

Message Series: “Fit for Life: Wholly Fit”

This morning at Concordia, we are beginning a new message series which I am really excited about...it’s called “Fit for Life”

...and over the course of this series, we’re going to be talking about and thinking about what the Bible has to say about our health and about our wellness, about our strength and about our fitness in every aspect of our lives

(You know, a lot of times, when we talk about the fitness, the first thing we think of is our physical fitness...

...our weight, our blood pressure, and our cholesterol...how many miles we can run on a treadmill or how many work out videos can we breeze through at home or how many pounds we can press on a bench...

But in the Bible, as we’re going to discover over the course of this series, fitness covers a lot more than just your body – your physical health – it also covers your emotions, your relationships, your drives, your passions, and your soul...

...it covers everything...because our God is a God who is concerned with our full fitness...that we are healthy and well, inside and out

In fact, I don’t know if you know this or not, but there’s actually a Hebrew word in the OT for the word “fitness”...

...and some of you may have heard this word before...because in the Bible, fitness really is a big deal

...the Hebrew word for “**fitness**” is ***shalom***

Now, *shalom*, if some of you have heard this before, you know that we usually don’t think of it as the word for fitness, but the word for what, anybody know? Peace!

...but in the Bible, this word actually covers a lot more than peace – this kind of serene feeling that we sometimes have – it covers our whole wellbeing / health

(In fact, in 1 Samuel 25, King David sends some of his servants to greet a real arrogant and self-absorbed guy named Nabal...but rather than chastising Nabal for being such a bad dude, David instructs his messengers to greet Nabal by saying...

1 Samuel 25:6

“Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!”

...and the Hebrew word for “good health” here is *shalom*

And so *shalom* covers not only a person’s peace and serenity, but also their health...in other words, *shalom* is meant to cover the whole state of your being / the peace and health of your body, mind, and soul...

And this leads us to our text for this morning...

...because in John 10, Jesus is going to give us the path to *shalom* / this all-comprehensive, all-inclusive peace and health that so many of us desire...

John 10:1-3

¹“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

(ILL: This past Saturday, woke up real early as I normally do, and I did my morning work out, took a shower, and then I decided to sit down and do a little bit of channel surfing...

...and it was like 5:45 in the morning and I’m flipping through the channels, when I come to an infomercial for one of those workout videos...and this workout video was called “Shaun T’s Insanity Workout”...that just sounds pleasant, doesn’t it?

...and it was one of those workout programs that was supposed to get you healthy and fit, toned and muscular, and take several inches off your waste in a mere 60 days...the only catch, as they freely admitted, is that it is really intense

In fact, I loved the way they opened they opened the infomercial...

...they had one of those real gruff voices doing their voice over work and the voice asked, “Do you like to work out in your own pool of sweat?”

...and I’m sitting there on the couch and I’m thinking “Um, no”...

The video continues...

...“because if you do, then Shaun T’s Insanity Workout is for you...it’ll drive you to a whole other level...but it’s not for the faint of heart...because Shaun will drive you to do cardio...drive you to tone your abs...drive you to build muscle...drive you to lose inches”

And I'm thinking to myself, "I'm not so sure that I want Shaun T to drive my anywhere"...and so I grabbed a bag of potato chips and changed the channel

...no, no, no...I'm just kidding...

But it was interesting, because the infomercial kept on talking about how Shaun T was going to *drive you* to do this and how he was going to *drive you* to do that...kind of like a cowboy drives a herd of cattle, Shaun T was going to drive you to health

(In the ancient world, what Shaun T does in his workout videos is what shepherds would do with their sheep: they would get behind them and drive them...

...because prodding them through the pasture was the only way that they could get them to go anywhere...

But then Jesus comes along and says: *I call my own sheep by name and lead them out*

Jesus doesn't drive his sheep, he leads his sheep...

And I think that this tells us something very important about the way that Jesus desires to have us healthy and whole / *shalom*

...because Jesus does not lead us to health like Shaun T leads us to health...he doesn't drive us and ask, "Do you like to work out in your own pool of sweat?"

No, instead, he gently calls us to follow him / to find health and wholeness in him...and some people follow and some people don't...

...but Jesus never forces our health...instead, he invites us to health...

In fact, it's so interesting...right before Jesus heals a man in John 5 who is lying by a pool...and he's been unable to walk for 38 years...he asks this man...

John 5:6

"Do you want to get well?"

Jesus doesn't force / drive this man toward health...instead, he asks him about health / invites him to health / he leads him toward health..."Do you want to get well?"

And what Jesus did for this man, he also does for us...

...because, you see, Jesus doesn't force anyone into *shalom* with him...he doesn't say, "Get healthy with me / experience fullness with me or else!"...but he does ask...he does lead...he does call...he does shepherd us to health...

And this is precisely what Jesus does as he continues...

John 10:7-10

7“I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Jesus says, *“I come and I gently lead my sheep so that they may have life!”*

...and this right here really encapsulates Jesus’ mission: to lead us to life

In fact, this is a theme that pops up over and over again in John’s gospel...

John 1:4

⁴In Christ was life, and that life was the light of men.

John 5:21

²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

John 20:31

³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 3:16

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal (what?) life.

Do you see a theme developing here? Jesus has come to bring us life!

(In Greek, the word for “**life**” is **zoe**...

...and this word, most often, is simply used to describe a person’s natural, normal life...the kind of life that most of think of / most of us live...you wake up, you go to sleep, you go to work, you come home, you take care of yourself, you take care of your spouse / family if you have them...just kind of normal, everyday hum drum stuff...

But it’s interesting: because when Jesus talks about life in (vs. 10), he doesn’t talk about it in the normal, everyday, hum drum way!

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full...

Jesus doesn’t just want us to have life, he wants us to have *full* life! He doesn’t want us to just barely scrape by with a bare bones, minimum barely hanging on life, he wants us to have abundant life!

(Now, over the years, a lot of people have tried a lot of different ways to get a full life...

- Some people try to get a full life through money...you earn another dollar, close another deal, make just a little bit more profit, and then you have a full life / complete life / worthwhile life
- Some people try to get a full life through thrills and chills...you get high on this, you get drunk on that...you go to this party, you sleep with that person and then you have a full life / complete life / worthwhile life
- Some people try to get a full life through achievement...you get this promotion / you make this name for yourself / you garner this much respect from others and then you have a full life / complete life / worthwhile life

But you know what's so funny about all of those paths to the full life?

...they finally leave you not feeling full, but feeling totally empty...

He was the most successful golfer of all time...

...he's won 71 PGA tour championships, 3 US Open Championships, and 4 Masters Championships...in 2008, he was the highest paid athlete in the world, earning \$110 million from championship earnings and endorsements

...but then a late night car wreck turned his whole life on its head...the rumor mill began running and it was revealed that Tiger Woods was living a double life...on the one hand, he was a stellar golfer and a devoted family man...but on the other hand, he was having dozens of affairs and tearing his personal life to shreds

...on the outside, Tiger had the fullest of lives – money, success, the perfect family – but on the inside, he was empty

He was a dancer, a singer, and an entertainer...

...from music to fashion, he held more sway over pop culture for longer than anyone who had ever lived...he's actually listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Most Successful Entertainer of all Time"...in fact, he became so iconic that he was given a name...he was called "The King of Pop"...

...but although Michael Jackson may have been the King of Pop, he wasn't the king of his own life...he spent most of his life trying to impress and earn the love of others...and fought his own demons, like that of an addiction to pain killers, which he eventually lost...because on June 25, 2009, Michael Jackson died, after having overdosed on a powerful sedative called propofol

...on the outside, Michael Jackson had the fullest of lives – stardom, throngs of adoring fans, anything he could ever dream of – but on the inside, he was empty
This is the story of so many people...

...from millionaire golfers to glamorous singers to mothers with minivans to fathers with 9-5 jobs...from teenage children living at odds with their parents to elderly parents living at odds with their children in nursing homes
...so many people – even if they look full on the outside – on the inside, they're totally empty

And so the question is: How do we get this full life that Jesus promises? How do we walk that path to shalom that we began this message with? Jesus gives us the answer:

John 10:11

¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Here's how Jesus is going to give us that full life that he so desperately wants for you / me: he's *going to lay down his life for his sheep* / you and me

And it's fascinating: because when Jesus talks about our full life in (vs. 10), he uses the word *zoe*, but when he talks about laying down his own life in (vs. 11), he uses the word ***psyche*** which doesn't just mean "life," it means "**soul**"

...Jesus lays down not just his body on a cross, but his soul...he gives the very core of his being for you and for me...he gives his very soul to carry all the things that make our lives feel so terribly empty: all of our hurts / transgressions / guilt / shame / hidden-ness / hopelessness / helplessness / despair...he lays down his *psyche* so that our *zoes* can actually be fulfilling and worthwhile

(ILL: You know, as we've been preparing for this series, I've been doing a lot of thinking about my own health journey and how my own life has become a lot fuller...

...because there was a time when I was not nearly as healthy as I am now...there was a time when I was a lot heavier than I am now...

In fact, I was talking to another staff member one day and we were talking about fitness and workout regimens and I told him that I had lost a lot of weight and I actually pulled out an old drivers' license just to show him how much heavier I used to be...

...and when he saw my picture, he gasped...he said, "Wow! That doesn't even look like you!"

In fact, would you like to see the picture on my old driver's license?

Well too bad, I couldn't find it and so I'm not going to show it to you

...just kidding ***PIC***

(You know, I wish I could say I lost all my weight because I had a lot of resolve and will

...but I didn't...I actually got really sick and started developing all sorts of health problems when I was in my mid 20's...and the doctor actually told me, "Zach, you've gotta lose some weight or pay some serious consequences"

...and so I was forced, really, to start exercising and to change my eating habits ...and it was kind of a fascinating thing: because I used to always be tired and sluggish and I was always hungry / scarfing down food...

...but the more I exercised, and the more healthy choices I made, the less hungry and more energetic I felt...

To lose my weight, I had to lay a lot of stuff down...

...I had to lay down a lot of sodium / fat / fast food / cholesterol / snack foods...

but when I laid all that down, what I gained, was marvelous / made me feel 100x better / made me feel fuller than I had ever felt before...

(You know, when God surveyed this earth, he saw a group of people who had not only problems with their health, they had problems with their souls / *psyches*...

...because our souls had been emptied and ravaged and decimated by sin...but that's not what God wanted for us...he didn't want us have empty souls

...and so God sent his Good Shepherd who laid everything down...in fact, he laid down not just his *zoe*, but his *psyche* so that we could have real, true, full life...

And so, as we kick off this series this weekend, let me just ask you: Are you basing your *zoe* and Jesus' *psyche*?

Are you placing your health – all of your health: be that your physical health or emotional health or relational health or spiritual health – in the hands of the one who laid down his very soul so that you could have health and have it to the full

I hope you are...

...because when you do that – when you trust in the one who gave the very core of his being / gave his *psyche* – for you, you not only have a life that is full, you have a life that is eternal...and there's no better life than that...