannah was nervous about competing against the other girls.

She asked her father for advice by saying, "Dad, do you think God wants me to make the varsity squad?" she asked.

"Practice as hard as you can," her father answered. "Do your best at the tryouts, and leave the results to God."

Her best friend, Melissa, who was already a varsity cheerleader, practiced with Hannah every day to help her make the varsity squad. They had talked about how fun it would be if they could cheer together. Melissa taught her the proper way to jump and encouraged her to keep a smile on her face. When Hannah became discouraged, Melissa always egged her on with, "You can do it, Hannah! I know you can!"

On the day of the tryouts over a hundred girls showed up to compete for the three spots. That afternoon each girl performed a routine in front of the judges. The results of the competition would be posted at 9:45 P.M. Although each contestant had high hopes of making the squad, all but three would go home heartbroken that evening.

Just before 10:00 P.M., Hannah came bursting in the front door of the house sobbing uncontrollably. Immediately Hannah's parents jumped out of their chairs and rushed over to comfort her for not making the cheerleading squad. Her mother patted her on the back and said, "It's OK that you didn't make varsity cheerleader. We still love you, and we're glad that you tried." Hannah continued to cry. She finally settled down and explained what happened.

As she began to talk to her parents through the tears she said, "Mom and Dad, I *did* make varsity. But my friend Melissa *didn't* make it! The judges demoted her to the junior varsity squad and gave me her place on the varsity. She's devastated. I hurt so badly for her!"

The family was stunned. Melissa had gone the extra mile to help Hannah make the varsity team so they could cheer together. No one expected this strange turn of events. With hands covering her face, Hannah continued to weep. "I don't want to be a varsity cheerleader now. I want my junior varsity position back, so Melissa can stay on varsity. Do you think the judges will let me swap places with her? I love her so much. Now she says she has nothing to live for."

"Hannah, I don't think the judges would allow that," said her mother. Hannah realized what she needed to do. She immediately got up, walked out the front door, and drove to Melissa's house. She wanted to comfort Melissa that night, so she slept on the floor next to her bed. Hannah knew the best thing she could do was to be near her friend during this difficult time.

The next few days Hannah helped her friend Melissa work through her devastation. Hannah told Melissa she wanted to ask the judges to trade places between the two of them, but her friend Melissa would have no part in it and begged her friend to keep the results the way they were. Melissa eventually put her disappointment behind her and excelled in other ways during her remaining years in high school.

Hannah continued to lead cheers at varsity football and basketball games for the next two years. But that's not her parents remember most about her cheerleading career. Their fondest memory was the night she slept on the floor beside a hurting friend.

When you swap places with others to feel how they hurt, you've taken the first step toward loving your neighbor as yourself.

Crossword Puzzle:

There was a man who was working on a crossword puzzle with coworkers and asked the question, "What is a four letter word for a strong emotional reaction toward a difficult person?" Someone standing nearby said, "The answer is hate." Another person interrupted and said, "No, the answer is love!"

As we walk through life we are all working that same crossword puzzle, but the way you answer is up to you.

"What is a four letter word for a strong emotional reaction toward a difficult person?" (Hate or Love)

In closing let me give you Ten rules for happier living:

1. Give something away (no strings attached)
2. Provide a kindness (and forget it)
3. Spend a few minutes with the aged (their experience is a priceless guidance.)
4. Look intently into the face of a baby (and marvel)
5. Laugh everyday (it's life's lubricant)
6. Give thanks (a thousand times a day is not enough)
7. Pray Daily (or you will lose the way)
8. Work (with vim and vigor)
9. Plan as though you'll live forever (because you will into eternity)
10. Live as though you'll die tomorrow (because you will on some tomorrow)

Sermon Notes: Pastor Bob Vale

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 - a. A life of faith.
 - b. A life of Purpose.
 - c. A life of Service.

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Doctors Recommend Laughter Because:
 - a. Laughter relaxes the whole body.
 - b. Laughter boosts the immune system.
 - c. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins,
 - d. Laughter protects the heart.

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