

Prayer of Preparation: *Lead Me, guide me, along the way. For if you lead me, I cannot stray. Lord, let me walk each day with Thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.*

Our gospel lesson today is very simple but has consequences on how we live. That’s the thing about the gospel; every lesson sounds simple until we realize we have to actually do what Jesus is teaching. Good news is only good news when we become a part of it.

Here’s what Jesus says to the disciples: **“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”** Sounds good, right. Jesus came that they may have life; not just life...abundant life.

The first question we must ask ourselves is, who are “they”? Some people will argue that “they” are the people who follow Jesus, the disciples then and now. I would argue that “they” are everyone. I would argue that Jesus came so that *everyone* can have abundant life. I would argue that there is no “abundant life” club where only a few people who have enough money can enter. No. I would argue and I believe that abundant life is for everyone.

In my mind, the next question becomes how do we get to the “abundant” part of life because that’s the hardest part. It’s not difficult to understand the difference between life and abundant life; a drive around Hagerstown demonstrates the difference. We see folks who have given up, folks who are struggling from day to day, and folks who are living a life we wish we had. Yet Jesus says that the reason he is here is that we have “abundant” life **and** to get to “abundant” we must listen.

Sounds easy right? Let me ask you a question. How many of you have said, “That child does not listen to a word I say?” Maybe the real question is how many of us have said it so often that we just stop saying anything because we know who will listen and who won’t.

When I taught elementary school, I taught what we call “active” listening. Active listening is what we do when we turn listening into: hearing, learning, and following. That’s what Jesus was teaching the disciples: they/we must hear Jesus’ voice, learn what Jesus is teaching us, and follow in Jesus’ path by doing the gospel because that’s when *everyone* has abundant life.

Jesus is calling us to shut out all the noise of the world and listen to his voice. This is not a simple call because it takes the **commitment** to shut out the noise of the news, it takes the **commitment** to shut out the noise of social media, it takes the **commitment** to shut out the noise of gossip, it takes the **commitment** to shut out the news of false prophets, and it takes the **commitment** to shut out the news of the powers that be so that we can **hear God**. It takes commitment to stop, to know, and hear God speaking to us through the teachings and ministry of Jesus. Siblings in Christ, we listen so that we can hear God speaking to us.

I want you to hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ with a fresh ear: **God is always speaking**. God is always speaking a word to us so that we may have life and have life **abundantly**. God is speaking to us about life that lifts us up when we are down. God is speaking to us about life that heals the hurting. God is speaking to us about life that helps when others turn away. God is speaking to us about life that calls us from where we are and transforms us to who God wants us to be. God is speaking to us about an abundant life found in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

God is speaking to us about the abundant life waiting for us when we follow Jesus. And it all begins when we listen to Gods word in church, in Sunday School, in Bible Study, in fellowship, in Ladies Tea, in scripture reading, and in daily devotion.

God is speaking to us, sharing a word about abundant life. May you ever be found...listening.

Response to the Word: *Lead Me, guide me, along the way. For if you lead me, I cannot stray. Lord, let me walk each day with Thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me.*