

**Kevin Powell**

**John 10:1-10**

I want to begin with a confession.

There are days when I am surrounded by more than enough and still feel something is missing.

Not dramatically missing. Not in a way that would make sense on paper.

Just a thinness. A kind of distance.

As if life is happening... but not quite touching me.

And I wonder if you know that feeling too.

Because we live in a world that is, by almost every measurable standard, abundant.

We have access to more information than any generation before us.

More convenience. More technology. More choice.

We can order almost anything we want and have it arrive at our door.

We can connect with people across the world in seconds.

We can curate our lives, our images, our identities.

Abundance is everywhere.

And yet.

Loneliness is rising.

Anxiety is rising.

A quiet sense of disconnection is rising.

Which makes Jesus' words feel less like poetry and more like a disruption.

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Because if abundance were simply about having more, we would already be there.

We have built a world that is very good at producing things.

But we are not as good at producing belonging.

We have learned how to fill space.

But we have not always learned how to be present within it.

And somewhere along the way, a different voice has taken hold.

A voice that sounds normal. Even reasonable.

You need more.

You are behind.

You have to keep up.

You cannot slow down.

It is a voice that promises abundance,  
but delivers exhaustion.

A voice that promises connection,  
but often leaves us comparing, performing, measuring.

And it is subtle.

Because it does not feel like something being taken from  
us.

It feels like something we are supposed to want.

The thief, Jesus says, comes to steal and kill and destroy.

And I used to imagine that as something obvious.  
Something external. Something I could clearly reject.

But more often, it sounds like this:

Your worth is what you produce.  
Your value is how you are perceived.  
Your life will matter when you finally arrive.

And so we build lives around that voice.

We fill our calendars.  
We optimize our time.  
We manage our image.

We become efficient.

But not always alive.

We accumulate things.  
But we struggle to receive one another.

We are constantly connected.  
But rarely known.

And it is not because we are doing something wrong.

It is because we are living inside a system that confuses  
abundance with accumulation.

A system that teaches us to measure life  
rather than inhabit it.

And into that world, Jesus tells a story about sheep.

Which feels almost absurd.

Because sheep do not accumulate.

Sheep do not optimize.

Sheep live in relationship.

They depend on a voice.

“My sheep hear my voice.”

And I wonder if part of what we have lost  
is not just connection with each other,  
but the ability to recognize a voice that gives life.

Because we are surrounded by so many voices.

The voice of urgency.  
The voice of comparison.  
The voice of fear.

And they are loud.

They tell us who we are supposed to be.  
What we are supposed to want.  
How we are supposed to live.

And if we listen long enough,  
we begin to believe that is the only way.

But Jesus speaks differently.

“They will come in and go out and find pasture.”

There is a gentleness in that.

A rhythm.

In and out.

Not trapped in productivity.  
Not trapped in performance.

Free.

And that word might be closer to abundant than anything  
else.

Freedom to rest.  
Freedom to step away.

Freedom to be with another person without turning it into a transaction.

Because one of the losses in our culture is that we have begun to treat even relationships as something to manage.

We network.

We leverage.

We maintain.

We transact.

But we do not always encounter.

We do not always sit long enough to be changed by another person's presence.

We do not always risk being known.

And so we end up with lives that are full but not necessarily shared.

Lives that are busy  
but not necessarily connected.

Lives that look abundant  
but feel, at times, strangely empty.

"I am the gate," Jesus says.

Not the destination.

The gate.

Which means abundant life is not something we build.

It is something we enter.

And what we enter into is not more things.

It is relationship.

With God.

With others.

With ourselves.

It is the kind of life where you are not constantly proving your worth.

Where you are not performing your identity.

Where you are not measuring your life against someone else's.

It is the kind of life where you can be present without needing to justify your presence.

And that is harder than it sounds.

Because the other voice is always there.

Telling you to check your phone.

To stay productive.

To keep moving.

Telling you that stillness is wasted time.

Telling you that you should be somewhere else,  
someone else,  
further along.

And yet.

“My sheep hear my voice.”

Not the loudest voice.

The truest one.

The one that does not rush you.

The one that does not reduce you.

The one that calls you by name.

There is something quietly radical about that.

To be called by name in a world that categorizes you.

To be known in a world that measures you.

To be invited into life rather than pushed into  
performance.

And maybe that is where abundant life begins.

Not in changing everything at once.

But in noticing.

Noticing the voices you have been listening to.

Noticing what they are asking of you.

Noticing whether they are giving life  
or taking it.

And then, slowly, gently, beginning to turn.

Not away from the world.

But away from the lie that more will finally be enough.

Turning toward presence.

Toward relationship.

Toward the small, often overlooked moments  
where life is actually happening.

A conversation where you are fully there.

A meal that is not rushed.

A silence that is not filled.

These are not small things.

These are signs of abundance.

Because abundant life is not measured by how much you  
have.

It is measured by how deeply you are able to receive.

And that is something our culture does not teach us well.

We are taught to acquire.

We are not always taught to receive.

To receive love without suspicion.  
To receive rest without guilt.  
To receive ourselves without critique.  
And yet that is what the shepherd offers.

Not a life of endless striving.

But a life where you are held.

Where you are guided.

Where you are not alone.

“I came that they may have life.”

Not a curated life.

Not a perfected life.

A real one.

A connected one.

An alive one.

And the invitation is not complicated.

But it is costly.

Because it asks us to loosen our grip  
on the things we thought would give us life.

It asks us to trust a different voice.

It asks us to step, again and again, through a gate that is already open.

And maybe today, the question is not

“How do I build an abundant life?”

Maybe the question is

“What is taking life from me?”

And

“Where is life being offered instead?”

Because even here

in a world that knows how to produce so much  
and connect so little

life is still being given.

In the voice that calls you by name.

In the presence that does not leave.

In the quiet moments where you are invited to be fully  
here.

Not more.

But deeper.

Not faster.

But truer.

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

And somehow, against all the noise,

that life is still possible.

Even now.

Even here.

Amen.