

Exceedingly Empty, Exceedingly Joyful

We can not truly understand fullness unless we have experienced emptiness.

“If I find myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

~C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Common discontentment -> there has to be more.

Failed idealism -> continued experiences of not getting what we bargained for. We keep heading down different roads and still come up empty.

Haggai 1:6 You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Lord, High and Holy, Meek and Lowly,
Thou hast brought me to the Vally of vision,
where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.
Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells
and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;
Let me find thy light in my darkness,
thy life in my death,
thy joy in my sorrow,
thy grace in my sin,
thy riches in my poverty,

thy glory in my valley.

~ Collection of Puritan Prayers, A Valley of Vision

So what is it that doesn't leave you empty?

John 1:16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

What a beautiful and simple reminder of what creates our ultimate, eternal satisfaction.

Jesus' grace upon grace.

Contrast gives us such a vivid image.

My emptiness -> Christ's fullness

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was in the beginning with God.

John Piper explains the fullness we experience because of Jesus in this way from John 1.

Jesus is divine -> His fullness is divine

Jesus is infinite -> His fullness is everlasting

Jesus is accessible -> His fullness is present (became flesh)

Jesus is glorious -> His fullness is all satisfying

It is a fullness of grace.

Every line, thought, phrase giving to us by Jesus in the beatitudes is his gift and work of grace in our lives.

Poor in spirit -> Grace

Mourn -> Grace

Meek -> Grace

Hunger and thirst, mercy, pure in heart, peacemaker, persecution

-> All gifts of Grace

Jesus is Better! To know Jesus is to know his grace. The glory of Jesus and the fullness of his grace.

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Grace given to those who were born (2nd birth).

Isaiah 40:17 All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

This is a display of grace. The gospel is the good news. The cross demonstrates the character and glory of God.

We (the nations) were nothing to him, and yet Jesus pays the highest price.

Revelation 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

It is a fullness of truth.

John 8:32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Because of his grace we can more clearly see his glory.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

God's gift of grace is enjoying the glory of Jesus as fully as we (a created being) can.

A fullness that does not go away. A filling that captures the beauty of our design. A fullness that takes place as we experience emptiness.

"What would you do with an empty cup if you were thirsty? Would you not hold it under a fountain until it was full? That is what you must do with your poor, dry, empty soul. Come and receive of Jesus, grace for grace. . . . Hold your empty cup under the stream of divine fullness, which flows to the guilty through Jesus Christ, and you also shall joyfully say, 'My cup overflows.' May the Lord pour his mercy into you, for Jesus' sake." ~ C. H. Spurgeon, The Treasury of the Old Testament