

## “Arm Yourselves” John 10:10

When Spillane treats injured seamen offshore, one of the first things he evaluates is their degree of consciousness. The highest level, known as “alert and oriented times four,” describes almost everyone in an everyday situation. They know who they are, where they are, what time it is, and what’s just happened. If someone suffers a blow to the head, the first thing they lose is recent events – “alert and oriented times three” – and the last thing they lose is their identity. A person who has lost all levels of consciousness, right down to their identity is said to be “alert and oriented times zero.” When Spillane wakes up in the water, he is alert and oriented times zero. His understanding of the world is reduced to the fact that he exists, nothing more. Almost simultaneously, he understands that he is in excruciating pain. For a long time, that’s all he knows. – The Perfect Storm

John Spillane is a para-rescue jumper sent into the North Atlantic, into the worst storm of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the perfect storm as the book and film called it – to rescue a fisherman lost at sea. When his helicopter goes down, he is forced to jump into pitch blackness from an unknown height. When he hits the water, he’s going so fast that it’s like hitting the pavement from 80 feet above. He is dazed and confused...just like we are sometimes in the story of our own lives.

We have been told time and again that we matter to God. And part of us partly believes it. But life has a way of chipping away at that conviction. And after a while, the accumulation of event after event that we do not like and do not understand erodes our confidence that we are a part of something grand and good. Does God really mean us well? If that’s true, why didn’t He \_\_\_\_\_? Heal your loved one...save your marriage...get you married...help you out?

And what about the Christian life we keep hearing about in the Bible? All that good stuff doesn’t seem to line up with the life of most Christians does it? The Apostle Paul looks like a madman...and we look a little foolish...like kids who have been held back a few grades.

It looks like either we’re blowing it, or God is holding out on us. And some combination of both is where most people land. When things don’t go the way you wanted it’s either some version of “it’s my fault” or the idea that God “could have come through” but He didn’t.

What is really going on here? Good grief, life can be brutal. Day after day it hammers us until we lose sight of what God intends toward us. We haven’t the foggiest idea why the things that happen to us are happening to us. Add to that planes flying into buildings, children starving, people hurt and wham...If God is good and in charge...well, you know the rest. Is there an answer to this?

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

What? Jesus says He came to give us life! So I started looking:  
“I am the Bread of Life” John 6:48

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” John 7:38

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Proverbs 4:23

“You have made known the path of life.” Psalm 16:11

“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men” John 1:4

“Come to me and have life.” John 5:40

“Tell the people the full message of this new life.” Acts 5:20

Question: what kind of life is Jesus talking about? This offer has been interpreted time and again as: “Sure, God wants you to have life...eternal life because of Jesus.” And that’s true. But that is also like saying at your wedding: “I give you this ring as a sign your retirement is secure.” And in the meantime? What about the meantime? What about between now and heaven? Take a look with me...

“I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” Psalm 27:13

“I tell you the truth, Jesus said to them, no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.” Luke 18:29-30

Jesus doesn’t locate his offer on in some distant land after we have slogged our way through our days here on earth. He talks about a life that is available to us in this age as well. So does the Apostle Paul. “[Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.](#)” 1 Timothy 4:8 That’s our present life and the next. Remember this: “eternal” doesn’t mean “later”...it means “unending”. The offer is life that starts now. “...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.” Romans 6:4 (NLT)

That’s the offer of Christianity. And I believe that it would make a huge difference if we knew...really knew...that deep down, nobody can talk you out of it kind of knowing...if we knew that our lives and God’s glory were tied together right now! The offer of our faith is life, folks...make no mistake about that! So...where is it?

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

That verse interests me. Why did Jesus marry those two statements? He says them in one breath. Why? Because God intends life for you...and right now that life is opposed! There is a thief...and he comes to steal, kill and destroy. The offer is life...but there's an enemy with a different agenda. He is set against us, and we are at war.

How I have missed this for so long I don't know. We are at war. I don't like that fact any more than you do...but the sooner we come to grips with it – the more we will begin to understand the life being offered.

This is not heaven. Is that a surprise to anyone? This isn't even Mayberry. This world is a combat zone...a violent clash of two kingdoms. I'm sorry if I'm the one to break this news to you, but we were born into a world at war and we live all our days in the midst of this battle.

Back in the beginning of man's time on earth a great glory was bestowed on us. Human beings were created in the image of God and fully alive in relationship with him. In Psalm 8 we read: ["For you made us only a little lower than God and you crowned us with glory and honor."](#) Psalm 8:5 (NLT) Things were awesome!

But lurking in the Garden of Eden was an enemy. This mighty angel had once been glorious as well, beautiful and powerful. But he rebelled against his Creator. Unable to overthrow God, he turned his sights on those who bore God's image. And the war began.

Reading the Old Testament is enough to convince us that war is a central theme of God's activity. The Exodus...blood, hail, locusts, darkness, death, plagues, and finally, the Red Sea. ["The Lord is a warrior."](#) Exodus 15:3

There is war to get to the Promised Land. There is war to get into the Promised Land. There is war to try and keep the Promised Land. Joshua goes to war. Deborah goes to war. Gideon goes to war. King David goes to war. Elijah goes to war...getting the picture?

Now, many people think war ends with the Old Testament. Jesus is all about peace. Well, look at these words of Jesus: ["I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."](#) Matthew 10:34 In fact, his birth was an act of war...an invasion.

["1\)A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. 2\)She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. 3\)Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 4\)His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. 5\)She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.](#)

[7\)And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8\)But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.](#)

17)Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” Revelation 12:1-5, 7-8, 17

This was an act of war, and the enemy knew it. He tried to kill Jesus as a baby. John Eldredge in Waking the Dead writes: “The whole life of Christ is marked by battle and confrontation. He kicks out demons with a stern command. He rebukes a fever, and it leaves Peter’s mother in law. He rebukes a storm and it subsides. He confronts Pharisees time and again to set God’s people free from legalism. In loud voice he wakes Lazarus from the dead.”

And, of course, there is the **CROSS**. War is the backdrop for the whole Story of God’s dealing with his people after the fall into sin. It is the context in which everything happens. And what is that war about? Our salvation, our restoration. And the Apostle Paul says that we are so steeped in this battle that we should arm ourselves.

“10)Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11)Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12)For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13)Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14)Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15)and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16)In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17)Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18)And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:10-18

Paul is telling us to arm ourselves...and notice the first thing we need to put on...truth. We arm ourselves by getting a good, solid grip on our situation. God’s intention toward us is life. Those intentions are opposed by the enemy. And until we come to terms with this we will not understand life.

Truthfully, until we get this, we will misinterpret 90% of what is happening around us and to us. It will be very hard to believe that God’s intentions toward us are life “**to the full**” as Jesus said. And it will be even harder not to feel that everything bad that happens in somehow our fault.

And, until we understand that we have been born into a world at war, we will think some awful things about God. That 4 year old girl being molested...do you really think that was God’s will? That ugly divorce that tore your family apart – God wanted that to happen? September 11, 2001 – that was desired by God?

And what about in your own daily life? How many times haven’t you told God that you have reached your limit...that you can’t take it anymore? “God, there are too many enemies, why won’t you make them all stop firing at me?” Sorry – that’s not where you live right now! That day is coming...when the lion

and lamb lie down together and swords are beat into plowshares. But that's not right now. Right now, it's war.

And that sure explains a lot. Remember what Jesus said? **"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."** John 10:10 Before He promised us life, He warned that a thief would try to steal, kill, and destroy. Question for you: why don't we think there is a thief who actually steals, kills, and destroys?

I don't believe that you and I can understand our lives, see clearly what has happened to us, or how to move forward from here, until we get this – until we see life as a battle. The war takes place around us and within us. Luther said at the same time we are both saint and sinner...old self and new self at war. And what's the war all about? OUR HEART!

I have learned a few things in the last half century plus...and one of them I am now convinced of is this: we don't see things as clearly as we ought to. We live too much of our lives "alert and oriented times zero." We don't understand what's happening around us or to us or to those we love, and we are practically clueless when it comes to the importance of our own lives and glory that God gives us which is being held back in each one of us. You have a crucial role to play in this war...and there is a glory God is giving you that is being held in check!

There is a great battle unfolding around us...against us...and even in us. God has called us and gifted us and placed us here in Steamboat Springs, Colorado for a reason. If you don't see that for yourself yet...here's the good news: I have a sermon series for you..."Hearts Fully Alive" and it's going to run all the way until December. For today, I'll just tell you that we don't see clearly, because we don't see with "the eyes of our heart". And that's what we'll talk about next time.

Between now and then...just look around for the evidences this week that show you were born into a world at war. And start asking God to wake you up to the life He is calling you to live. AMEN.