

# JOHNS CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## The Life You've Always Wanted

Sunday, July 8, 2018

Rev. Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

---

John 14: 12-14

Thomas Wheeler, former CEO of the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, tells about a trip he took when he learned more about his wife than he expected. He and his wife were driving along an interstate highway when he noticed that their car was low on gas. Wheeler got off the highway at the next exit and soon found a rundown gas station with just one gas pump. He asked the lone attendant to fill the tank and check the oil and then went for a little walk around the station to stretch his legs.

As he was returning to the car, he noticed that the attendant and his wife were engaged in an animated conversation. The conversation stopped as he paid the attendant. But as he was getting back into the car, he saw the attendant wave and say, "It was great talking to you!"

As they drove out of the station, Wheeler asked his wife if she knew the man. She readily admitted she did. They had gone to high school together and had dated steadily for about a year. "Boy, were you lucky that I came along," bragged Wheeler. "If you had married him, you'd be the wife of a gas station attendant instead of the wife of a chief executive officer." "My dear," replied his wife, "if I had married him, he'd be the chief executive officer and you'd be the gas station attendant."

My wife, Brandy does this kind of stuff all the time! It keeps me very humble.

### **Perspective**

It is all in how you look at things, isn't it? Perspective is everything. Sometimes in life things can totally change just by gaining perspective. This

is one of the wonderful things about the Christian faith; it gives us perspective. It reminds of who we are and whose we are. It reminds us of the source of life and the meaning of our existence. We pick up the Bible and read it and gain perspective on our lives, and we begin to change our attitudes and behavior because of it. Perspective is everything.

I have a hunch that many of you came to church today to gain perspective on your life and faith. Perhaps you saw the title of this message and thought, "There is a life I have always wanted! I need to stop majoring in the minors and live my life the way I am called to live it! I am tired of being reactive. I want to be proactive with the life God has given me." Well, you are ahead of the game! You are here at church. That is a great start! Think of those who are in bed right now who decided not to come! Think of all those today who said with the poet:

*"I get up each morning and dust off my wits*

*I pick up the paper and read the obits*

*If my name is missing, I know I am not dead*

*So, I eat a good breakfast and go back to bed!"*

You have not done that! You have chosen to be here. And by being here you have said yes to God and the life he has for you! After all, who wants to live a boring, wasted life? God has given us so much and we need to take advantage of it!

J. Wallace Hamilton loved the stories of Sir Frances Drake's sailors. The sailors used to sit on the coasts of England and share stories of the sea with the young boys who would gather to hear

them. But they would not talk about the pleasures of the sea; they would talk about its dangers. They would talk of high waves and stout winds, and gallant ships that would ride out these storms. And the young boys would be so taken by these adventurous stories that they would run away from their homes to be a part of it.

Jesus walks on the shore of our lives and today and is tempting us with a life filled with adventure. He says, "You want excitement? Follow me! You want adventure? Follow me. You want to see things you will not believe? Follow me!" You see, the Christian life is not a life of security; it is a life of risk! Jesus approached his disciples with a call beyond the ordinary. They could not resist the pull of ultimate meaning, purpose and adventure. They said goodbye to a life of mediocrity and said hello to God's dream for them! They left the ordinary to do the extraordinary!

Many of you have come today because you want the same thing for your own lives! I have spoken to many of you who want the same thing for your church. You want Johns Creek to be an extraordinary church for God! Let me tell you, this church is already extraordinary. The gifts, resources and potential of this church is off the charts! "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard" what God can do through Johns Creek UMC!

So, individually and as a church, where does this extraordinary life with God begin? Where does it start? From where does it germinate?

### **A Life of Prayer**

It begins with a life of prayer.

I was doing some research on the American diet, and I found out some interesting things. Check this out:

- Everyday 220,000 people because of what they eat will see a doctor because of a stomach ailment
- Everyday 80 million aspirin will be taken
- Everyday 1.6 billion pain relievers will be taken

- Everyday 4,000 will suffer from heart attacks
- 2 million will experience some kind of heartburn
- 1.9 million dollars will be spent on antacids (to keep the food in)
- 1.4 million will be spent on laxatives (to get out what you put in!)

We take in a lot of things and a lot of the wrong things. And this is obvious by these stats, and it is obvious by the way some people look. Someone once said, "You are what you eat!"

I want you to imagine something. Imagine what we would look like if we only ate one meal a week and just snacked on junk food the rest of the week. What do you think we would look like - gaunt, emaciated and fatigued? It would not make any sense to do this! Yet did you know that 80% of Christians, though they attend church, don't have a daily spiritual feeding program? So imagine how many people in the church look spiritually emaciated to God. Christians are not getting enough spiritual sustenance to live the life they always wanted. We can't survive spiritually on one meal, one hour a week. We need more! (*I am grateful to Wayne Cordeiro for these stats and insights.*)

If we want to live the life that God wants for us we must take the initiative and begin being fed spiritually everyday. And the exciting thing is that Almighty God will mentor us. This is the purpose of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives inside of us in order to guide and direct us. The problem with those of us in the mainline church is that we have allowed other denominations to gain a monopoly on the Holy Spirit. We need to reaffirm our belief in the fact that God's Spirit lives and breathes inside every Christian.

Let's say for a moment that one day I went into a music shop and bought a guitar. I've always wanted to play the guitar like Stevie Ray Vaughan or Eric Clapton. Let's say after I bought the guitar I signed up for group lessons. Now, imagine if Eric Clapton came up to me and said, "I see some real

promise in you! So, I am going to give you this option. You can continue taking this class once a week, or I will meet with you one on one for an hour every day and teach you everything I have learned.”

What do you think I would do? I would do back flips and say, “Yes! Yes! When do we start?” And it would not be more than a year later when someone would come up to me and ask, “Where did you learn how to play guitar?” And I would be modest and say, “I just took some group lessons.” And they would reply, “No, you did not take lessons. You were taught by a master.”

The same thing is true when we allow the Holy Spirit to mentor us through prayer and scripture reading. It won’t be long before we begin to think how Holy Spirit thinks and to see what the Holy Spirit sees and to feel how the Holy Spirit feels and act the way the Holy Spirit wants us to act. And soon someone will ask, “Where did you get that insight?” or “There is something different about you.” And you will say, “I go to church once a week.” And they will reply, “No, you don’t just go to church once a week. You are taught by the master.”

When we begin to pray and read Scripture everyday, we get the nourishment and power we need to live the life we have always wanted! Then we get into the really good stuff. You see, connecting with God always leads to connecting with others.

## **The Good Stuff**

If we open ourselves to the nourishment of the Holy Spirit, God will lead us to people who are desperate to hear and experience his love. As we are being fed by God, a conviction begins to grow inside of us to change lives with gospel. Wesley would call it God’s sanctifying grace – God empowering us to love as he loves.

Jesus talks about this conviction to love and its result in John 14. Did you hear the amazing statement in verse 12? “You will do even greater works than me because I am going to the Father and

I will be in you.” Wow! What a verse! How is that possible? Christ has always existed. The first chapter of John explains this fact. But when Christ was in bodily form in Jesus, he was limited. He could only touch and love one person or one group at a time. However, when Christ went back to the Father, his Spirit was able to infuse each of his followers. This means that his ability to love is multiplied, and Christ is able to reach millions of people through us. We are literally the body of Christ reaching out to the world!

And Jesus is chomping at the bit inside of us to reach out and love and change others. The opportunities are all around us. We just have to open our eyes.

My colleague told me about a minister who likes to go to Nordstroms department store at Christmas. Her name is Claire. She really does not buy anything. She just fills a Nordstroms bag with paper and walks around enjoying music, lights and other sights and sounds of Christmas.

One year she was on the top floor where women’s clothing was located. An elevator opened and a bag lady appeared. She was caked in dirt. She had a shopping bag in her hand that contained all of her belongings. Claire noticed a nice saleswoman approach the lady and ask, “Can I help you?” The bag lady replied, “I’m looking for a cocktail dress.”

Well, it was obvious to Claire that the lady could never afford a cocktail dress. But the saleswoman continued to be gracious and said, “Oh, we have a great selection!” She found three dresses for her, the cheapest being around \$3,000, and then led her to the dressing room.

Claire was really intrigued by all of this, and so she moved closer in order eavesdrops on them. A few minutes later the bag lady came out of the dressing room and said, “I’ve changed my mind. I am not going to buy anything.” Saleswoman replied “Oh, that’s okay. If you are ever in Nordstrom’s again, here’s my card. It would be a pleasure to wait on you again.”

Claire could not believe the attitude of the saleswoman. So, after the bag lady had walked away, she approached the saleswoman, intending to find out exactly what had gotten in to this saleslady. Before Claire could open her mouth, she found her answer. On the saleswoman's blouse was a pin with the letters WWJD – "What Would Jesus Do?"

In Romans 8 we are told that the same Spirit that was in Christ Jesus dwells in us! It is Christ who is alive in us, and he wants to love and connect with others through us. The world needs this so badly! We live in an age that sociologists call, "The age of the lonely crowd." This means that we are with each other but we don't connect with each other. We e-mail and text each other, but we don't connect with each other. When was the last time you really connected with someone? When was the last time you treated someone as a child of God?

Tony Campolo tells the story of one of his deacons who was depressed. Campolo told him that if he would go out and help others he would feel better. So, the deacon went to a nursing home and got to know a man. He went to see him every week and would hold his hand during a chapel service.

One day the deacon arrived at the nursing home to find his new friend not in his usual spot. He checked with a nurse, and she informed him that he had taken a turn for the worse. The deacon went into the hospital room, and all the tubes were hooked up to his body. The deacon picked up the man's hand and prayed that God would receive his friend into his everlasting arms. The man squeezed the deacon's hand and opened his eyes. The deacon knew he had connected with him.

The next day the deacon went to check on his friend, and he discovered that he died shortly after he had left the day before. But he met a middle-aged woman while he was there, and he found out that she was his friend's daughter. She

said, "Thank you! Thank you! You did so much for my dad. Because of you he died in peace." Deacon asked, "What do you mean?" She replied, "He told me that every week Jesus would come by and hold his hand and he did not want to die until he held the hand of Jesus one more time."

I don't know what you think being a Christian is, but I believe it is being the hands of Christ in this world. It is being the arms of Christ in this world. It is being the feet of Christ in this world. It is being the heart of Christ in this world. The closer we get to Christ, the closer he draws us to other people who need his love.

We all know the name of Mother Theresa. Her name is synonymous with Christian love and service. When she heard that there will be people dying in the streets of Calcutta because the religious community said they were untouchable, she said, "Not on my watch!" So, she built a hospital in Calcutta and loved and cared for the poor and outcast. Why did she do it? She revealed why she did it when she was asked to speak to a group of nuns a few years ago. This small woman with a big spirit arose to the podium, lifted her hands, and counting with each of her fingers spoke these ten words: "What you do for them, you also do for him."

You might see it one day. As you give a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty, or as you put your arm around someone in need, you just may catch a glimpse of the face of Christ and discover it is literally Christ you are touching.

Do you desire to live the life you've always wanted? Get on your knees in prayer and then get on your feet and join Christ with what he is doing in the world. You will never be the same.



JOHNS CREEK  
United Methodist Church

11180 Medlock Bridge Road Johns Creek, GA 30097  
770-497-8215 [www.johnscreekumc.org](http://www.johnscreekumc.org)