

Empty and Full

Palm Sun. – 3/28/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Philippians 2:5-11 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 8, **“And being found in human form, [Jesus] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**

Introduction

- ✘ Often, people are described as being either an optimist or a pessimist. The optimist sees a glass – and life – as half full, while the pessimist sees the same things as half empty.
 - ➔ Either way, the goal is to have a full glass, right? After all, an empty glass is just something to look at, while a full glass means that you have an entire beverage waiting you.
 - ➔ The full glass gives us hope and anticipation, but an empty glass means the happiness is all gone.
- ✘ Often we Christians are mocked for what we celebrate and remember this week, during Holy Week.
 - ➔ To begin with, many say that Jesus’ Passion – His riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday only to be killed on Friday – shows that we Christians love to wallow in pessimism; that focusing upon Jesus, emptied of all His dignity, especially to dwell upon His death the way that we do, reveals some kind of deep-seated need to beat ourselves up; to always look on the dark side. They say that we Christians are just too riddled with guilt to ever allow ourselves a full-glass view of life.
 - ➔ Then, when it comes to the climax of Holy Week – Easter morning, we are also mocked for what they call our “foolish optimism”; believing in some “silly myth” that our ancient “man-made hero”, Jesus Christ, actually rose from the dead. “Get a life”, they say to us Christians, “deal with the realities in this world as they are. Just face the problems going on around us right here rather than wasting our time dreaming of some pie-in-the-sky future that doesn’t exist”.
 - ➔ Yes, the Christian faith is thus labeled as “foolish, glass-half-full, whistling-in-the-dark optimism”.
- ✘ Well, my fellow believers in Christ, this week is not about a glass half full or glass half empty, is it? No, it’s about Jesus, the Son of God, emptying Himself in order to make us full!
 - ➔ That’s what Paul teaches us actually happened in history during these holy days, almost 2000 years ago.

I. We come up empty.

- ✘ You know the primary reason why people charge us with being pathological pessimists? It’s because so often we start out our conversations about our faith talking about the one thing people would rather avoid – the issue of sin.
 - ➔ But Paul starts out in a different place in our text today. He tells us in verse five to “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus”. Notice that he says we have already been filled with it through faith in Christ.
- ✘ So what is this “mind” which is ours already? Well it is a mind that is the example of perfect love; a mind that is humble and not seeking to be flashy, as we see with Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey on Palm Sunday.

- It's a mind of perfect obedience; allowing Himself to be arrested and tried; tortured and killed according to the Father's will and plan of what is required to earn salvation.
- Christ sets the example, not of selfishness, but selflessness, offering His own blood in love; in service to the Father, but also to a world of sinners so that they/we might be saved.
- ⊗ So, when we understand that Paul is saying that each of us has been given that same mind; that we are to empty ourselves like that, how does that make you feel? If you're like me, you feel pathetic, don't you? Because we know that we may try and try, but we always come up empty.
 - No, the truth is you and I are quite full of ourselves, acting out our own selfishness. I don't want to think that my life actually belongs to God instead of me; that He's the only reason that I'm able to walk and talk and breathe and survive at all. I don't want to get up out of my comfy chair and do something nice for my neighbor (or even my family) who could use my help. No, instead I actually think everyone else should be helping me; giving things to me; serving me.
 - After all this is the way our world has taught us to think things should be; saying that those who serve others are actually less "successful". It's true. As a general rule those who work in what are called "service industry" jobs, like restaurant and retail and hospitality and cleaning types of work, are paid a lower wage and viewed by many in our world as being in a lower class of our society. So, why would anyone want to actively serve others and settle for that?
 - Thinking this way is just the reality of how our sinful nature works.
- ⊗ And when I do try to empty myself and follow the example of selfless service that Jesus has given me to do, I still come up empty the wrong way. I just can't do it. I fall short. I get all full of myself and think of what a great Christian I am and how glad I am that I'm not like him or her or them, and I realize in the fullness of my pride and focus upon "me", I'm actually just an empty shell of a sinner.
 - Yes, that issue of sin – it can't be avoided. It must be acknowledged and confessed and seen for the reality that it is. That's not being pessimistic, it's just being real.

II. Jesus' emptying Himself leads to His being full

- ⊗ Jesus, of course, is much better at emptying Himself than we are. In verses 6-8 Paul summarizes Jesus' entire life, from His conception and birth as a human being to His sacrificial death on a cross.
 - You might remember from your days in confirmation class that we call this Jesus' "State of Humiliation"; where even though He is God Himself as the second person in the Holy Trinity, He humbled Himself to take on human flesh and live here with us on earth.
 - None of us will ever understand the self-sacrifice that this had to entail; being the all-powerful God, yet not always using those godly powers; enduring temptation and ridicule and suffering, but never falling into sin; still loving even His enemies and those in blatant sinful rebellion against God, and doing it all to perfection.
- ⊗ As we review His passion and suffering this week, we see Jesus empty Himself in humility and service to the extreme; in His arrest and trials and beatings and brutal death on a cross; allowing it all to happen when He could have stopped it at any moment with just one word or thought.
- ⊗ Yet, in all of this, Jesus emptying Himself did not leave Him empty, did it? No, Paul tells us in verses 9-11, that "God highly exalted Him!"
 - He "bestowed on Him the name that is above every name" (v.10). That is the name "Jesus" which means "Yahweh saves". Just think about how full that name is, not only with meaning but with power – the power of the Creator of the ends of the earth; the one and only true God!

- It is to Jesus alone that Paul says “every knee” will bow whether here on earth, in heaven or even “under the earth”, that is in hell. Yes, at His final return on judgment day, there will be no more hiding from the truth for any soul.
- “Every tongue” of every person that has lived throughout history will publicly confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord” over all. Unbelievers will confess that truth in great regret, realizing that they rejected Jesus to their eternal peril. And believers will confess Jesus as their Savior, in praise and gratitude for His undeserved grace.
- ⊗ Now that Jesus has been raised from death and ascended to reign on His eternal throne, He of course does always and fully use all of His divine attributes. This we call His state of exaltation.
 - That’s not just half full, nor is it foolish optimism. It is full to overflowing all the time, and it is true!

III. In Christ, we who are empty are full.

- ⊗ What Paul wants you and me and all believers to understand and believe here is that Jesus is not just an empty dream or example of perfectly emptying Himself that we can never follow. No, what Jesus did counts for us.
 - What do I mean by that? Well, it’s still true that we can’t empty ourselves of our selfishness and sin as we ought.
 - But instead Jesus came and did it all in our place! He fulfilled God’s Law while we come up empty every time. And then He filled us up with His perfect righteousness.
- ⊗ Jesus humbled Himself even to death on that cross; that is taking our death for sin so that now we don’t have to pay for our sins with death.
 - This means all those examples of our selfish minds and ways we talked about earlier – not wanting to help our family and neighbors; expecting them to serve me and letting my own pride fill me up when it shouldn’t – every single sinful thought and word and deed has been paid for in full by Jesus. At His death your account of sin was completely emptied out!
 - And that means each one of you is now filled to overflowing in Jesus’ exaltation. Paul was right in verse five, the mind of Christ “is yours” now today in faith.
 - How? Because ever since our baptism you and I now wear His name for all eternity! We have been marked with the name “Jesus” that means “Yahweh saves”! Yes, Yahweh has saved you...and me!
 - So when we kneel before Him at His return it will not be bowing in shame but in faith and joy and the confidence of His work for us.
- ⊗ Yes, the words that we hear before we sing the Sanctus in the Communion Service are not just pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking. They mean something very important; something we must never take for granted. We really do, “with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, laud and magnify His glorious name, evermore” singing praises to His holy and saving name!
 - Because we know by His gift of faith that, because of what Jesus has done for us, God will exalt us and fill us with Christ; with His love; with His humility to serve others before ourselves – yes, with a mind like Christ’s.

Conclusion

- ✘ This really is amazing isn't it? It can't be grasped by human reason. It can't be understood by the ways of the world. Yet it is as true and as real as the hand in front of your face. By emptying Himself, Jesus now fills you!
 - ➔ He gave His life so that you would not die, but live. He gave His blood to cover you with His righteousness. He came down from heaven in the form of a man to live a perfect life for you; to die so that death might not have hold of you.
 - ➔ All of this Jesus did willingly and without complaint. He entered Jerusalem on His own accord and sacrificed Himself for you. Yes, Jesus emptied Himself so that you will be full for eternity. Hosanna in the highest! Amen.