

Survive or Thrive?

Overview *(this is longer than normal as this subject is something LIFE Group Leaders looked at in their last meeting but hasn't been a Sunday preach)*

We're living in very strange times and the need for seeing other people is generally getting stronger the longer restrictions continue. God isn't a solitary being, he is Father, Son & Holy Spirit, living together in perfect harmony. As we are made in his image it's not surprising enforced distancing from those closest to us is so difficult.

God doesn't intend for us to just get through this tough time, John 10:10 says "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." - there's no caveat, abundant life includes 2020 & even 2021.

Abundant life recognises the past but doesn't live there. It looks to the future but doesn't wish its life away. It lives in the now.

- It reaches up to God to be fed and be satisfied.
- It reaches to our brothers and sisters in Christ to support us in our journey
- It reaches out to draw others into this wonderful, wonderful abundant life.

For most of us this time is really hard with feelings of loneliness, loss, anxiety for jobs, finance, kids, family and friends and many other things. So how do we live through this time?

- 1) We can give up and wait to die. Not really an option!
- 2) We can do whatever it takes to just Survive in this life. That is to remain alive or in existence and continue just to function. Or
- 3) We can choose in the power of the Holy Spirit to live life abundantly – and to THRIVE. To grow vigorously and flourish.

Where do we find this abundant life in the here and now? If you feel overwhelmed it is easy to start to believe the enemies lie that surviving is sufficient - his aim is to steal and destroy; He steals our heritage as sons and daughters of God and causes us to believe the lie that we can never live abundant lives. The promise is for us to live an abundant life and to thrive.

Jesus acknowledges life won't be easy- John 16:33 says "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

That's a great promise for today. We may need to do a little tweaking to realign our lives to God again. To climb our way out of the cultural morass that hinders us and into his truth. We need to think biblically. The old and new testament recognise anxiety as a big issue. It is not a modern phenomenon and the answer is to look to God for his faithfulness in the now.

Read Isaiah 6: 1-3

Uzziah had reigned for 52 years and was a Godly, powerful King. The country would be fearful about the future but God steps in to bring assurance that he is the all powerful, never changing King over all things who rules forever. We too have that assurance and we too are given a vision of Jesus in Revelation Ch1 of Jesus enthroned and majestic above all things.

Read Jeremiah 29: 10-11

God tells the people they will be in exile for 70 years but not to be miserable and live in the past, not to look forward just dreaming of the future return but to settle down 'Bloom where you are planted'. They are told to build houses, plant gardens, marry, increase and seek the peace and prosperity of the city they are in. He then follows up with ' For I know the plans I have for you... '.

What we learn from this is that every situation we find ourselves in God knows about and he doesn't just want us to survive where we are but to thrive. God has plans to 'prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' So this pandemic and all its pressure is a place for us to thrive not just survive. To learn more of God and about ourselves.

How do we turn from the worlds mind set of 'if only' and 'can't wait to get out of this' to living and rejoicing in the here and now and seeking God to thrive? John Ortberg says 'discipleship is not about trying it is about training'. We need keep coming back to God for him to train us in his ways. Paul puts it like this in Colossians 3:1-2 'Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.'

Someone put together a helpful acronym for THRIVE:

Thankful
Hopeful
Restful
Inspiring
Victorious
Eternal

As we look at each point look for ways to apply it to your life

Q How can we start to apply THRIVE to our lives?

*Maybe put a reminder on your phone 2 or 3 times a day, a note by the kitchen sink
Be intentional about realigning your mind to God's truth.*

Each time ask the Holy Spirit to keep reminding you when you start to drift from living in the now .

Q What do you have to be **thankful** for? It can just be a little thing
you haven't had to scrape the frost off the wind screen, for a sunrise/sunset or a joke someone shares that lifts your day. Thankful for your salvation.

Some people find keeping a thankfulness journal helpful

Q What is the difference between our **hope** in God and our hope Santa will bring us the latest gadget?

we have a blessed hope that is sure. Nothing will shake God. Whatever is going on he knows, he is with us and promises us he will bring us to glory with himself.

Q Have you noticed God bringing Psalm 23 to us over the past few weeks?
How can you fit **resting** in to a busy day? (It doesn't necessarily mean we stop doing but that we find places of rest in our day.)
Stop for a cup of coffee, go for a walk, read a chapter of a favourite book, listen to music
(John Mark Comer's book 'The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry' is great. Or a John Ortberg's 'The Life you've always wanted'.)

Q Share something that **inspires** you?
scripture, creation, friends, science. God nature is to create so be inspired by the wonders around you. .
How can we inspire others and each other?

Q What is God's **victory**? (*Defeating Satan, sin, death on the cross and giving us freedom and abundant, eternal life*)
What helps you to live with God's **victory** in mind?
Thinking about the cross, resurrection and ascension. Reading bible, praying

Q What is your hope for **eternity** in heaven?
Do you think you will just survive in the presence Jesus?
We will be living an abundant life , everything will be made new
We will eternally thrive!

Pray for each other
Be open about the things you are struggling with and to pray for each other. Lift your eyes, look to God, and bloom in the circumstances he has put you in.