

Life in Jesus is infinitely fuller

John 6:33-40, 10:7-16, 13:34-14:7

Welcome to our church. It's a community - more than that, it's a *family* - of people discovering and sharing that life in Jesus is infinitely fuller. That's who we are and what we do. Discovering the infinite fullness that Jesus brings is what has changed our lives, and keeps changing them. And it's something we want others to share in too. That's why your friend invited you to join us today.

So now it's time for me to explain this big claim - 'life in Jesus is infinitely fuller.' Sounds like a big claim, I suppose. Why is our church claiming that? And what does it mean, anyway?

Well, we're claiming that both because it's what Jesus claimed Himself, and what we have experienced to be true as we've trusted Him about that. In the passage we read from John 10 earlier, Jesus said that He had come to 'bring us life, and have it to the full.' In a couple of other passages in John we're going to flick to, we'll find Him speaking the same way. Jesus claims to be able to offer a fullness of life than nobody and nothing else can.

I can tell you that my experience of Him is, that's true. Knowing Jesus, believing the promises He made, leaning on the things He has done on my behalf, letting Him represent me before God, letting Him be in charge of my life instead of me being in the driving seat, enjoying the security of what He alone could do on a cross to overcome the sin, evil and death that plagues us...

That's all brought me a fullness that doesn't fade, and it's been a very, very long time since I have felt the kind of void-like emptiness that I still hear about others having in their hearts. I don't mean that I'm never sad, struggling, scared, weak or sinful. I've been every one of those things this week. But I'm never empty. Never. Jesus brings a fullness that does not disappear.

Later on you're going to hear from other people who say that life for them is infinitely fuller in Jesus. As you hear these things, I'd love you to hunger for what we have. And I'd love you to leave today knowing that you can have it too. If fullness of life doesn't sound like something you need, let's think about how life can be empty.

When you're going round on an empty stomach, how does it affect your day?

You know the feeling of going about on an empty stomach. As long as you feel hungry, you're distracted by the need to fill yourself up with something. And once you eat, that feeling goes away. Until you get hungry again. Then the empty feeling returns.

As human beings, most of us go around on empty hearts too. I've got friends that have spoken to me about it. A hole, an emptiness they can't fill, at least not for more than a little while. So far, you're either with me or you're not. , some of you will be thinking 'What hole? What emptiness? I'm fine!' But I've lived enough of life to expect that most of you are still with me. We know that empty feeling. That's real.

And we keep trying to fill this hole - this hunger of the heart - with lots of different stuff. 'Once I get that job, I'll be happy.' And you are. Until you're not again. Then you wonder if something else will fill that gap that still seems to be there. 'Once I get that car... once I get married... once I have a child... once I've completed my bucket list... once I've got a bigger house, a better car, a better job - I'll be happy.' And you are. Until you're not again.

Is it possible that you could find something that would fill your life in such a way that the emptiness doesn't come back?

There's another way that life can be empty. It runs out. We die. And as any of you who have been through the loss of a loved one know, there's a horrible emptiness about it all. Suddenly, life's just - *done*. And one day, that'll be us too. Just emptied. Finished. Run out.

This is the bit where I get to tell you good news about Jesus. And it's all wrapped up in these big claims that He makes for Himself. In the gospel of John, Jesus says something big and controversial about Himself seven times. They're called the 'I am' sayings. We're going to hear three of them today. Here's the first one.

_____ reads *John 6:33-40*

So Jesus says, 'if you come to me, you'll never go hungry, and if you believe in me, you'll never be thirsty.' He's not offering a technique or a twelve step programme to wholeness. He's offering *Himself*. 'I am the bread of life' He says. It's coming to *Him*, knowing *Him*, believing in *Him* that fills you up for good.

The guy, the girl, the kids, the house, the job, the car, the stuff, the holidays, the clothes, the shoes, the experiences - not one of them has filled you up so much that the hunger or thirst doesn't come back. But coming to Jesus and believing in Him does what none of those could. It brings you an unending fullness. Life in Jesus is infinitely fuller, because this hunger of the heart goes once your heart is placed in Jesus' hands.

And Jesus says He can deal with the other emptiness too. He says in v.40, 'what my Father God wants is for everyone who *believes in me* to have eternal life. That beyond death, those who believe in me will live forever.'

I'm still going to die. So are you. But life in Jesus is infinitely fuller because it's not going to run out. I am full of hope, joy, optimism and peace - not about death itself, which is still a horrible, horrible thing. But about that being no more than an interruption in a life that will never end.

My confidence about this is based in Jesus. He said He could offer those who believe in Him unending life after death. Then He died. On a cross. It looked like He couldn't do anything for anyone. But then He broke death, and rose to life. Maybe you don't believe that. All I'll say about that is, if not, why not? Have you *really* checked out whether it's true?

If Jesus broke death itself, I really do believe Him when He says He can break mine too. That life can be infinitely fuller because it's going to be eternal.

How do we get this infinitely fuller life in Jesus then? Well, Jesus said it three times in the short passage we just read. *Believe in Him; but also come to Him.* Here's what some people tell me: 'I do believe in Jesus.' Great. But so what? Do you *come* to Him? Do you deliberately approach Him, day by day put your life in His hands, talk to Him, listen to what He has to say too? Listen again to what Jesus said:

'He who *comes* to me will never go hungry, and he who *believes* in me will never be thirsty... Everyone who *looks to* me and *believes* in me shall have eternal life...' If you want to have this life in Jesus that's infinitely fuller that we're discovering and sharing, then don't just *believe* in Him. *Come* to Him.

If you're feeling uneasy right now, why do you suppose that is? If what I'm saying is all nonsense, or just 'fine for Scott to believe but not something for me,' then why do you feel like you're keeping something at arm's length that

you know you need to let in? Like you're putting off something that you need to do? This is God. This is His Holy Spirit, saying, 'Come to Jesus. It's time.'

Pause for prayer/reflection - invite bowing, closed eyes

In the passage we read earlier, John 10:7-16, Jesus makes another big claim. He says, 'I am the gate for the sheep... whoever enters through me will be saved.' Saved from what? Saved from a life of wandering about aimlessly! Sheep do that. They wander off, and they get themselves in trouble. But when they *come in*, safely through the gate, they are in a place where they are secure, and together, and enjoying rich pasture.

That's what Jesus offers. This infinitely fuller life is *in Jesus*. You come to it *through Him*. And once you come into it, you come into a place of security, together with others, who are enjoying the rich pasture of what life together with Jesus is like. Spend enough time with us, come here a few weeks, and you'll get a sense of that. We share something very good together here, something that God is giving us as we come into life *in Him*.

Jesus also says in that passage, 'I am the Good Shepherd.' He says He's different to others that people follow or lean on to look after them. Others may let you down, hurt you, or abandon you when things get nasty. But Jesus is completely committed to His sheep - (that's the people who hear His voice and follow Him).

He's committed because He actually really does *care* about you. He wants you to live and not perish. He wants you to find fullness of life in Him. He wants you! 'Jesus loves you' sounds a bit twee, really. But what if it's true? What difference would it make in your life to truly know that there is a God who genuinely *loves* you - so much that He would lay down His life *for you*?

Twice Jesus says He loves those who hear His voice that much. So let me say it twice in the hope that you will hear Jesus' voice in this:

'I love you so much, I died for you.'

'I love you so much, I died for you.'

Sheep are fickle. They wander off, forget the Shepherd, forget themselves, really. But the Shepherd is not fickle. He's absolutely committed in love and life and death and resurrection to *you*.

Jesus said that there are 'other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.' He was telling churchy people that He was off to call non-churchy people to come and join them. I sincerely pray that every one of you here will hear Jesus' voice today saying, 'Come in. Join in. Come and discover life as it really could be - an infinitely fuller life in me.'

Think about a group of people you know of - a family, a group of friends, a team of some type (work, sports, volunteers) - that stands out for the quality of their relationships. What makes these relationships so good?

_____ to read John 13:34-14:7

There's lots of teams, groups and families that thrive with really strong relationships. And that's so important - in fact, some Harvard research done over a 75 year study of some people's lives shows that it's actually the most important thing for a good life. There's a TED talk by a guy called Robert Waldinger you can look up online about it.

Waldinger starts by saying that a survey of millennials (that's people born in the early 80s through to the early 00s) showed that 80% want to get rich and 50% want to get famous. But actually, this stuff doesn't end up making life good. The research shows, it's good relationships that lead to the healthiest, happiest, fullest lives. Loneliness kills. People with strong social connections thrive more. The quality rather than the quantity of relationships is what matters. And good relationships are good for us physically and mentally.

Why am I telling you all this? The point of this sermon is not to say 'church is one way to have a set of great relationships that will help you live longer and stronger.' It's to say that as a church - a family of people who are called family because we've all been adopted by God as Father through our faith in Jesus - I want to claim that we have a unique quality of relationship together that we'd love you to come and share in.

Jesus told His disciples to 'love one another as I have loved you - and that's how people will know that you're my followers.' As we as a church love each other with the uniquely sacrificial love that Jesus has shown each of us, and as you observe and notice it, you'll see something so rich and full of life that you'll recognise Jesus. And you'll want to share in it too.

That's a big claim for a church to make. It's a big claim I want to make for our church, here at St. Columba. Because I invite you to be with us and see how

we are with each other, and see if there isn't something infinitely fuller here than anything the world has to offer.

I can almost see those who are always here sweating! The pressure! Let me just tell you some true stories about the kind of love we've experienced here. When one of us is ill - and some of us have been *really* ill - this church family has provided meals, prayed through the night, looked after children and done the shopping.

When one of us is struggling to pay the bills, this church family has put their hands in their pockets to provide for us. When people's marriages and families have struggled to hold together, this church family has supported us with love and held us together. When people's lives have hung in the balance, this church family has given us a reason to hope and to keep living.

The language in this family is of grace, encouragement and loving challenge. It's not the bitter gossip and talking behind people's backs that we see in our workplaces or in some of our families and friendships. We are quicker to say 'Here's what I've done wrong' than 'here's what you've done wrong.' And what makes this all this happen is - we love Jesus. We believe in Him, and we've come to Him. And *that's* what makes our relationships uniquely good - a shared relationship that with God Himself as Father, through faith in Jesus.

All of that is *true* about this family of people discovering and sharing that life in Jesus is infinitely fuller. I want to quickly say, we're not perfect. Though we love each other really well, we hurt each other as every other sinful person does. We can fall into self-concern or bitter talk. But it's not our default. It's not who we are. It's what we're throwing off. And I think if you'll come and be with us, you'll notice that.

Jesus went on to say in that passage, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.' Another big claim. He's saying that He and He alone can give you life with God - this infinitely fuller life. There's no other way to get what Jesus offers. There's no other path - whether it's another religion, or lifestyle, or community - that can bring you this infinitely full life.

Here's the reason. It's been there in all three passages we've looked at, because Jesus *keeps* talking about it. It's that He has come from God, and He's going back to God. He's the *only* One that's ever been true of. He's the Son of God. He has come *from* the very eternal, infinite presence of God, and in John He says He's going back *to* that eternal, infinite presence.

From God; to God. That's unique. So here's why that could change everything about your life today. Because if you believe in and *come to* Jesus, you're coming to the only One who can *bring you home to God*. That's what He says in 14:1-7. You trust in God by trusting in Jesus. Jesus goes to prepare an infinitely full place for you with God. He is *the* way to the same God who sent Him to us in the first place. He's the One who's always been at home with God, and who says, 'Come to me, and I'll bring you into the family home.'

For an infinitely fuller life. A life where you never run empty. And a life that never runs out. A life that, together with others who are discovering and sharing it, knows the richest kind of love, joy, peace and security. And a life that goes beyond a death that can't do more than interrupt it.

Is that a life you want? Come and be one of the people discovering and sharing that life in Jesus is infinitely fuller.