

- In the 10th chapter of the gospel according to Saint John, and in the 10th verse, there is a text to which I call your attention, and then which I hope we will listen for and hear a word from the Lord. And Jesus said, "I am come that they God's sheep, "may have life and may have it in all its fullness. "Life in all its fullness." The centrum and the persistent of the urgent problem in life of course, is life itself. Its quality, its meaning, its destiny. What does it mean to be alive, really alive? What difference is there between their existence and life at its full potential, between impoverished and abundant living? This problem of life is posed for us by the experiences of living and working, but partly also by the tragic facts of life's denials and negations. By our experiences of transience and evanescence, and by the other present prospect and fore knowledge of death. Anyway you take it, anyway you turn, there is the challenge of life, constant, unavoidable. The ways in which men and women respond to this challenge are depressingly varied and insufficient. Still, every style of life, every behavior pattern, every basic conviction and goal, one way or another is an instance of life trying to come to terms with itself. You cannot deny life's challenge, either, for even to try to do this, and to run away from life, and to hide, to cut your risks, is itself a way, and a poor way of coming to terms with life. As a great sociologist Kurt Levine, used to talk about life spaces. The human beings total experience, the concurrent unity between the self and the world. The vital sum of the conscious and the half conscious, and the unconscious dispositions and attitudes which give color and value tone, and to experience. Our deepest anxieties arise from the sense of dread that our life spaces have become, or may become vacant, distorted, incoherent. One of those taunting reframes in modern literature is that chorus in "Murder in the Cathedral", where the women of Canterbury bespeak their fear, of having the drab vicissitudes of a dull piece upset. "Seven years, they say, "seven years we have lived quietly, "succeeded in avoiding notice. "Living and partly living. "There have been oppression and luxury. "There have been poverty and license. "There has been minor injustice, "yet, we have gone on living, "living and partly living. "Living and partly living. "One year, the apples are abundant "another year the plums are lacking, "yet, we have gone on living, living and partly living. "Living and partly living." Now, there's a burlesque version of this same theme and the new story about the oil man out at Midland, who was lying upon his death bed. And he said to his solicitors and hovering wife, "And honey, I'd like to be buried in the car." Now, to translate this off to (inaudible), this means in the Cadillac. And she says, "Darling, if that's what you want, "that's the way it'll be." And he died, and she made arrangements and they got a dragline and made a proper size grave and a crane for the committal service. And as the coffin and the corpse were being lowered into the grave, one of his friends nudged the other at the grave side and said, "And boy, now that's what I call, really living." Every way you turn in the New Testament, I think you will see a deep interest in this struggle about life's meaning. In this struggle of life with life and of life with death. But one of the most interesting ways in which this problem is dealt with, is by borrowing and adapting a linguistic distinction that the New Testament people picked up from the classical tradition, between bios and zoe. Now we know these terms as they occur in biology and zoology. But you could hardly guess from the difference between biology and zoology, and what the New Testament has in mind between bios, as the where with all of life and the what with all of life. And zoe, which regularly means life itself. Life in its fullness, life at its best. In the story of the prodigal son, the restless boy demands his share of the paternal estate, and the father as the story goes, divides and then hands over to this boy, his bios, his money and goods. And it was this bios, this life, this where with all of life

that the boy and proceeded then to squander. And bios can be used to refer to physical vitality, as in our expression, step lively. It can refer to one's livelihood, how he makes a good living or a kind of a poor living. It can either refer to one's public career or one's public life. But every where in the New Testament and at least generally in the classical tradition, bios has the connotation of the substructure of life. The material means of life, the structures and processes by which life goes on. Now, zoe, on the other hand, always has to do with life in its ideal, or divinely ordained reality. Life as God designed it to be. Life as it may grow to flower and fruit from this sub soil of material subsistence and the molds of culture. Life, as it finds the power to defy death's power to negate the power of life. Life at its full stretch of freedom, intelligence and love. And above all, life in communion with God. Now this is Jesus' message in the parable of the good shepherd. This parable is shaped around a complex metaphor, taken from the commonplaces of the experiences of a pastoral society. And this is, in some ways misleading. For most of us have not had very much firsthand experience in a pastoral encounter with sheep. That is to say, pastoral encounter with live sheep, with four footed woolly sheep. And what is worse, there are a great many people in the modern world, who do not know how deprived they are because they do not understand what it means to be a pastor, in it's original and literal sense. I speak of this with some complacency because as it happens, this gap in my experience was filled in two years ago. Our then high school senior, David, had declared his interest in agriculture over things urban. And we had arranged for him to commute out to the nearest small town high school, where they had an FFA program. But then as it turned out, he had to have an animal husbandry project at home. And what it was, was sheep. Two (inaudible) use in the fall and winter, three lambs in the spring, and all of this in a sizeable backyard in an upper middle class neighborhood in Dallas. Thank God, it was a neighborhood, and thought we have good neighbors and our sheep became something of a neighborhood project, especially for the kids. Now, you will endure to despair the details of how everybody in our family, including the dog became amateur pastors, with dad as the unlicensed veterinarian. Because, we discovered that city vets are not trained for sheep, and country vets charge outrageously when they are called into the city. But the upshot of the avail was that it brought home the pastoral imagery of the Bible more vividly than I would have ever imagined. And for sheep, will quite easily the most important domestic animals in the biblical world. A great deal of the economy and culture of that world was intertwined with the business of shepherding. And now sheep en masse or in flock, are not very bright creatures, but they have their attraction. And a healthy sheep is as lively a creature as you will ever have to deal with. Now, an oriental sheep fold was a kind of a co-op. Several flocks shelter, then one fold with their respective shepherds coming in and out and doing business through the doorkeeper. There was, you see, typically only one gate. And the gatekeepers job was crucial in this whole arrangement. Sheep were valuable prizes for rustlers. You can rustle a sheep over a sheepfold wall, as you cannot easily do with a steer or a horse. Now all of these things were commonplace to the people who heard this parable of the good shepherd. Although not even the disciples could first grasp Jesus application of the parable to Himself, and to His mission and to His work in the world. He speaks of Himself as the door or the gate, and then again, as the gatekeeper, one who knows the rightful owners of the several flocks and who keeps watching ward against the thieves and robbers, the rustlers. And then He speaks of Himself as the good shepherd. One who has sheep and who knows their needs, and who is more interested in their safety and wellbeing than in His own. He contrast Himself with the hireling, who has no stake in the business, no investment in the flock. And so feel free to decide when danger has used up his wages. And so, Jesus focuses these pastoral metaphors upon His declaration of purpose in the world. The reason for His coming, the reason for His being here, is that men

may have life and have it in its fullness. Men may have life and have life up to its potential. Men may be alive. Now, the word of course, is the way, life itself. And this use of zoe is not to disparage or despise bios. Sheep have to have the wherewithal to live. And it is an anti-biblical asceticism that despises the material basis of life. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these material things. But, the problem remains, and it is particularly poignant for men and women and nevertheless, than in these days of hour. The question of the means and the ends, of living and life. As this question gets rather complicated by the pressures of priority and pride that fill out daily realm. If in the course of making a living or getting a living, or getting ready to live or struggling for minimum subsistence, you don't really come alive, don't appreciate or express or fulfill your life's faith, and then something very tragic has happened or is happening. If from the fear of life, or the lust for life, or the confusion as to what life is all about, a human being is diverted or derailed, or shattered, then something priceless is wasted and ruined. A human creativity has to come out of the energy left over after our needs as bio social animals have been met. No surplus, no creativity. This is why material competence is so very important, but it is also why materialism, the preoccupation with material competence, invariably corrupts the men who take it for a style of life. It is also why in a contest between a hungry materialism and a sybaritic materialism, the soft guys always finish last. If the current struggle for man's minds and commitments is a struggle between two materialisms, then we might as well face it, the lean and the mean have an advantage over the sentimental and the well intentioned. Now there's no need amongst thoughtful folk to be label the irony of confusing that, where with all of life and life itself. And to be label the unfairly obvious things about the spiritual poverty of a thing minded, gadget ridden, money mad, power obsessed society. What are you doing in a university, if you don't know that the quality of life does not consist in the abundance of things, of bios? What are you here for, if you do not already realize that materialism is a stultification of the real possibilities of human living? Surely, we agree with these parts of our minds and hearts that abundant life is a moral and spiritual affair. It's the experience of having one's life space full and resonant with intellectual excitement, model integrity, spiritual dedication. But, now, what is our life potential? Nobody knows for certain, but certainly it includes the peaks of delight and achievement that all too often we suppose are reserved for the geniuses, the saints, and the other guys. In a first rate book called the "Human Potential", Gardner Murphy has a whimsical suggestion that goes like this. "My thesis, he says, "is very simple, "and to a reasonable psychologist, very shocking. "If it is katydid nature to scrape, "frog nature to croak, wobbler nature to wobble, "then it must be human nature to play "the 'Air for the G-string' on a Stradivarius." And this may sound a try for homiletical for a great psychologist, and you yourself might like to vary the questions there, are aspiration and proportion, but the thesis is sound. On the one hand, bios is simply not enough for man alive. On the other hand, the typical human life has all too little zoe, all too little real fulfillment. And here's where we come to a crisis in this sort of reflection about life. And for our normal impulse, is to suppose that if we all ought to have more zoe, then let's gird ourselves for extra effort. Than to, let's choose more firmly between living and partly living. You may suppose that I am exalting you to a more careful rearrangement in your budgeted vitalities and in the allocation of your vital energies, and cheering you on to more zoe. But this is the last thing in the New Testament as a real possibility when it is talking about life. Now, bios, it is true, is more or less at our disposal. What we have, our material life of organic bio social life is more or less our own to have and to hold from this time forward, for better or for worse. But zoe, is not really our own. It is always spoken off as a gift, as a benefit, as a blessing. It is one might almost say, God's metamorphosis of bios. Every human life in its in most an utmost essence is a specific creation of God Himself. We receive it from God, we enjoy it in Him, we hold it in trust to Him. You

are not your own, you are bought with a price. And the life which is given us, we must receive and use and be prepared to hand it back and to leave it in God's keeping. The abundant life which Jesus came to bring to man is not therefore, an augmentation of life. Where with all, nor even an addition of resolution and human effort. It is rather, the reinvigoration of moral concern of our spiritual power to respond to God, to commune with God and to live by God's grace in God's good world. Faith is not just believing that life is more than meat and the body more than raiment and that sort of thing. It is in essence our being willing to receive our lives from God and to be glad to have it so. Unfaith or bad faith is the effort to snatch our lives, to possess this gift from God, and then to dispose of it, by and for ourselves. Thus, Jesus, can say, "I am the life, "the mediator between the source of life, the giver of life "and our actual life spaces." Really to live, is to live from God, for God, to God. Zoe is at every moment and in its totality, an exercise of faith and enterprise our faith. If we are really to have life in its fullness, we must be willing to live it on God's terms and within the order of His providence and love and care. In a time like this, a time of war, a time of nerves stretching, tension and conflict. When the tides of materialism and barbarism and inhumanity are all running so strongly against the vitalities of the spirit, and the moral order in the human community. We will have to do much more than increase our efforts on behalf of personal or even national self enhancement, survival and glory. As men and as a nation, we shall not be worthy to survive in this struggle for survival, if we merely oppose one bios to another, set one materialism over against another, organize our freedom merely to oppose enslavement. As men of faith and freedom, we must be willing to seek and to receive the gifts of life from God. And we must learn to cherish and to enjoy them without fear and without greed. And we must take these gifts of life and make them an offertory to God and to our human brethren in self-sacrificing, self-fulfilling service. And finally, we must come to rest our hopes and confidence in God's purpose and God's power, to redeem and to fulfill our lives in the face of the threats of transience, evanescence, half-life and death. Jesus, said, "I am come that men may really live, "really achieve their full potential, "really learn to live and die in the love of God. "And in the certitude that God is Himself victor "and victor yet to be." And so to live in that devotion, which love and gratitude and confidence create and sustain. Eternal life in the midst of our historic exist, under the eye and by the power of God. What more could men aspire to? But what less should men alive settle fall?" Let us pray. Almighty God, who art the author and giver of life, whose service is our perfect freedom. Bestow our wills to be willing to receive our lives at thy hands, to live our lives in thy fear and favor. That in the agonies of decision and responsibility of our time, we may not confuse life's where, with all with life itself, nor ever be content with less than that fullness of life, which thou does promise and provide. Grant therefore that in all the changes and chances of our mortality, our hearts may be surely fixed on thee, whom to know is life and peace. And this we pray in the name of Him, who came that we might truly live, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.