

IT IS GOOD TO BE ALIVE
Psalm 104:24-28

The Psalmist repeatedly said that it is good to be alive, and what he said was and is certainly true. Read Psalm 104:24-28.

It is a strange thing, and a sad one also, that many people are much more alive than others. Some have dulled their capacity to appreciate the greatness and the vastness and the glorious wonder of this world. But others have developed this capacity and it will continue to grow throughout their entire lifetimes.

Many today insist that life is not worth living. Finding whatever life they have constructed for themselves to be unbearable and unendurable, they imagine life has to be that way -- not only for themselves but for everyone else. People who insist that life is worth living are looked upon as incorrigible optimists or, worse, a little balmy in the head and not worthy of being respected or trusted.

There are various things, of course, which have a strong tendency to make one pessimistic. The attitudes and actions of many people in this world of ours, whether of high or low estate, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, give little or no reason for genuine optimism. The best that life can offer is often despised and the worst is just as frequently exalted. In the search for sensation and excitement, men and woman turn down pure love, which could give them happiness, and turn to unworthy and even immoral pursuits, which can bring them only grief and bitter disappointment.

The hurts people inflict on each other are so common as to require no further description. The pain people bring upon themselves is so senseless that it is almost beyond explanation. One boy, for example, walks up to another, punches him, and breaks his nose. Asked for an explanation, he simply replies that there was no provocation. He just felt like hitting someone. In a world like this, people ask themselves, "How can life be worth living?"

A whole school of philosophy has grown up around the idea that life is disgusting. Modern novels and modern drama are full of this view. Many people who are not acquainted with these things are ready to agree. They just know that life does not make much sense, but somehow they have to make the best of it.

Utter weariness and despair lead some people to the ultimate conclusion of this line of thought, and they commit suicide. Others, having considered the last and final step of despair, dismiss the thought from their minds, recognizing that it does not provide any solution at all. That much sense they have. So they go on living, "tired of living," as the folk-song puts it, and "afraid of dying."

Are you one who goes on living simply because you are afraid of dying? Are you convinced that life is not worth living, but that you have to see it through, somehow, because there is no other way out? If so, listen to me! This is no way to live!

In the morning many ordinary men and women will wake up just as you will to face the tasks and the toil of a new day. After they have breakfast, they will start out, not in despondency and despair, but with hope and courage. In fact they will set out to face the world with an air of expectancy which will be evident upon their faces.

What will they expect? If you should ask them, many would have trouble putting it into words. They would tell you, however, that they trust in God as their heavenly Father to take care of them, in His own able way and according to His own precious will. These people daily trust God to make life worth living, and even to provide excitement along the way. They are like the Psalmist, who looked at the world in which he lived and found it good because God is in it.

Read Psalm 104:1-23.

If God were left out of this world, the whole thing would look like a tragic mistake. See God in His world and there will always be reason for hope, even amid terror and tragedy. You don't have to put God into this world. He is here, whether you see Him or not. See God in His world, and trust in Him. The world will look entirely different to you when you do. When you see God in His world, the whole thing looks different immediately. The sunrise looks different and so does the sunset. The bright day and the dark day acquire glories all their own. "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 104:31-35).

The Psalmist was not a sentimentalist. He knew the roses have thorns, and that storms accompany the rainbows. He noted that the earth trembles, and that nature is convulsed even while its blessings are poured out upon the earth.

Human life itself is no bed of roses. Human existence knows the same convulsions. Things are not what they ought to be or what they could be. There is always humanity with its sin spoiling everything. Still, there is always God with His glory, and in His own way overcoming human pride and selfishness, redeeming people. There is always God. Because of Him, it is good to be alive.

Why is it for many people living out their lives in the twentieth century that life has become merely a bitter pill that must be swallowed? Why is it that many intellectuals regard life as a disease and human existence as a curse? Why is it that so many wish they had never been born?

People today are paying the price for refusing to take human life seriously. Not taking sin seriously, they will not take redemption seriously. The result is that all of human life becomes completely irrational, and people no longer see a purpose in anything. They get up in the morning, go to work, come back home, and go through the whole dreary process again the next day, convinced there is no meaning to any of it.

Is there any light to lighten this darkness? Yes, there is always God in His glory. When Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, the great God Himself entered our little world. He became one of us. Living His life for each one of us, the Son of God tasted death for us. He died for us that we might live. He lives for us, having been raised from the dead by the power and glory of His Father, that we might have life in all of its abundance.

No one takes life more seriously than a genuine follower of Jesus Christ. Once a man has received Christ as his Saviour, he knows what life is about. He knows that evil exists and has contaminated life. He can then take life with positive affirmation. If the Son of God thought enough of us to die for us and to give eternal life to us, who are we that we should go on living as if life does not make any sense at all? Because of Him, life does make sense. It is worthwhile to be a child of God by faith in Christ. It is worthwhile to follow Christ, to enjoy His forgiveness, and to have the blessed assurance of eternal life.

With the Psalmist, every follower of Christ sees the growing grass as a sign and guarantee that the mercy of God endures forever. Having knelt at the altar of redemption, which is Christ's cross, every follower of Christ knows what it means that the sparrow finds a place to build her nest and to raise her young. The sparrow lives out its life under the open skies of God's favor. Why should not we, for whom Christ died, do likewise?

Truly, it is good to be alive. But some people do not realize it. They see only the difficulties; they see only the problems; they see the pain and the sorrow of human existence. We must always be conscious of these, but we must never let them bow us down so completely that the pulsating beauty and wonder of life are lost. Somebody may protest, "You say, 'It is good to be alive!'" Apparently you do not see the dark clouds overhanging human life." Some people think it is even trivial to talk about the glory of life when there is so much suffering in the world. The thing about Christianity which enabled it to spread so rapidly in the early centuries was that it taught people how to live with a light in their eyes and a glint of eternity in their minds, even though they had to do it in the midst of trouble, toil, and pain. Of course, if you see only clouds you naturally are not going to say, "It is good to be alive." But believe me, friends, there is more in this world than clouds. And, if that is all that you see, then you should have a change of vantage point. Take altitude within yourself. It is a wonderful thing to have altitude in your thoughts. You can have it if you will just take it. And altitude of spirit makes all the difference in the world.

The person who knows that it is good to be alive is also the person who is best able to take the ups and downs of life as they come. This is a great art. Life will deal you heavy blows at times. To use a colloquial phrase, it will sometimes "throw the whole book at you." But if you have this spirit I am talking about you will be able to take what comes and not let it get you down, not let it defeat you. You will be able to handle it.

It is like General Goethals, the man who directed the digging of the Panama Canal. He was a great Christian. After they had dug untold tons of dirt out of the great ditch and piled it to one side, there was an earthquake and a landslide and all the dirt went back down into the ditch. The men came to General Goethals and said, "What shall we do? This is terrible! The ditch is filled up again. What shall we do?" The great man answered, "Do? Just dig it out again -- that's all you do."

One winter night, when the great inventor was sixty-seven years of age, Thomas A. Edison stood near his laboratory at Menlo Park and watched many years of work go up in flames. When he observed his son, he said, "Charles, go find your mother. Bring her here. She'll never see anything like this as long as she lives!" The next morning Mr. Edison

remarked, "There is great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start anew."

Great people do not allow the vicissitudes of life to defeat them. They have something within them that rises victoriously above the losses and disappointments. Whatever comes, life is good. And the thing that makes a person most aware of its goodness is to know God. Tolstoy said, "To know God is to live."

If the great God, Who created, sustained and saved us, provided the waves of the ocean for His creatures to enjoy, there is good reason for us to find life worth living and to enjoy it. If you are a child of God, your life has been redeemed by the Son of God. So, do not go on living as if this had never happened. It has happened. Christ died for you and Christ lives for you. God cares about you, and God cares for you. Face these facts and leave all resentment and bitterness behind.

Because Christ is your Saviour and Lord, it is good to be alive. Live with complete trust in God, and learn to enjoy life. Life was given to us by God to be enjoyed. In Christ, sense the glory of the common life, the wonder of birth, the mystery of growth, the happiness of a wedding, and the grandeur of gray hair. In Christ, know the satisfaction of greeting someone with a glad hand, of working, of reading, and of having fellowship with family and friends. In Christ, learn to live. It is good to be alive.

How we need to remember what Christ said: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). When will we ever learn that this is true? When will we learn to appreciate the gracious actions of God in the world and in our own lives? God gives and He forgives. He lives and He gives life. Trust in God and enjoy the life He gives you. It is good to be alive. Enjoy your journey through the future. The mornings will be brighter when God is there. Work will be more enjoyable and helpful when God is there. Problems will be seen in their true perspective and can be taken in stride when God is there. Depend on God. He will take care of you. You can always depend on God. He does not go back on His promises. Others may fail, but God will never fail. The birds of the air and the beasts of the field depend on God. Why not you?

If you really want to live, you must know God. The way to know God is through Jesus Christ, for He is the way to God. When you take Christ into your life and He takes control of you, every day of your life thereafter you will have the joyous realization that it is good to be alive. This is the truth, and there is no doubt about it, as many can testify.