

JOHN 8 v 32, JOHN 10 v 10. TAKE A RISK

Last week Tina spoke to us about opening the door when Jesus knocks, she gave her testimony about how she came to faith, how it changed her and what it means to her. Let me try and continue on a little from there.

In her story, Tina said, "Most of her Christian friends grew up in Christian families. They listened to Bible stories told at home or at Sunday school. They attended church and as young teenagers were confirmed. Most of them have known God in their lives from as far back as they can remember. Their faith may have changed, matured, or they may have had periods when they felt more distant from God, but at the core of their lives is a learnt faith." Well that just about sums up how my early life went. But it wasn't until I was in my mid 20's and a girl I worked with asked me about how long I had been a Christian and when I made my commitment to God. My commitment was going to church, being in the choir, when I was younger, getting confirmed when I was 12 ,why, because I was 12, but I realised that I hadn't actually asked God into my life in a full and committed way. I didn't need to relearn what I had learnt, but I did have to rethink what I thought. That made a difference!!! That's when I started to grow. Asking Jesus into our lives changes us, it has to.

So how, it's not going to alter our past, that has already gone, nothing we do in the future can make any difference to that, but if the past has made me who I am then thank you God. Being a Christian will not keep us away from illness and pain, I can't say that your life will be comfortable and pain free. I can't guarantee what the bible doesn't. But what we do in the moment of now, can make a difference to who we are in the future.

Tina said how walking into the church in Hackney and meeting Angie, changed her life.

So what is your life, how would you fill in the blank: Life is _____?

Forrest Gump filled in the blank by saying: "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're going to get."

F. Scott Peck began his bestselling book, The Road Less Travelled, by writing, "Life is difficult."

Once, a long time ago, I went to a time-share sales meetings and the salesman in one last final effort to get me to sign up to the deal said something like, "Life is not a dress rehearsal, you only get to live it once." I didn't sign up by the way.

Others have described our existence by filling in the blank with: a rat race, a bowl of cherries, a series of choices, a pay cheque, only for the weekends, a party.

For many life is nothing more than the time spent between birth and death.
The drudgery of existence.

The boring monotony of the routine.

The hope of having enough until the end.

In John 10 verse 10, Jesus says, "[That we may have life and have it abundantly](#)"

In John 8 verse 32 it says, "[You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.](#)"

So is, The drudgery of existence, or the boring monotony of the routine, or the hope of having enough until the end, having life abundantly, and being set free. I don't think so.

You won't find life in pleasure.

Some folk say that if only they could take a cruise, or retire in luxury, or have their fantasies fulfilled then they would be living. Many people have done these things yet their life remains empty.

You won't find life in performance.

Even workaholics learn that the satisfaction of one job completed is short lived, so they then need to go on to the next.

You won't find life in possessions.

"The one who loves money or possessions is never satisfied, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income, they always strive for more.

You won't find life in position.

Too often people think that if they receive a certain promotion, or reach a certain status, or live in a certain area then they would be happy. Interestingly, those people who have reached that position still have not found the secret of a fulfilling life.

It is living a life with God that sets us free, He liberates us for life, He opens the door of sin and lets us out. He places us in the position for which He has made us. He gives us the freedom of walking along His path. He enlists us in a movement that is called to change the world.

I would like to read a short extract from a book by Malcolm Duncan, who is Pastor of Gold Hill church in Woking, and is part of the leadership team for

Spring Harvest, it reads.

" You and I are not alone. Across the world, on all continents, and in every country, there are men and women, boys and girls just like us. We come from different cultures, have different coloured skins, speak different languages.

Some of us are single, some married. Some of us are young, some old. We look after our children and love our spouses. We have dinner with our friends. We chat to our neighbours, and play our part in our communities. Some of us sit at desks and write letters. Some of us plough land and plant seeds. Some of us teach and some are taught. Some make things, some are politicians. A few work in churches, but most do not. We are found in every stratum of society and in every walk of life. Wherever we are and whatever we do, our lives matter. Our choices matter. We matter. We are ordinary people with extraordinary power. We are part of the most dynamic family on earth - we are the church, that's right, we are the church. We the church are the folk that can make a change.

Pastor Bill Hybels, wrote a book in which he wrote "the local church is the hope of the world." Do you believe that? If you don't perhaps you could at least believe that the local church is the hope of the village, the benefice, or the community that it is in, that would be a start.

Jesus didn't come to start a new religion, He came to change the world. He didn't want those who followed Him to live their lives wrapped up in cotton wool, surrounded by our bubble of security, away from the challenges of society.

Jesus wants us to be His eyes, His ears, His hands, His feet. He wants us to continue the work where He left off. He invites us to say "YES" to Him, to follow where He might take us and to live our lives His way.

Jesus never promised us that following Him would be easy, or pain free, or even safe, but then it never was for Him.

If we are truly to follow in Jesus footsteps, we need to look at what we do and the way we do things, we sometimes need to be apart from the crowd, whilst being in the crowd. Don't go with the flow just because it's the easiest thing to do, don't join in the negativity, the gossip, the tittle tattle just so you don't rock the boat. The bible says that we should love one another as I have loved you. We need to walk along side folk, where they are, but this doesn't mean we need to be like them and do what they do.

Let me give you two examples that happened in my life. When I worked out of Kwik Fit in East Dulwich, people asked me about my church and my faith, not

because I went about quoting the Bible, or proclaiming that the end is nigh so they should repent. They asked simply because I was the only driver that didn't swear, and that I refused to work on Sundays.

The second example was when I was Group Scout Leader in Deptford. My Scout Leader asked me about being a Christian because I didn't lose my temper, join in the gossip, and encouraged the group to attend Church Parade. He and his wife were baptised the Sunday some of us went to Abersoch. I was proud to be his sponsor.

That was just by me being myself, in the crowd, but apart from the crowd.

Sometimes we might need to take a risk, to step out of our comfort zone, to do something different.

Look at some of the people in the bible who took a risk by listening to God or spoke out about Jesus. There was, Samson, Jeremiah, Micaiah, Zedekiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Silas, Paul, Epaphras, Junia. They all took a risk. They didn't say is it safe, but is it for God? They took a risk. The other thing they all have in common is that they all went to prison, and that still goes on today Some folk are persecuted, put in prison, or even killed for their faith. Hopefully that won't happen to any of us.

When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, and walk along His path, our life should be an unexpected adventure. As exciting as a trip around the world and as mundane as a cup of coffee. We can start wherever we are and it's never too late, even if we've taken a few detours and met some dead ends. And I've certainly been down quite a few.

We are all born with God given potential to change the world around us. When we follow Christ, we can have confidence that despite any setbacks or disappointments that follow, the path that Jesus leads us on is a path full of life, both here in this world and the world to come.

We all desire to live a full life, an abundant life, a life overflowing with purpose and passion. We will sometimes take big bold steps, at other times they may be small and fearfully trod. Whatever steps they are, let us keep our eyes focused totally on Jesus. Let us walk with purpose and commitment, through the narrow gate as in John chapter 7 verse 13-14. ["Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few that find it."](#)

One of the most powerful statements Jesus made regarding life was: "A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance" (John 10:10).

What was God up to when he sent Jesus to this earth? Upgrading life, that's what. Through Jesus Christ he was offering to us life that was not just good, but better, not just full, but fuller, not short lived, but eternal.

Jesus came not only to save the world but to change it, let us continue the work that Jesus started. Let us speak out about injustice, inhumanity, let us stand alongside the homeless, mistreated, the people who have no voice. Let us live the Gospel in our daily lives and bring others into God's Kingdom.

Let's take a risk if that's what's needed. Jesus did.

Amen