

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message. Sunday May 2, 2021. "Thrive: Flourish"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're deep into 2021 and thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We have opened our children's and youth area also and are seeing a good response. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Sunday.

We began a brand new series Sunday to help us design a life that God created us to live, and in addition gives us the greatest sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment that we would ever want. We're calling this series "***Thrive***". And it's simply living the abundant life that Jesus talked about. Before we begin, let's just give the premise of the abundant life some thought.

What does 'thriving/flourishing' mean to you? What would it look like in your life?

The challenge issued for this series is; **if you want to live a life of thriving and flourishing, are you orienting, aligning, your life in a way that would bring about a thriving life?**

Kal began with a look at what thriving isn't. He began with a somewhat familiar word, 'languishing', which is what many of us are experiencing after over a year of having to deal with COVID. Languishing is described as the 'middle child' between depression and flourishing and is just a; "*joyless, aimless sense of stagnation and emptiness. Motivation is dulled and attention is fragmented*". I'm sure many of you can identify with the feeling of languishing. So, in order to thrive we have to move away from this feeling of languishing and craft a life that leads us to thrive.

So, what would not languishing look like for you?

The scripture was only one verse, **John 10:10**, but it was read out of five different translations. Just to get a broader understanding of what we in the church world understand as "*the abundant life*". Read that one verse out of as many translations as you can, and then we'll talk about the specifics.

What jumped out to you about that verse and thriving?

What did you notice in other translations about what the life of thriving/flourishing means?

We came up with a scriptural understanding of thriving; **life to the fullest, rich and satisfying life, better than you ever dreamed of, in abundance, or more abundantly. The peak of well-being.** And from this understanding we had to ask ourselves a few questions.

Why do we often not feel like we're thriving/flourishing?

Was Jesus wrong about the abundant life? Have we interpreted the abundant life incorrectly?

What does it take to live a fuller, richer, more satisfying, abundantly thriving life?

There were three things pulled from this passage to help give it some context, and then three specific steps we could take to BEGIN that process of orienting or aligning our life so we can thrive.

1. Based on the context of this passage, the *'thief'* who steals, kills, and destroys most likely isn't satan, (this gets interpreted a lot this way). But rather Jesus condemned the Pharisees for using shame, fear, and division to steal our ability to live the abundant life. So thieves are things we allow to hinder our ability to live the abundant life.

2. Not living a life of thriving stems from spiritual blindness. Not being able to 'see' those things that we allow to creep into our lives that keep us from living the abundant life. We have to grow an ability to see the significance and feel the weight of the choices we make. We must make choices that grow our spiritual sight and see the path our choices take us on.

3. That will only come from being able to wisely discern, hear, the voice of Jesus. If we say we trust Jesus, and want to live like he calls us to, then we have to learn to recognize AND obey his voice.

Where do you struggle in these three that inhibit your ability to live the thriving life?

III Challenge.

This first Sunday closed with the challenge that in order to battle the things mentioned above we have to **claim ownership and mastery over our lives**. We GET to choose what our lives look like. We may not be able to control everything that happens, but we have full control over who we will be.

Three steps were mentioned as ways we can battle the thieves who come to steal, kill and destroy.

1. **Do a fearless inventory. Where in your life do you feel like you're not thriving?** We all have areas of our lives we know we're just not 'feeling it', living to the fullest. This is continuing to grow a sense of self-awareness to do some inner work and see where we might be languishing.

2. **What may have crept into your life that might be stealing, killing, and destroying your abundant life.** We all have allowed; bad habits, unhealthy practices, attitudes, bitterness, unhealthy emotions, unresolved issues or grief, shame, to make their way into our lives. They have taken root, and are the thorns choking out real growth. We have to do a ruthless inventory to root these out.

3. **What is one thing you can incorporate into your life that will help you better hear the voice of Jesus?** Need to **develop a growing discernment and wisdom to distinguish the difference between the thief and the good shepherd**. We all allow voices that don't have our best interest at heart take our ear. We don't mean to, make a conscious choice, to listen to people, get attached to things that don't build us up. It often just happens. They crowd out ways we can hear the voice of Jesus. Then we wonder why our life is going in the direction it is.

Three very simple and clearcut steps that if we were to actively and consistently practice them in our lives we could reorient and realign our lives to live life of flourishing/thriving, the abundant life as Jesus described it. Really the life we desperately want.