

**Love and Light:
“Born to Live Forever!”
1 John 5:9-13**

A sermon preached by
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It's really hard for me to express,
For so long it's been concealed,
But I really need to confess to you
Exactly how I feel

When I think of what I lack
In becoming more Christ-like
And think of the person I should be,
It can tear me up inside

I often wonder if I'd ever be
What you desire, O Lord,
When I compare myself to you,
There's no doubt — I fall short

It seems so overwhelming, Lord,
With many things to overcome,
Just to have your godly qualities
And the victory of your Son

It often seems beyond me, Lord,
And I fail every day,
It hurts so much when I fall short
And stumble along the way

Hear my heart crying out to you,
O Lord, please lift me up
Give me strength to carry on
When I have had enough

Fill me with your Holy Spirit
Afresh today, my Lord,
Guide me, teach me, and equip me
For what you've called me for

I pray that even in my weakness,
I'll be of use to you,
So others will see you in my life
And want to know you too

It's at these times, I need you more
When I feel I cannot face
Another day where I fail you,
O Lord, I need your grace.

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Perhaps these words could have been written by someone living at the time the words we find in the book of 1st John were written. 1 John is perhaps an open essay or better yet a sermon to encourage the community that has somehow divided over the question of the humanity of Jesus. Yes, Jesus' humanity. That may sound a little odd for us today, when the more modern or post-modern questions are more likely to be about the divinity of Christ. But nonetheless, some of the members of the 1 John community have now split from the church, denying that Jesus is the Christ, or that he actually came in the flesh. So the author of this text's intent is to encourage those who remain that their confession of the earthy Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God is true.

Isn't it just like human nature...to wander away after the fanfare has died down? When the hard realities of daily life set in...we begin to rely more on our own strength than leaning on the strength of God in Christ. Those who make up this community in 1 John have been eye-witnesses to the unfolding story of Jesus ministry, his trial and crucifixion...his death and resurrection. They have burned with the fire of the Holy Spirit...claimed the love and light that Christ offers...and have now wandered away...raising questions of whether he was real or not. 1 John is an asserted effort to remind them of who and whose they are and real them back in to live a life believing, loving and obeying the saving love and grace of Jesus...and to not only live in the light now...but for all eternity!

For 6 weeks now we have journeyed together in this series of "Love and Light" discovering the powerful words in the book of 1 John. We have talked of how God's light saves, heals, cleanses us, and restores us. We can be recognized as being a

part of God's family due to the resemblance we share...and that resemblance brings with it some responsibility to keep the family together. 1 John clearly calls us to believe, love and obey. To believe God's testimony...to love God and to love one another, and to obey the commands of Jesus to believe in his name and to love one another. When we believe, love and obey we can live with confidence. And it is only through God's love that we are empowered to love one another. And last week RoyBeth reminded us that we are born for victory...that God's love bring life...even out of brokenness and death. We are born for victory...and today I want us to claim that we are born to live forever!

Perhaps this is where the challenge is for us today as we look a little deeper into this text. To understand the depth of living an eternal life, we must first understand our purpose and power.

Full disclosure: I love being present with people as they discover and come into the full sense of purpose. It's why I love the practice of coaching. You see, I believe that we possess all we need to be the very best of ourselves. God has equipped each of us with all we need. As a coach it is my job to walk alongside of you helping you uncover the beauty of these gifts you already have...asking questions to move you closer to that self-discovery. The best metaphor I like concerning the practice of coaching is like riding a tandem bicycle. You are in the front and I'm in the back...we must peddle together to keep the bike moving forward, but you as the coachee are moving us forward, and as the coach get to point out things along that way that help you get to the destination...and since I coach from a Christian perspective, I will always connect you back to how God plays a part in your passion and purpose.

As I come onboard in a full-time capacity...I look forward to engaging with you to discover your purpose and passion for serving...sharing your story...living your testimony as a believer and follower of Jesus.

So this passage in 1 John 5 is a bit of a coaching challenge. To discover your purpose, your passion, and your testimony just as God as given us His testimony through his Son Jesus.

Just maybe that is the problem that exist for the community this text is being written. Just because they have made a profession of faith and become a part of the faith community...we find that they have wandered away. The new has worn off we could say...and now they are just living a ho-hum, mundane life.

That's what has happened for Joe Gardner, in the Pixar film, Soul.

Joe Gardner has always felt like he was “born to play” jazz piano. When he fulfills his dream of playing with famous saxophonist Dorothea Williams, he asks her, “So, what happens next?” She responds: “We come back tomorrow night and do it all again.” Despondently, Joe confesses, “I’ve been waiting on this day for my entire life. I thought I’d feel different.”

The film’s main insight is something Christians already know: There’s more to life than our accomplishments. As an Enneagram 3 this is probably the very reason I love this film.

Joe Gardner, a part-time music teacher who has greater aspirations to perform professionally as a jazz pianist. His whole life is encumbered with reaching this one goal, but when he finally gets his break, Joe takes an unfortunate fall that nearly destroys his dream—casting him into the afterlife.

I ran across an article in Christianity Today that helps elaborate on this...

In recent decades, Christians, especially young adults, have set out on similar expeditions for a “spark,” searching for that one big thing to accomplish for our faith. We too are subjected to

feelings of purposelessness if we aren't becoming or doing grandiose things "for the sake of the gospel" challenged us to live missionally and jump out of our comfort zones to accomplish great things. But they were inadequate guides for the mundane parts of life. As many millennials found themselves working a 9-to-5 to keep food on the table and the lights on, some [asked themselves](#) whether their routine lives [testified](#) in any grand way about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These questions are compounded in a loaded year of a pandemic, ongoing racial and social injustice, and political strife unlike our generation has seen. Our souls have been conditioned to do something so extraordinarily impressive and effectual that a year of quarantining, distancing, and being still feels like a betrayal to our Christian witness.

Joe Gardner witnesses firsthand the consequences of idolizing our life's purpose. While attempting to return to his body on earth, he observes "lost souls" aimlessly searching for something. Moonwind, a member of the Mystics Without Borders is "devoted to helping the lost souls of Earth find their way." He explains to Joe that these souls are individuals who at one time or another found themselves "in the zone," blissfully given to the excellency and enjoyments of their craft. But at some point, they were unable to "let go of their own anxieties and obsessions, leaving them lost and disconnected from life," and became unrecognizable and empty versions of themselves.

Our work and aspirations can never fulfill us in the ways we were designed to be fulfilled. The message of Soul encourages anyone to "let go of trying to identify yourself by one idea or goal. Instead, commit yourself to bringing purpose and passion into each conversation, workspace and home space you are a part of."

The Christian, however, takes it a step further. We commit ourselves to bringing the passion of Christ into every area of

our mundane lives. In doing so, we experience what it means to be alive and be human in ways God designed us to be. “If we bear in mind that our daily doings can ‘aim our love and desire toward God,’ our labor ceases being drudgery,” [wrote](#) Jamie Hughes.

When we’re living big lives, sprinting from task to task while focusing on nothing in particular, tea is little more than a shot of caffeine. But if we’re in tune with God and living at the slower pace required for worship, teatime takes on added dimensions, becoming a “wonder of hot water and dried leaves” that provides sanctuary.

Jesus exemplified this for us. Jesus “came to show us how to be human, how to love God and our neighbor. How to depend on the Spirit and see its fruit manifest in our lives. How to care for the hurting and needy among us. How to fight for justice and against oppression.”

But for someone who’s constantly seeking to find meaning in the next big thing for their life, everything will continually feel meaningless. We can miss out on the life God has put before us. Like Joe, we too can over-stress the idea we were “born to do” something. But the truth is that we weren’t born to do anything but abide in Christ. We live in Jesus. It’s possible we define our worth by our purpose and subsequently blind ourselves to the greatest blessings and wonder of being defined by our identity in Christ.

I believe that is the key to being born to live forever...it’s not about waiting to live forever, it’s about living now as in eternity. Eternal life is not only about the future promise we have for those who believe in Jesus...but it is also about the present reality...in this sense it has to do with a quality of

existence that death cannot destroy. That is, it is “eternal” not in the sense of lasting forever, but in its quality, in its manifestation in the here and now.

One last connection to the character Joe Garner in Soul. Ironically it was Joe’s father who introduces him to the love of jazz music. Joe became obsessed with becoming a great musician that it became meaningless...because he lost sight of the very reason the music became a passion. The piano became the instrument he loved most..and while defending his love for it he says, “the tune is the very excuse to bring out the you!”

If we are going to live an eternal life...then it’s important for us to remember who gives us the tune...and the opportunity to bring out the “you” lies in our passion to believe, love and obey the one who came to show us the way!

In the name of God, who places in us the tune...and in the love of Christ who shows us the way...and in the power of the Holy Spirit...may we live a life of eternal victory in love and light!