

CCC Living the Better Life Easter 2010

Welcome:

The night before Jesus Christ was crucified He made a very strange statement that nobody understood. It's the first verse from God's word, the Bible in your Message Notes...

Jesus said, *"In a little while the world will no longer see Me. But you're going to see Me because I am alive and you're about to come alive."* What in the world did He mean, *'and you're about to come alive,'* I am sure the disciples were thinking, I'm already alive, what does Jesus mean?

See **Easter is all about coming alive.** Jesus Christ proved He was who He said He was. Jesus said, "I'm God. I'm going to let them kill Me on a cross. I'm going to be buried in a grave for three days then I'm going to bring Myself back to life... Why, to prove, "I am who I say I

am." Most people know this part of the Easter story. But what most people don't know is the second part of the Easter story and that involves you and me. God's word, the bible says, *"He [talking about Jesus] included everyone in His death so everyone could be included in His life. A far better life than people lived on their own."*

"Living the Better life" What is this better life? What is this better life than what you're living now... f you live in Maryland we know a lot about The Good Life. In fact, you're probably living the Good Life today. You've got a good home, you've got a good family, you've got a good job. You're probably in good health or a health care program. If I asked most of you... you'd say, Bill, I've got it good. Compared to the rest of the world, you've got it good. You're living the good life. But let me ask you a question, "What if there was something more? What if

beyond the good life that you're living there was a better life? What if you were missing out on something that you didn't even know about? What if you were missing out on something you have really never tried? What if God intended the better life for you? Wouldn't you want to know about it? Of course you would and so would I also. Every Sunday, I encourage people who come to keep coming back and consider the claims of Christ. Why would I do that because I know there is a better life? You see we often settle for less only because we don't know that there's anything better.

Let me give you an example what I mean... When I was a little baby my mother would feed me Gerber's Strained Spinach. And mmmmmm was it so yummy to me!!! Why? Because I didn't know any better. I had never looked or consider anything different... But when I began

considering and trying other foods ... Pow WOW Now we're talking! Life is good. There was something definitely better in life for me.

Would I ever go back to strained spinach. No way baby, you can have it all! I have tasted something better.

And I believe that God brought you here today to Calvary church on this Easter Sunday so He could let you in on a little secret. There's something way more better than just the good life you're living today.

I heard and lived most all the other points of views of life and to me they are just strain spinach... any one here today know what I mean... Since tasting the better life having a relationship with my creator and having purpose and meaning of life.... See, beneath this image of "The Good Life that you're living there are three dirty little

secrets that nobody likes to talk about. We try and act as if it they aren't there.

One, people feel exhausted. They're feel worn out. They say, "I'm tired all the time. I can't keep up the pace. I'm overloaded. When I get home in the evening, I crash. Because I'm worn out. I'm out of energy. I'm exhausted."

The second thing I hear is that exhaustion leads to—**Emptiness.** You say, I don't think I've got another thing in me. I'm stretched to the limit and yet I'm empty inside, there isn't any real meaning or purpose to my life. The only purpose can be here on earth is getting more and having more and accomplishing more then guess what you die. That's the good life...

Another well kept secret in this good life your living I call **Enslavement.** I couldn't count the number of times people have said to me, "Pastor Bill, I feel trapped. I feel

trapped by my debt. I don't know if I'm ever going to get out of it. I feel trapped in my relationship, either with a girlfriend or boyfriend or in a marriage. I can't get on with it but I can't get out of it. I feel trapped by the expectations of other people around me. I feel trapped by guilt. I feel trapped by fear. I feel trapped by my own anger. I feel trapped by bitterness with somebody who's hurt me. I'm even a slave to my schedule."

We'll I've got good news for you today. That is what Jesus was talking about when He said, "*He included everyone in His death so everyone could be included in His life. A far better life than people lived on their own.*" It's called "The Better Life." The reason God brought you here today is so you can learn about the better life. There is something more and you are about to come alive.

Now what is this better life that Jesus Christ offers us? It's three things and I want to go over them briefly this morning. What is the better life.

1. It's a life filled with meaning and purpose.

The greatest tragedy in life is not going to be your death. We are all going to die that is a given. The greatest tragedy in life is **to go through your entire life without knowing your purpose in life**. Without knowing you're purpose and meaning in life. Without knowing what on earth am I here for. And I am sorry to say, unfortunately, most people go through life never really knowing their purpose, never knowing why God put them on earth.

May I be blunt with you this morning. May I speak the truth to you in love? I talk to many people who have everything you could ever ask for and guess what: The good life is not good enough. See looking good, feeling

good, having the goods, doing everything you ever wanted is a good life but is not enough. That's not enough to make you happy. Why, because it takes meaning and purpose to have your life have any significance.

Now in today's times I have found a lot of people confuse a full life with a meaningful life. Like they are the same... In other words if I am busy then I have meaning and value. Having a full schedule is not the same thing as having a fulfilled life. They are not the same. If I stay busy then I will be fulfilled. No, staying busy just keeps you from really looking at the truth of your life. Your life has no meaning and you need meaning. Why? Because God created you that way.

And so we search for meaning in all kinds of different ways. We think if I just get more possessions then that will add meaning to my life. But there's always

more to get. Or if I accomplish certain things then my life will have meaning. But there's always more to accomplish. So we search for meaning through all kinds of things – through hobbies or sports or travel, through relationships, through sex, through food. Now all these are all good things. There's nothing wrong with these things. It's just they don't last. And when the experience is over, where do you get your meaning in those down times? You need something that gives you constant meaning, let me say it this way you need something that will give you eternal meaning.

Where do you get that? There's only one place. From the God who created you. The Bible says this. *“Christ gives meaning to your life.”* Now you were made by God. You didn't make yourself. God made you and **He made you for a purpose.** And until you understand

you were made by God and for God, let me share with you... life's not going to ever make sense. And until you understand the purpose He put you on earth for, you can't step up from the good life to the better life.

The Bible says this *“Because Jesus was raised from the dead [that's what Easter is all about] we've been given a brand new life. We have everything to live for including a future in heaven and that future starts now.”* This is a very, very important verse in the Bible. I want to point out three or four things just from this one verse.

First notice that this better life, whatever it is, is somehow connected to what Jesus Christ did at Easter. Somehow His coming back to life from the grave enables me to live a better life. Better than just the good life, whatever that is.

The Second thing to notice is the better life is not just an addition to your old life, something you just tack on to your existing life. It's a whole new deal. It's all new a brand new beginning. It's brand new. **God wants to give you a brand new life.** He says I want to give you a brand new life. I want to give you a chance to start over. I want to give you a chance to begin a new. That's the starting point of a better life. Not that your past life has been a bad one... We'll just give you a brand new life and that brand new life it's incredible.

Let me summarize the whole Bible for you. **You were made by God to have a relationship with Him.** A personal relationship. God knows and loves you and He wants you to know and love Him. That's a relationship not a religion. See becoming a Christian were not talking about religion. God couldn't care less about religions. God is

more interested in a relationship with you. Gang there will be no religions in Heaven. You were made to have a relationship with God. But here's the one problem. God is perfect and you're not. I am but your not no I am not either. And no matter how hard I try to be good, or do good things... I can't overcome that gap, that separation with God. God said, I'll come to earth. And He did that 2010 ago in the form of a person named Jesus Christ. He said, I'll die for all the sins of the world, pay for everything that's been done wrong so you don't have to pay for it. I'll give you complete freedom. And not only that, He says that we have so much – everything – to live for. “I'll give you meaning for that life here on earth also.”

The world won't tell you this because the world won't be honest with you, because the world doesn't know the difference themselves. But I'm going to tell you the

truth right now. You're not going to get what I am going to say to you in Cosmo magazine. You're not going to get what I am going to say from the Ophra Show. You will never be happy living for yourself. Why, because you weren't made to live for yourself. In fact, I could give you hundreds of examples that show the more selfish you are, the more self-centered you are... the more miserable of a person you are. You were not made to live for you. You were made to live for God. And when you start living for God that's when you discover real happiness, real meaning, real significance, real purpose, and real value to your life. Because you're not living for you, you're living for God. The beginning of the better life begins when you stop living for you and you start living for God.

Then God says, Let me tell you why I have a purpose for your life. And then you start enjoying it. The

Bible says this, "*He died [Jesus] so we would no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us and was raised to life for our sake.*" God says, You weren't made to live for you. You were made to live for Me. When you live for God purpose, you're plugged in to God the source of life and that gives you meaning. That gives you significance. That gives you purpose. That gives you real wealth, which is priceless.

That is were true peace and joy is found.

Let me ask you a question, "Has God been trying to get your attention? He brought you here to Calvary this Easter Sunday, 2010, so He could say to you, "The good life is not good enough. I want you to step up to the better life. The life you were created to live from the beginning."

You say, "It sounds good. How do I get it? How do I get this life of meaning and energy and purpose and

freedom?” Again, you can’t earn it. You just accept it. It’s a gift. You have faith and you believe and then you will receive.

The Bible says *“Everybody comes alive in Christ.”* It’s in a relationship to Jesus that you get this better life. You don’t get it through religion or going to church or keeping following your list or do’s and don’ts. You get it through a relationship with God. In fact, Jesus said this in the book of John *“I came so you can have real and eternal life, a better life than you ever dreamed of.”* Friends let me share this with you. I wouldn’t go back to strained spinach for no reason. I wouldn’t go back to the good life for any reason. Once you’ve tasted the better life there is no comparison. That’s why Jesus came. Instead of feeling empty and enslaved and exhausted He says I want you to have meaning and freedom and energy. This is what Easter

is about. It’s not about crowds. It’s about personally getting to know God.

I’m going to close today with a prayer that you can pray to begin the better life. It’s like the prayer I prayed many years ago. I haven’t always been a believer. There was a day in my life when I said; the good life is not good enough and I made the choice to start living the way God intended for me to live, the better life. I stepped across the line. You don’t have to pray this prayer aloud. God knows your heart. I want to share something with you in the last 8 yrs we have had over 400 people make this decision to want to live the better. You don’t have to pray this prayer aloud. He knows the very thoughts you’re thinking right now. So you don’t have to pray out loud. In fact, you don’t even have to say these words they aren’t magical or mystical or anything. It’s really the attitude of your heart.

Say, God, I want to start living for You instead of living for me.”

Prayer:

First, I’m going to pray for you then you can follow me in a prayer. Father, there are people here today I know who have never begun a relationship with You. They know about You. They believe in God. They just haven’t ever really known You. I pray that You would give them the courage to open their heart and their mind and life to You right now.

Now you pray. Just pray something like this, “Dear God, I want to start living the better life. I realize that You made me for more than just the good life. So as much as I know how I want to start living for You not myself. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for Your grace. Thank You for sending Jesus Christ to die for my sins. I don’t understand

that so You’re going to have to help me out with it to understand it in the days to come. But I want to open up my life to You, Jesus Christ. As best as I know how, I want to get to know You. I invite You to be the manager of my life. The boss. You call the shots from this day forward. I want to learn to trust You. I want to exchange the good life for the better life. Thank You. Amen. \