# Candidates Sunday Sermon Starter

## I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.’

## John 10:10-11

## Introduction

Who do you consider to have the fullest, richest life possible?

Perhaps a footballer, business billionaires or TV reality stars? We only need to go on social media to see the details of someone’s fortune splashed all over our feed. Many might say it’s those who work hard to gain material wealth or power or fame, or all three! Surely, the richer, more powerful and more famous you are, the fuller and richer your life is?

John 10:10-11 proclaims a radical, counter-cultural alternative view. In this view, those who are consumed by and worship these material values have had the best stolen from them; they have been robbed! In contrast, those who follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who loves us so much that he suffered and died for us, are the ones who live the richest possible life. In John 10:10-11 we can see that those who have decided to put the King and his Kingdom first in their lives have been rescued from the deeply embedded cultural lies that tell us that wealth, status and fame will produce a full life. If we have been saved from the empty life of self-centred materialism by our encounter with Jesus, an interesting question arises: what then should we do with our lives?

## Main points:

Pause and consider what comes into your mind when you hear the phrase ‘full-time ministry’.

As today is Candidates Sunday, you may instantly be thinking about officership as you ponder the phrase ‘full-time ministry’ in our Salvation Army context. However, 1 Peter 2:9 says to all followers of Jesus, ‘You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.’ The word ‘royal’ in this verse is one of a group of words in Koine Greek, the language that the New Testament was written in. They are the *basi-* words: the King is *basileus*, the Kingdom is *basileia* and those who work in the service of the King are the *basilikos* – that’s us. How amazing is that!

In Exodus 19:6 Moses tells Israel, ‘You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’

In Judaism priests were intermediaries or intercessors for the rest of the nation, and Peter makes the same remarkable statement about us, the followers of Jesus the King. The Salvation Army is part of the Church family that strongly believes in what is known as ‘the priesthood of all believers’. That means that whether you are in work, or out of work, or unable to work, whether you are a student, or retired or too young to work, you have an overriding primary vocation, which is to be a member of the rich and beautiful fellowship of royal priests who serve King Jesus every day of our lives.

However, within this wonderful royal priesthood which all followers of King Jesus belong to, the New Testament mentions that all of us are given spiritual gifts, in order that we may be even more effective in serving the King than we would be in our own strength. There are lists of gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4.

1 Peter: 4:10-11 says: ‘Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.’

## Application:

Pause and prayerfully reflect on your current life and context.

You may already feel like you are fulfilled and flourishing within your work and life. Continue seeking and working as a royal priest for the King. He will bless you by continuing to live life to its fullest.

You may be feeling a bit unsettled and lost, not quite sure as to what to do with the next stage in your life. It is important to remember that the Good Shepherd specialises in helping lost sheep find their way to the place where they should be (see Luke15:3-7).

Among other possibilities, perhaps a form of full-time ministry might be something for you to consider and pray about. How will you know whether this is the right way for you? Some Salvation Army officers have a dramatic calling, and some don’t. Some full-time leaders simply feel a quiet but growing conviction that this is their purpose.

Spend time in prayer asking God to open your mind and heart to listen to his voice.