

Now *That's* Living!

If we haven't said it ourselves, we have probably heard someone else say, "Now that's living!"

- You may remember a television series called "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous," hosted by Robin Leach from 1984 to 1995.
- The show featured the extravagant mansions and pastimes of wealthy entertainers, athletes and business moguls.

We say "Now that's living!" when we see people enjoying experiences, or living a lifestyle that we think is desirable and pleasant.

- In most cases this admiration is based on physical things ... or enjoyable activities ... that a certain income level or social class make possible.
- The inference is that those of us who don't enjoy a comparable lifestyle (whether we realize it or not) are not really living, because we don't have the riches and fame these people have attained.

Most of us will not even come close to living a lifestyle of the rich and famous ... but there is good news in today's readings ... God is making a better, life-giving offer ... And all we have to do ... is say "Yes!"

The Jews say "*L'chiam*" "To Life!" when making toasts. The toast echoes today's first reading, in which God urges the Israelites to "Choose life" ...

All three readings today touch on life as God intends it, also called life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

I want to share three aspects of life that I see running through them ...

- We have to choose life ...
- Life involves growth, maturation and fruitfulness, and ...
- Life is relational.

First, we have to choose life:

- In the reading from Deuteronomy (30:15–20), the Israelites have arrived at the destination God has prepared for them ...
- Moses is delivering his farewell sermon, in which he urges the people to "choose life" ...
 - that is, to freely follow the instructions that God has graciously given ...
 - in order to live as free people ...

Second, life involves growth, maturation and fruitfulness

- In the reading from 1 Corinthians (3:1–9), Paul says “you are God’s field, God’s building.”
- Paul is saying that to choose life is to grow and mature.
- In other words, Paul is challenging the Corinthians to grow up ... to tend to the health of the community ... if they are to live as free people.
- To live as God intends is to grow ... to mature as individuals, and as a community, because ...

Because ... Life is relational

- In the reading from Matthew (5:21–37), Jesus “lays down the law” regarding relationships.
- He sets forth a demanding ethic threatening fearsome consequences and requiring drastic actions

But, wait a minute! What’s going on here?

- Isn’t the Old Testament supposed to be about law and justice ... and the New Testament about grace and mercy?
- Isn’t Jesus all about grace?

Some churches view law and gospel as opposites:

- Especially some Lutherans – whom I’ve heard some pray for insight to discern between Law and Gospel as they read scripture.

John Calvin and his Reformed descendants view law and gospel as two sides of the same coin ...

- In this approach, we find gospel, mercy and grace almost oozing from both testaments.
- Creation, life and community are God’s good gifts ...
- Including law ...
 - the instructions that God has graciously given ...
 - in order to live as free people ...

When he “lays down the law,” Jesus is ...

- Calling us to be fiercely loyal to our spouses, to the covenant community, its members, and to the One who calls it into being.

This is good news, because life flourishes when we choose it freely and trust that God's grace will produce maturity and good fruits in us ... and in our relationships.

We praise God for this Good News!