

## ***“God’s Gift Of Abundant Life”***

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2: 1 – 17; Romans 12: 1 – 2; Luke 9: 28 – 36; **John 10: 1 – 10; (Sermon)**

During the Christmas season we looked at the gifts God has given to us.

We looked at God’s gift of hope, God’s gift of peace, God’s gift of joy, God’s gift of love, God’s gift of light, God’s gift of Jesus, God’s gift of His Word, and God’s gift of endurance.

Today we will be looking at “God’s Gift of Abundant Life”

To me, the key theme in the Gospel according to John is recorded John 10:10 when Jesus said; ***“I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.”***

The hardest thing for Christians to do is to live the way Jesus taught since we live in an evil godless world.

Our human nature is for us to conform to the ways of the world and to live like the rest of the world.

Worldliness is defined as any and all activities that leave God out of a person’s decision making process.

Worldliness is not a place; worldliness is a state of mind.

Worldliness is a system that is based on man’s morals, man’s values, and man’s way of doing things

Since worldliness leaves God out worldliness is satanic.

The world pressures everyone to live selfishly; to live materialistically; to fill our lives with work and pleasure activities; and to live without God.

In addition Satan is our enemy and Satan is doing his best to keep you from living the victorious abundant life that God planned for you.(1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8)

However, when we became a Christian we were given the victory over Satan and through The Holy Spirit we are all given all the power to live a life pleasing to God. (James 4:7)

In order for us to experience this new way of life we need to turn our life over to Jesus; we need to keep focused on Jesus, we need to trust in Jesus, and we need to tap into the power of The Holy Spirit

I want to give you an example of a boat.

A boat is made to be in the water; however, there is a real big problem when water is in the boat.

That same thing is true for us.

We were created to be in this world; however, we have a real big problem when worldliness is in us.

1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15-17 tells us ***“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the***

*eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”*

Worldly things will die but the Godly things will always be alive.

If we love the world then the love of the Father is not in us and if we love the world we are the enemy of God.

James 4:4 says; ***“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”***

Jesus said you are either for me or against me. (Matthew 12:30)

You can not straddle the fence and you can not be a genuine Christian and live like the rest of the world.

The sad thing is there are a lot of Christians trying to be both today.

Jesus warned us not to trust in the things of this world.

In Matthew 6:19-20 we read; ***“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*** Jesus also said; ***“What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”*** (Matthew 16:26)

Jesus wants us to have more than a routine physical existence.

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:18 tells us; ***“Jesus redeemed us from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors.”***

Jesus said; ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”*** (John 14:6)

And Jesus gives life to all who believe in Him.

While the life that Jesus offers is eternal the abundant life Jesus offers is also for us while we are on this earth.

The life that Jesus offers is overflowing with love, peace, joy, hope, and forgiveness.

Jesus is calling each of us to be the spiritual beings that He created us to be.

But in order for us to experience God’s gift of abundant life we need to believe in Jesus and we need to be transformed by The Holy Spirit.

In the latter part of verse 2 of our lesson from Romans we are told ***“to be transformed by the renewing of your mind”***  
So what does it mean to be transformed?

The word transformed comes from a Greek word meaning “*metamorphosis*” or “*to change in form*”

In Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9 we can read the account of Jesus’ transformation.

In a miraculously way Jesus’ physical body and Jesus’ clothing were dramatically changed so that Jesus revealed some of His Devine glory to three of His disciples.

Matthew’s account of Jesus’ transfiguration tells us “*His face shone like the sun.*” “*And His clothes became white as the light.*” (Matthew 17:2)

Mark describes Jesus’ clothing as “*dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.*” (Mark 9:3)

Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in His glorified state.

Jesus’ glory did not come from a heavenly light shining on Jesus but rather Jesus’ glory came from within Jesus’ body.

Remember the physical in the Bible always points to a spiritual truth.

The command for Christians to “*be transformed*” (Romans 12:2) is a command for a change in our character; to change from a self-centered life to a Christ-centered life.

The command for Christians to “*be transformed*” is a command for us to reflect the holy characters of God.

We are to leave our old nature and we are to grow in our new nature which we received when we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

when a person is transformed the Godly characteristics of love, peace, joy, and forgiveness are evident in that person’s daily life.

I want to point out three important things about the words “*be transformed.*”

First “*be transformed*” is a command to all Christians.

As Christians we are commanded to live a disciplined Christian life.

We are commanded to live like Jesus taught.

Human striving after righteousness is not enough because if we depend upon our own efforts we will fail.

must tap into the power of The Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:17 tells us that righteousness is a gift from God.

Secondly the command for Christians to “***be transformed***” is a present, continuous action - not a one-time action.

Living like Jesus taught is a conscious decision we all must make every day and throughout every day.

Third the command for Christians to “***be transformed***” is a passive verb.

We are not commanded to transform ourselves but rather we are to let ourselves be transformed by The Holy Spirit.

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:18 says “***And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*** (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:18).

Our first part in transformation process is to yield our will to the will of God The Holy Spirit.

Our part in transformation is to renew our minds.

We saw that in our lesson from Romans 12.

We renew our minds by seriously studying our Bibles every day.

We all need to study our Bibles individually and we all need to study The Bible collectively.

Remember the primary way God speaks to us today is through His word, The Bible.

That is why you are encouraged to be an active participant in one of the four Adult Bible study groups that Mt Paran offers every week.

You can not be serious about hearing what God has to tell you if you do not have 45 minutes a week to attend one of the four Bible studies Mt Paran offers each week.

In Luke 9:29 we read that Jesus was transformed “***as He was praying***”.

The transfiguration was not a separate experience that came after Jesus’ prayer but Jesus’ transformation came as Jesus’ praying.

We find that prayer is often the setting for revelation in the Bible (Luke 3:21 – 21; 22: 39-46).

That should be a lesson for us.

Sometimes we just need to get away from our daily routine and away from all distractions to pray.

We are not doing a good job of listening to The Lord if we do not take the time and make the effort to spend quality time with God in prayer every day.

Remember Philippians 4: 6 & 7 “***In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God that passes all comprehension will guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus.***”

Every day we are required to re-surrender, re-submit, and realign our mind, our will, and our emotions to the purposes of God.

Renewing your mind takes a conscious effort of disciplining yourself to listen for the ways The Lord wants to use you each day.

The account of Jesus' Transfiguration has several lessons for us today?

First, this passage confirms who Jesus is.

God The Father calls out from the cloud that surrounded Jesus and His three disciples on top of that mountain saying, "***This is my son whom I have chosen.*** (Luke 9:36)

Secondly The Transfiguration reminds us that as Christians we are called to be obedient to our Lord Jesus. "***Listen to him.***" (Luke 9:36)

We all need to learn and accept the fact that God's will for our life is what is best for us in all situations.

When we remember all of the physical and spiritual blessings we have received as Christians it is only logical that we should want to respond to The Lord with our obedience, our love, our devotion, and our service.

When we forget the benefits of being in Christ we are prone to slip back in to worldliness and the self-destructive way of life.

Next when Moses and Elijah were talking about Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, God gave these three disciples a glimpse of what was going to happen in the near future; as well as a glimpse of God's eternal plan.

Knowing this we have hope for our future.

We know our God is in control and that our God controls the future.

Our God knows our weakness and our God graciously gives us a glimpse of Jesus' Eternal Glory.

And last but certainly not least this portion of Scripture shows us that God has the power to make good on His promise to transform us.

One day we will see what the disciples saw; our glorious exalted Savior.

Our spiritual transformation can not be explained, we can only experience spiritual transformation.

This morning we all need to ask ourselves; "*am I experiencing God's gift of abundant life every day.*

We need to ask ourselves; "*Is my life filled with the things of God or is it filled with the things of this world?*"

*“Have I been transformed or am I still conforming to the ways of this world?”*

If not we need to take a serious look at the way we are living.

We all need to ask ourselves; *“How much time did I spend praying and reading, studying, and mediating on God’s Word this past week?”*

We all need to be honest with ourselves because The Lord already knows the truth.

*Jesus said “I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.”* (John 10:10)

Friend, the choice is yours. Will you accept God’s gift of abundant life **or** will you reject Jesus and God’s gift of abundant life?

**AMEN**