

# Gospel Meetings s.h.c.- 01 for Me to Live Is Christ

by Stan Ford

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*The speaker argues that life's purpose is not found in things, theories, or thrills, but in Jesus Christ, who is the entrance, enjoyment, and enhancement of life.*

**Duration:** 42:43

**Scripture:** Psalm 32:1, Matthew 4:17, Luke 15:24, Acts 20:21, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Philippians 1:2, Hebrews 13:5

**Topics:** "Materialism", "Repentance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the story of the rich farmer from Luke 12. The preacher highlights how the pursuit of material possessions and worldly happiness can lead to emptiness and foolishness. He emphasizes the importance of repentance and faith in Jesus as the true path to happiness and forgiveness. The preacher encourages the congregation to seek a deeper relationship with God and to find true joy in Christ rather than in worldly things or theories of men.

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## Transcript

It's a joy to be here, a joy to see friends again, and I trust that you are, too, and I trust that the coming evening we will see very much of the blessing of the Lord. I want to start this series of services by turning to the first chapter of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. If you have your Bibles and care to turn with me, although you may have your Bible and would much rather I just read the scripture, but the first chapter of Philippians, please.

I would like to read a few verses at the beginning of the chapter, and then select the verse which is my text. Philippians chapter one, Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine, for you all making requests with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day unto now, being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

Verse twenty-one, for me to live is Christ and to die is more Christ. It's gay. May the Lord just add his blessing to the reading of his own precious word.

For me to live is Christ. I wonder if I was to ask you individually, what makes life for you? I wonder what you'd say. If I was to ask the church of God, what makes life for its members? I wonder what they would answer.

Now, there are some things that I've learned as I've been travelling from place to place in your lovely land. One of the things I have learned is this, that there are many men and women who would answer that question, what makes life? They would answer it by simply saying, life is made up of things, of things. Are we not living in a day when so many are saying, as the Prodigal Son said long ago, give me, give me, give me.

And there are those who imagine that life consists of an abundance of things. If I have a good job, if I have a good home, if I have good prospects, if I, all things make life. And then suddenly we open our newspaper, we turn the knob of our wireless, we listen to what's going on in the world, and we find out that those that have the most things appear to be the most unhappy.

We suddenly find that things are precious and things are essential. But the story that the Lord Jesus told in the twelfth chapter of Luke appears to be very modern. You remember he told the story of a farmer, a very rich farmer, who leaned over his pine fire gate and saw his fields of waving corn and said to his soul, soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years.

Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. And Jesus said, thou fool. Oh please sir, please madam, I didn't say it.

The one who said it was the one who, in the Sermon on the Mount, said, if you call your brother a fool without a cause, you're in danger of hellfire. Oh please, those are not my words. Jesus said that if you call your brother a fool without a cause, you're in danger of hellfire.

So if Jesus said, thou fool, there must have been a cause. And the cause was that the man thought that life consisted in things. He proposed like a fool, he practiced like a fool, and sir, don't you forget this, he perished like a fool.

Thou fool. But there are men and women who tell me that life consists of things, and there are men and women who tell me that life consists of theories. Oh dearie me, I get that so often, especially when I'm speaking to undergraduates.

You would think that life has its beginning and its end in theory. Oh, if they can grasp some new philosophy, if they can listen to someone expound what they believe to be some new approach, then this is it. All life, it consists of theories.

And I have little doubt that every one of you will acknowledge that there have been many thousands of men and women in your beloved land, as in my beloved land. They have taken their life occupied with theories. The difficulty is, the theories they follow today are not the theories they followed yesterday.

And if I was to speak of the theories that they followed when I was a young man, they'd look at me and they'd say, you're a square. Well, they don't even call them that now, because that theory's out of date. The apostle, by the way, may I emphasize this? It thrills my heart, I don't know what it does to yours, but when I take my Bible in my hand, I'm utterly amazed that I'm reading something that's over 2,000 years old.

I don't know what you do in history, you young folk at school. I haven't the faintest idea. When I went to school, of course, when it came to English literature, they told us something about Shakespeare, and they told us something about the father of all English literature, Chaucer.

And if you came for my candy, they'd stick their chest out and they'd ask you whatever you know of our great candy poet, Hardy. Yeah? The very basis of English literature doesn't go back any further than Chaucer, and that's only a few hundred years old. And I've got in my hand a book that the latest writers wrote over 2,000 years ago, or about 2,000 years ago, and yet how applicable it is for today.

I take it, and you'd almost think that I'd read in your local newspaper. It's so not today. I mean, you take these people who imagine that life consists of theories, and then remember the words written to the church at Taunt, where the writer, led of the Holy Ghost, said, the world by wisdom knew not God.

And you'll see where theories get you, away from God. But life doesn't just consist of things, does it? And it doesn't just consist of theories, does it? I can almost hear you young folk look at me and say, oh yeah, things, they don't matter very much. Theories, they don't matter very much.

I'll tell you what makes life thrill. Thrill! Now, please, don't you misunderstand me. I believe things are important.

Why, I did when a young man said to me, can I have your daughter to be my wife, I thought things consisted very much then of things that mattered, that she'd be cared for properly. When my son asked someone else to be joined to him, I said to him, boy, can you keep her? I think things do count. I think theories count, because I wouldn't give you much for a man who's not prepared to think through the claims of the Christian faith.

And I believe thrills count. We'd heard it. I'll let you into a secret, as long as you don't tell anyone.

I had a wonderful Christmas last year. My idea. We had a phone call.

Granddaughter. Grampy, we've got a new pony. Anyone would think I didn't know about it.

I'd got up in the forest and got it. But my son-in-law and my daughter had bought them a new pony. Grampy, would you break it in for the Shavs? Oh, bring it over.

So they brought this pony over, and I put it in the Shavs. Oh, I tell you, I had some fun. Sitting up in a little breaking trap behind a pony that had never been in the Shavs before.

Put a kicking strap on it. Get up there. I hadn't done it for years.

And it was wonderful, until the time came to put it out on the main road with all the traffic. I didn't mind when it was in the field, if it didn't go where I told it to. Well, you know, I just sang at it.

But to put it on the road. And out we went. Mary was sitting up in the trap, and the wife, you know, and I was walking to its head.

And the traffic was going, and the old pony was picking her legs up. We got to the corner. We stopped for the lights.

Always good to stop for the red light. We were turning round to the right, and a great what we would call a refuge lorry. What do you call them, sir? Garbage truck.

Oh. A great garbage truck came and threw alongside of us. And this pony looked at this great thing, and oh, I was calming it down and calming it down.

And suddenly the lights changed, and he left off his air brakes. I don't know if it was the songs I'd been singing where I'd been breaking it in in the field, but the pony suddenly decided to go to heaven. And up he went, and took me with it, and Mary in the trap.

Oh, I like thrills. I like thrills. Listen.

Yeah, well, I'm still here. I'm still here. We had all right.

But I tell you, it's not the first time you've driven in a trap, either. But there it was. I only know this, that if that consisted of life, it wouldn't be very much, would it? That lasted for a little while, and the memory of it still lasts.

And when I go over and look over the hedge and see the ponies running about in the daughter's farm, well, it comes back again. But, friend, if that's all life was, what a miserable thing it would be. I hope you have some thrills in life.

I hope your life's not just dull. I hope you have some theories in your thinking. I hope you don't accept everything someone says without reasoning it through.

I hope you've some things. Please, God, you have. But life does not consist of things, or theories, or thrill.

He's in prison. Poor, half-blind man. He's lost his things.

The theories of man have placed him in prison. They're meaningless to him. When it comes to thrills, what thrills are there in closing your eyes in a stinking, dirty, damp jail? And he writes to the church at Philippi, and he says, for me to live, it's Christ.

It's Christ. Oh, friend, have you got life this morning? Have you Christ? For me to live is Christ, and to die is death. I would like to leave you in thought just for a moment for three simple things.

Life has to have a beginning. The entrance of life is Christ. Life has to have a continuance, or it's death.

And so the entrance of life is Christ. But oh, hallelujah, the enjoyment of life is Christ. Life has an end.

But oh, bless God, for the Christian we can say that if the entrance of life is Christ, and the enjoyment of life is Christ, the enhancement of life, for me to live is Christ, and to die, it's gain. It's gain. There's something more.

The enhancement of life is Christ. This morning, as we gathered around the table and remembered the Lord Jesus and the way he appointed, one of our brethren made reference to the fifteenth chapter of Luke. You'll forgive me, but it's been going round in my mind ever since.

We sang a little hymn that reminded us of its truth. I wonder if I could take you just for a moment, away there into the fifteenth chapter of Luke, and hear the prayer or the statement of the Father. My son was dead.

This, my son, was dead. Never let us forget, if you and I are going to enter into life, we have to realize the tremendous fact that we are but dead in trespasses and sins if we know not Christ. Dead in trespasses and sins.

And the Father gave to say of his son who had gone into the far land with his things and his theories, seeking his thrills, he dared to say of him that he was dead. But something happened. He was dead, but he's alive again.

He was lost, but he sang. How was it that he came back to life? How was it that this man entered into life? May I remind you, very simply, of what happened? The first thing with this young man is the first thing that must happen for all of us if we will enter into life. He repented in the far country amongst the pigs.

He dared to say, I will arise and I'll go to my Father and I'll say unto him, Father, I've sinned against heaven and before thee, and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. And in that far country he saw something of the possession to which he had gone when he turned his back on his God and turned his back on his parlor and turned his back on his home.

For he said, I've sinned against God. He turned his back on God. He said, I'm going to repent.

My friend, some years ago in my country there was a very wonderful man whose name will be known and whose memory will be revered by many of you this side of the water. Professor Rendall Short was one of the greatest surgeons of our country. He was, as many of you know, associated with Buller's Holmes and his work in the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship has put them in his debt forever.

I was speaking at a conference in the city of Bristol, England, with Professor Short. After the afternoon session it was open for a time of questioning and, of course, I was but the boy, the professor was there to answer everything and I just nodded my head, you know. They thought I knew something.

As soon as I opened my mouth they knew I didn't, so I kept quiet. But there it was. But I well remember this question.

One of the folk in the congregation said, Professor, what is the difference between, or is there a difference between, the preaching you listened to when you were a young man and the preaching we're listening to today? I can see little Professor Short, he was but a short man as well. I can see him as he waited a moment and then said, there is a vast difference between the preaching I listened to when I was a young man and the preaching that seems to be so prevalent today. When I was a young man they preached, repent and believe the gospel.

Today they preach, believe and be happy. Well I want to tell you something. If you do believe you'll be happy, for happy is the man whose transgression has forgiven him.

But if you come to these services during the week, and I hope and I'm sure you will, I want to promise you that also I will preach repentance. My Bible says this is the gospel, repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus. This man repented.

He turned from his wicked way and his sin. He not only repented but, as I have said, he returned. He said, I will arise and go.

It wasn't enough saying I'm sorry I've sinned, I'm sorry I've sinned. But if he was to enter into the blessing of it, he had to return. And that's not an easy thing to do sir, is it? We fang with the children as they left, one step more, one step more.

But I tell you the hardest step you'll ever take is a step that will take you away from where you're fanged, to Jesus Christ. Take the step. I remember when I was first converted, as most of you know, my background was not a Christian background, and when I was first converted I used to sing some of my old fighting friends and they used to look at me and they used to whistle and put their finger to their head and they'd say, fight back.

And I used to put my hands in my pocket and say, Lord let me leave them there, let me leave them there. And there they were screwing their heads. After a while of course it didn't bother me, because I found out they didn't touch my head, they touched their own.

But nevertheless, I am not ignorant of the fact that if you're prepared to return to Jesus Christ, it'll cost you something. I don't want to make little of that. I have a God that's looking for men and looking for women, and the poor half-blind preacher who found himself in a prison cell didn't mind the prison cell because Jesus was there with him.

He not only repented in return, but he requested it. Oh he said, I'll go to my Father and I'll say, Father, I've sinned against heaven and before thee, and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose. But his father saw him when he was yet a great way off and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. I'd say it's a bit of a job to talk when someone's kissing you.

He was able to get the first part out. Father, I've sinned against heaven and before thee, and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son. But the tears of the dad and the kisses of the father stopped him then.

And he never said, make me as one of thy hired servants. He was going there, but he never said it. The father had something better for him than that.

A sermon? No, you'll come back as a son. Isn't it wonderful because of Calvary? Because of the fact that Christ died for our sin? Jesus Christ says to you and me tonight, you can come. Or this morning, you can come.

He says to you and me, there is an entrance to light. If you'll repent and return and request. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall, hallelujah, shall be saved.

But I said the entrance of light is Jesus Christ. For me to get life is Christ, but for me to live is Christ. The enjoyment of life is Christ.

I love that story, don't you? I love it. Do you remember what happened? His father said, bring forth the ring and put it on him, and shoes for his feet, and the best robe, and kill the peasant calf. And I once heard a quaint old preacher yell.

I once heard him say, why, that ring had been there for years waiting for him to come back. And the garments had been there and the mothballs for years waiting for him to come back. Why, he said the shoes had been there for years waiting for him to come back.

The calf had been there for years waiting for him to come back. He wasn't much of a farmer, was he? It'd have been a bit tough if the calf had been waiting for years. I only know this, that if the calf hadn't been waiting for years, the one that provided it all had been waiting.

And he's waiting for you this morning. And then they went in and it says this, and they began. Did you get that, young people? They began to make merry.

It never says they stopped. They just began. You see, when you come to Christ, you never stop making merry, you only begin.

And here in time you begin to make merry, and in eternity, at his right hand of pleasures forevermore. Oh, thank God for me to live his Christly enjoyment of life, his Christ. To know that day by day he's with you.

We have just finished, as you know, some services in Burlington, and the Lord's been very gracious, and some have come to know the Lord as Savior, and it's been a joy. We've had some happy meetings. But during the course of the day as I've been visiting, I had on one occasion, on one day, to visit some homes where every person I went to, every home I went to, the person was dying with a cancer.

And please, I want to say something to you. I have no light answer to that. I have never found any books written by theologians that helped me in that ministry.

To look into the face of a man who you know will not be with you much longer, and to try and find some word of hope and help. But I thank God for this fact, that there as I spoke to these men concerning the Christ of God, I was able to remind them that in their position, to know Jesus Christ is to know one who in the depth of their pain, and of their sorrow, and of their anxiety, has promised to be with them. I have, and I have quoted it here before many times, I have a favorite verse in the Bible.

It's found in the 13th chapter of Hebrews. David long ago cried, Oh leave me not and forsake me not! Jesus in the 13th of Hebrews said, I will never leave thee in the face. That we might boldly say, The Lord is mine.

Isn't that wonderful? The Lord is my helper. I will not fear what makes you do anything. And when the darkest things that could happen to a person happen, if Jesus is with you, what a difference.

I'd rather part to it with Christ than without him. For me to enjoy life is great. I want to tell you this, that the Lord hasn't made me miserable.

If I look miserable, it must be the, well what I had for breakfast or something, I don't know. It's nothing to do with the Lord, because I thank God that Jesus Christ has brought joy. But I said the entrance of life and the enjoyment of life is Christ.

I want to remind you that the enhancement of life is Christ. If there is one thing certain, If Jesus Christ does not come back for his own, every one of us will face death. Please God, he will come back for his own, very soon.

But if he doesn't, if in his love for other sinners, he still leaves open the door of salvation, every one of us will have to face death. How many of us this morning can say, for me to live is Christ and to die, it's gay. It's gay.

Now please don't misunderstand me. Don't misunderstand me. I don't want to die.

Not me. I've got a number of reasons I don't want to. I've got a wife, I've got a son, I've got a daughter, I've got a daughter-in-law, I've got a son-in-law, I've got one, two, three, four so far grandchildren.

I've got a good reason why I don't want to die. I'm very much like the Bishop of Durham. You remember the story of the Bishop, or maybe you don't, but I expect you do.

The Bishop of Durham, you know, was taken very sick. He went to see his doctor and the doctor said, you must go to Switzerland for six months. And the Bishop said, I can't go to Switzerland for six months, I'm too busy.

Well, make up your mind, it's either Switzerland or heaven. Oh, he said, if it's as bad as that, I'll go to Switzerland. I'm like the Bishop of Durham.

I don't want you to think that I'm aching from spirituality I haven't got. I want you to know this, that I am utterly convinced, utterly convinced, that knowing Jesus Christ as my Saviour has brought joy in time, and hallelujah, will bring joy in eternity. For me to live is Christ, and to die is more of Christ.

To be with Him, which is Father. And the Apostle Paul could say, I've entered life, I'm enjoying life. I have been enhanced in my life with the knowledge that the future is secure.

Because there was a time in my life when I bowed my knee, and I cried, who art thou Lord? What wilt thou have me to do? And I received that Saviour as my Saviour. I came to know that it was true, that faithful was the saying, and worthy of all expectation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Oh, friends, friends, have you found that out? Of course you've found that out.

That's not the question. The question is not, have you found out that Christ died for sinners? The question is, have you taken Him as your Saviour? Have you opened your heart to Him? For my Bible says, to as many as received Him. To them gave He the right to become the sons of God, to enter life, even to those that believe on His name.

May I ask, if you have not received Him, and there are two people who know, you know in Christ's name, but if you have not received Him, will you receive Him this morning? Will you ask Him to enter your life? You with us will leave this service saying, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. The decision is yours. You make the right decision.

Could I help you? Could I ask you to sing with me as we close the words of what I suppose the loveliest of hymns, and I think it, just as I am, it's numbered, Mr. Choirmaster, please, sir, 226. 226. We've had a change of choirmasters.

Thank you. 226, just as I am. I believe when I was with you the last occasion I said this.

I still feel very much the same. I'd rather you didn't sing it unless you meant it. It's such a lovely hymn.

It has been blessed by God to the salvation of thousands, but I would rather you didn't sing, just as I am, I come, unless you're willing to come, or having come, you want to come closer. But if you'll mean it, He'll receive you, because He said, Him that cometh unto me, I shall in no wise cast thee. Will you come? The first and last verse of 226.

Before I dismiss, I wonder if I may say what I say at the close of every service. I have in my hand, a few copies of that lovely little gospel booklet, God's Way of Salvation. Now I may, if I felt that the Lord wanted

me to do, but as you know I don't normally make appeal.

I feel that this matter needs to be done, I say this reverently, in the coldness of one's own approach to the Lord. I don't want anyone to go from these meetings saying they were just emotional meetings. I'm not after your emotions alone, I'm after them, and not alone.

I'm after your will. I'm after a man or a woman who will say yes to Jesus Christ in this service, and then go back to his business and prove it. Back to his home and prove it.

I may, if I felt the Lord wanted me to, but I don't normally do it. But it is my custom at the close of every service to say, that I hold in my hand a few copies of that lovely little booklet, God's Way of Salvation. Not my way, God's way.

And if this morning there's someone who wants to enter into life, you wish to take Christ as your Savior, would you afterwards just come and ask me for a booklet, I'll be standing in the front. There are trained counselors here who'd love to speak to you. We are your servants for Christ's sake.

Friend, what is your life? Shall we pray? God and Father, we ask very simply that you will bless what has been said. Grant that each one of us here might realize that it's not just in things or theories or thrill, but it's in Jesus Christ, who died for our sin, was raised again because of our justification, that we can have life. Grant, we beseech thee, that there may be found some who will have life today.

Dismiss us then with thy blessing, and may the love of God the Father, and the grace of God the Son, and the fellowship and communion of God the Holy Spirit be the enjoyed abiding portion of all who love the Lord in sincerity and interest. Now this day, and until that day shall dawn, and the shadows flee away, and we enter into the enhancement of life, and see him face to face. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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