

The Good Life – Accepts the Word Mark 4.8 & 20

Are you living the 'good life' this morning? For many that idea of the "good life" would evoke financial security, great health, abundant pleasures, and constant freedoms.

But sadly most of those pursuing that 'good life' never find it;
and what they thought was lasting fades;
and what they thought was secure gets lost;
and what they thought was pleasure becomes pain;
and what they thought was real turns out to be fake.

Tragic, isn't it? To miss the real "good life" for an imitation that is broken and useless – and all the time missing what Jesus offers, the most incredible life possible for any human to possess.

What is the "good life"? It is a life that flows from within. It is the original and genuine "good life". All other varieties but His are counterfeit. Only Christ's 'good life' never ends. All the rest do.

That is where we start in Mark 4.8 & 20 this morning. But before we hear Christ's voice this morning remember that anyone who is honest and has looked at life apart from God soon realizes that the world's pleasures only offer the best at the first, and then, once you are "hooked," things start to get worse.

Last week as I tuned in to hear news at the top of the hour I was a couple minutes early. And there in my car came the music of the 60's and 70's and one of those voices was the voice of Roy Clark singing his 1969 hit "Yesterday".

The words his voice framed, exactly captured the fleeting pleasures of anyone who tries to live the “good life” apart from Jesus. Listen to these piercing words and think that this is all that life apart from Jesus has to offer:

1. Yesterday when I was young, the taste of life was sweet as rain upon my tongue. I teased at life as if it were a foolish game. The way the evening breeze may tease a candle flame.
2. I ran so fast that time and youth at last ran out. I never stopped to think what life was all about, and every conversation I can now recall, concerned itself with me, and nothing else at all.
3. The game of love I played with arrogance and pride, and every flame I lit to quickly quickly die. The friends I made all seemed somehow to drift away, and only I am left on the stage to end the play.
4. There are so many songs in me that won't be sung. I feel the bitter taste of tears upon my tongue. The time has come for me to pay for Yesterday... When I Was Young

Unlike anything this world offers, Jesus continues to offer that which is best until we one day enjoy the finest blessings in His eternal kingdom (Luke 22:18). So how do we make sure we have today this ‘good life’ that is genuine? The best way to start is to listen to Him, the Author of the ‘good life’

Open with me to Mark 4.8 and then 20 where Jesus explains that the “good life” is actually from a Good Heart – Accepts the Word.

Note that it is that which “comes from within”. So just as a good heart has fruit that comes from within and that fruit is produced by God. So we should see from within us fruit that springs up, increases, and comes to maturity.

We are the company of the unworthy, doing the impossible for the Glory of Another. Never was more asked of anyone than what Jesus Christ asks of you and me TODAY!

JESUS WANTS TO HAVE ALL OF US

Stand, read, pray.

In the Gospels we can trace Christ's calls to commitment. He states we can't be His disciples unless we desire to obey these expressions of devotion to Him. Here are six ways that we evidence Christ as our Teacher, and that we are His Followers. Each of Christ's calls can be distilled down to a handful of words. Why not jot them down on a paper to remember?

1st – Jesus wants my Heart opened completely in love for Him – that means **I will love Him MOST.**

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26).

In this verse, the word “hate” essentially has to do with a comparison of loves. Simply put, our love for God is to be so great that, in comparison, love for even the dearest of relations should seem as hatred. Loving God with an unrivaled love means that we will esteem nothing—family, friends, possessions, job, fame, power, pleasures, and especially ourselves—of more worth to us than He is.

Matthew 6:33 “But **seek first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you;

Mark 8:34-37 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.³⁵ “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for My sake** and the gospel’s will save it.³⁶ “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ “Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Please open to **Hymn # 372**.

Remember this hymn is a testimony of how one man made it through life when it seemed everything was going against him, and the world around him was crumbling. And from those times come one of the greatest hymns of our time!

“Living for Jesus”

Living for Jesus, a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

Chorus O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me.
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne.
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

2 Living for Jesus Who died in my place,
Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace;
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading and give Him my all.

3 Living for Jesus, wherever I am,
Doing each duty in His holy Name;
Willing to suffer affliction and loss,
Deeming each trial a part of my cross.

4 Living for Jesus through earth’s little while,

My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.¹

Stanza 2B describes loving Jesus most: "such love constrains me to answer His call, follow His leading and give Him my all."

2nd – Jesus wants my Body offered completely to Him– that means I will die to SELF.

"Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).

Dying to self is a prerequisite to living for Christ. Paul wrote of this when he said,

"I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).

In spite of the cost of death to self, and whatever personal suffering that may bring, a dedicated disciple will follow after Christ, wherever He chooses to lead.

Stanza 1B describes dying to self: "yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free—this is the pathway of blessing for me."

3rd – Jesus wants my Will surrendered unreservedly to Him – that means I will OBEY.

"Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

Because Christ purchased us with His blood, we belong wholly to Him (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In light of this, He expects us to acknowledge His rightful ownership by not holding back anything for ourselves.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

A life given unreservedly back to God as a love offering is what stewardship is all about. Stewardship is not only about money, it is about life itself. Time and life are

¹ Eckert, Paul, *Steve Green's MIDI Hymnal*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1998.

far greater treasures than money and possessions. First and foremost, God wants *us*—unreservedly!

Chorus describes obeying Jesus: "I own no other Master—my heart shall be Thy throne: My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone."

4th – Jesus wants my Eyes focused eagerly on His Word – that means I will hunger for His Word.

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'" (John 8: 31-32).

Note that Jesus is addressing those who "believed Him"; belief in Christ as personal Savior and Lord is the first step of discipleship (John 3:16-18). Abiding in His Word bears witness that we have true life in Christ. In Greek, "abide" (*meno*) in verse 31 primarily means "to stay." By staying in His Word, becoming not only a "hearer" but also a "doer," we show that His love is in us (James 1:22-25; John 15:10-11).

Eyes focused upon Christ's word will find what Jesus wants me to be: Mark describes the life by Christ's words captured.

- ***FOLLOWS JESUS:*** Mark 1:17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."
- ***DOES THE WILL OF GOD:*** Mark 3:35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."
- ***YIELDS A CROP:*** Mark 4:8 But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."
- ***ACCEPTS THE WORD AND BEARS FRUIT:*** Mark 4:20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."
- ***UNWORTHY, PERSISTENT, AND HUMBLE:*** Mark 7:24-30 From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. 25 For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. 26 The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take

the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." 28 And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." 29 Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." 30 And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

- **TAKES UP THE CROSS:** Mark 8:34-38 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Oh, that each of us would have this same passion for God and His Word! In light of the rich treasures to be had, it's inconceivable that the majority of Christians today have not read the Bible through even *once*—especially since it takes an average reader only 15 minutes daily. If you haven't already been doing so, I challenge you to begin reading the Bible through no less than once a year. Beyond reading the Word faithfully, we should also do word studies to pursue a theme of interest; read commentaries; do Bible study guides; memorize Scripture, and meditate upon it daily.

Stanza 4A describes loving Christ's Word: "Living for Jesus thru earth's little while, my dearest treasure the light of His smile."

5th – Jesus wants my Actions focused on selfless love for others – that means I will love with Christ's LOVE.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

The commandment to love was not new, but the manner of love to be shown was now taking on a new dimension—to love as *Christ* has loved. What type love had His disciples experienced from Christ up to that point?

John 13:12-17 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then,

your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Matthew Henry writes:

He spoke kindly to them, concerned himself heartily for them, and for their welfare, instructed, counseled, and comforted them, prayed with them and for them, vindicated them when they were accused, took their part when they were run down, and publicly owned them to be dearer to him than his *mother, or sister, or brother*. He reproved them for what was amiss, and yet compassionately bore with their failings, excused them, made the best of them, and passed by many an oversight. Thus he *had* loved them, and just now washed their feet [vv. 12-17]; and thus they *must* love one another, and love *to the end*.²

Our wives and children need to see Calvary love compelling us to live sacrificially for Christ's sake and theirs. This is how the world will distinguish us from Satan's crowd, they will know we are clearly Christ's disciples.

2 Corinthians 5: 14-15 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Stanza 4B describes loving with Christ's love: "seeking the lost ones He died to redeem, bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

6th – Jesus wants my Life spent intentionally on fruit bearing for His glory – that means I will Walk in the SPIRIT.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:7-8).

The ultimate goal of discipleship is this: ". . . be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Eph. 5:1-2). This is an ongoing, lifelong process by which the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God, to conform

² Matthew Henry, *MATTHEW HENRY'S COMMENTARY, Vol. V.- Matthew to John* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company), p.1104.

the child of God, into the image of God, for the glory of God. In so doing, He produces in us the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). That fruit is manifested in a true disciple's life as an:

Galatians 5:22-25 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Stanza 2B describes walking in the Spirit: such love constrains me to answer His call, follow His leading and give Him my all.

So what is the genuine good life? Simply stated, it is a life "Living for Jesus". How do we get that? Jesus told us, it is welcoming Him into more and more of our lives. Let me read each of these six calls Christ made and you respond with the way we can choose today to welcome Christ's Word into our lives by saying "I Will...":

- *1st – Jesus wants my Heart opened completely in love for Him that means -- **I will love Him MOST.***
- *2nd – Jesus wants my Body offered completely to Him that means -- **I will die to SELF.***
- *3rd – Jesus wants my Will surrendered unreservedly to Him that means -- **I will OBEY.***
- *4th – Jesus wants my Eyes focused eagerly on His Word that means - **I will hunger for His Word.***
- *5th – Jesus wants my Actions focused on selfless love for others that means -- **I will love with Christ's LOVE.***
- *6th – Jesus wants my Life spent intentionally on fruit bearing for His glory that means -- **I will Walk in the SPIRIT.***

Thirty one words that frame the genuine "good life"!

COMMUNION

With the bread in our hands, lift it up to Jesus and with your eyes closed **SAY** from your heart to Him the words of that chorus.

Chorus O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me.
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne.
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

Now hold the cup up before Him and SING to Him as a sacred consecration that chorus again like it was the first time and the last.