

Life Sunday 2027

John 10:10 "That They May Have Life"

Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans For Life

lutheransforlife.org

A sheep that has wandered from the fold and from the care and protection of the shepherd will never find rest. Such a sheep will be in constant danger, always looking over its shoulder wondering if, and when, the wolves are coming after it. The search for food and water and shelter will be never-ending. Every day it will be anxious and without peace. Such a life can hardly be called a life. It is, instead, a continual kind of death.

Only in the fold, under the watchful eye of the shepherd, does the sheep actually have life. Not just physical life, but true life. Because there in the fold, the sheep is cared for--given daily sustenance, sheltered from the world, protected from all who would destroy it. In the safety of the sheepfold, the sheep can sleep in peace, live daily in contentment, and experience true joys.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus is the door to that sheepfold. He is the One who gives life and gives it abundantly. Apart from Him, there is only death. For Christ alone is the way to the Father in heaven, who creates and sustains all things. Our Lord, Jesus, offered up His own life as an offering for the sins of the world. For we were all straying like sheep, separated and alienated from God and His loving care. But now, through the blood of Christ, we have been washed and forgiven and brought back to God, the Shepherd and overseer of our souls. And because we are now beloved by God and cared for by Him, we have all that we could need and more: daily bread, protection from the evil one, and freedom from judgment over our sins.

In Christ and in Christ alone we know peace and joy and hope and contentment. For in Christ we know that not even death will separate us from the love of God and that we shall dwell with Him and receive His blessings now and forevermore. That is life--abundant life.

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There are many who would try to convince you that you can find life apart from Christ. The devil, the world, and your own sinful nature will tell you that you will find joy in the things of this world, that living abundantly means having enough money to buy whatever makes you feel good, and that joy is found in the moments of fleeting pleasure you gain through things like sexual immorality or popularity. They are all thieves and robbers who do nothing but kill and destroy.

Such a life is no life at all. It is, as Solomon said, all "vanity and striving after the wind." In the end, we know that these things can't save us from death. That is why those who seek after these things are never content. Like a lost sheep, they are constantly angry and anxious, always on the hunt for more, and ever looking over their shoulder for those who would hurt them or get in their way.

We see this very thing played out every day all around us! This is why the world fights so hard to keep abortion legal and accessible and why assisted suicide is growing in popularity. If we strive for the abundant life according to the devil, the world, and our own flesh, we will naturally see our neighbors as obstacles to our own life. Raising children and caring for the sick and the dying is difficult. It requires time and effort and money. And the worldly, Satanic solution to that is to kill them. Ironical, isn't it, to think that we could find life through the death of others.

Such a twisted existence is not living. It is hell. I am reminded of a quote from St. Augustine, who said, "For you [O God] have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you" (*Confessions*, Book 1, chapter 1). We were created to live in and with God. Life apart from Him is a restless, endless void. And should a person live forever, apart

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from God, it would be an everlasting death, a continuous vacuum of misery and loneliness, which is exactly how Jesus describes hell.

And it is the very thing Jesus has come to deliver us from. As the door of the sheepfold and the Good Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus says that He has come that His sheep "may have life and have it abundantly." He "lays down His life and takes it up again" (John 10:17) so that we can truly live, in this world and the next. He wants us to live in Him, forgiven, loved, protected, and cared for, day after day without end, by our Heavenly Father. That is an abundant life, one filled with purpose and peace and rest and void of fear and anxiety.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, our Lord has called you and gathered you into His flock that you might have this life. It is a gift He gives freely, a gift which can only be received by faith. But He doesn't just call *you* to this life. He calls all those who have wandered from the fold. Every person whom He has fearfully and wonderfully made, from the very tiniest to the very oldest, is one to whom this call to live goes out. For God, in Christ, was Himself conceived in the way that all men are conceived, and He grew in Mary's womb and was born and lived and died and rose again so that all who are conceived and born and live and die might live and die and rise in Him and thus have true life.

We, who live in Christ, are given the privilege of sharing that call and inviting others to live this abundant life in Christ. For a Christian, that is what it really means to be pro-life. Yes, it absolutely means that we care about the physical lives of our neighbors. We take care of the poor, we feed the hungry, we shelter the homeless. We speak out against abortion and assisted suicide and war and violence of every kind. Considering all that Jesus has endured to grant life to His

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sheep, it would be absurd to think that these agents of death would be acceptable to Him and have a place in His fold.

But we can't stop there. Being for life means that we want all people to have true life, the life that Jesus died to give us. And that is not just a long or even endless physical life. It is abundant life in Christ, now and forever, which means that we care about their spiritual lives as much as their physical ones. It means that we preach the Gospel to them all, the poor and destitute, the addicts and the homeless, the corrupt politicians, the mothers and fathers considering abortion or who've had abortions, the supporters of abortion and euthanasia. We do it not just because we want to put an end to abortion or change the laws on assisted suicide, but because we want them all to know Christ's forgiveness, to find real joy, to have life and have it abundantly with us as Jesus' sheep in His fold forevermore.

May God grant us His grace to listen to the voice of our Shepherd, that we might have life in Him and invite others to do the same. To Him, who gives abundant life to us and to all His sheep, be thanks and praise, glory and honor, with the Father and the Spirit, now and forever. Amen.