

Color changes indicate slide changes

Our signature verse for this season is Romans 15:13

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹ We're longing to be filled to overflowing; and to be filled we must open our mouths. We must want it.

(FOUNTAIN IMAGE Reminder - HS - me - family & friends -local community - world)

David invites us in Psalm 34:8 to 'Taste and see that the Lord is good.' If we are tasting for the first time, great. There's probably nothing standing in our way of seeing the Lord's goodness - when we are new to the faith often we don't lack enthusiasm. But, if you've eaten a meal 1000 times the old proverb comes into play, 'Familiarity breeds contempt'. Filet Mignon again! Isn't there anything different? But replace that filet with hot dogs and in a week you'll want filet again. It's too easy to slow boil in a personal pot of contempt. Life can sometimes seem like Bill Murray in Groundhog Day, waking up to the same thing over and over again; expecting the same thing day in day out (explain premise of the movie).

Like Bill Murray we're bored with life as it is, we're always looking for the other thing, the exciting thing. The next thing. The sexy thing. We look past all the beauty & wonder that's right before us. Yet all the while that thing which fills us is right there, right in front of our eyes....

In the last scene of the movie Bill Murray wakes up to the exact same morning scene he'd woken up to for who knows how many days before. But this time instead of rolling his eyes and sighing in desperation and disgust, he says, "It's so beautiful!" He now could see and taste something new - he could regard the day differently *because* he had been filled with love and love had changed his world view.

Ultimately what fills & satisfies us is God. If we want to taste and see his goodness, it must be seen in the light of who He is to us. Charles Spurgeon once started one of his sermons like this:

"There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and (we) go our way with the thought, 'Behold I am wise'. But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with solemn exclamation (we say), 'I am but of yesterday, and know nothing'. No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God...

But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow

¹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ro 15:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

globe...The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

And, while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Spirit there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.

So, to be filled is to know God, and as Spurgeon said that morning to his congregation, "It is to that subject that I invite you this morning" To contemplate; to taste and see that the Lord is good. And I can guarantee, I will not even come close to taking you there. (pray)

In reading on Psalm 34:8, and in this conversation of being filled to overflowing, I was led to Ephesians 5:15-20 ¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Let's stop there briefly. There is a very real sense of a healthy fear conveyed in Scripture under which we should be living - be very careful, the days are evil. That fear we could define as a rational, balanced outlook at life & self. A sober acknowledgement of the reality of the fallen world we live in, and that we too are fallen creatures. When we acknowledge there is sin & evil in the world, even in us, someone may say we are being negative or fearful. Fearful yes, but not scared. Negative? No. Not one iota. We're simply maturely recognizing our condition before God; we're full of hope, not in our abilities to do or be good or create abundance, but strictly in God's goodness. We need to regard ourselves rightly in the face of God.

The fear we are speaking of is better expressed as maturity & wisdom; the fear which means we are realistic and looking at life through the eyes of Christ. Even at ourselves; with wisdom which says, "I too am a sinner deserving of death, my own heart tends to lead me astray. Only through Christ am I made right." That can only be positivity - because it points to the grace of God in Christ sufficient even for my totally depraved nature. As stated in Romans 3:23, 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'² So, in relationships and interactions of life, there's a very real sense of trust, but verify; even with our own hearts. Realizing there's not only sin within us at work, but other powers as well in the world and in relationships. That God loves us, but that we are a fickle sinful bunch mixed up in a complex stew of sin and self.

² *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ro 3:23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Therefore we are urged to be wise, making the most of every opportunity - not just some, but EVERY. Constantly aware. We have the ability to be active in our faith, of opening our mouth to be filled by the Living Word of God; and there's a sense of urgency in maximizing time and opportunity. It continues...¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.

Like Bill Murray, don't go looking for love in all the wrong places. Don't be foolish. Devote your mind, as Spurgeon urged us so many years ago in England, to plumb the depths of God. Take to heart what Koheleth said to us as we studied Ecclesiastes months ago, 'Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.'³ Don't go looking for your filling in false ways. Don't get drunk on wine. Don't seek to be filled with things which were never meant to satisfy you fully; alcohol, drugs, the approval of others, material wealth, sex, food, success, power, etc... The are only pleasures, surely given by God, but not meant to fill the soul with meaning and purpose - that's reserved only for God himself...know the Lord's will, fear God and keep his commandments - the only way to find that out is a thorough study of the Scriptures. Not a seminary degree, but a daily quiet time. A time when you push aside all other cares and sit with the Lord and read and pray. Allow his Word to soak into your heart and mind. Allow the Holy Spirit to submarine you deep into an ocean of God's thoughts.

That is why it says...'Instead, be filled with the Spirit,' Which is reflective of not only Romans 15:13, but also of Psalms 34:8, taste and see that the Lord is good! And what comes out of this willing act of submission to God's filling is that we overflow. Ephesians 5 continues to describe that by saying, 'Instead, be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'⁴ A healthy picture of interaction between the body and of constant thanksgiving - or living our life in awe at the wonders of God day in and day out.

It is easy though for us to grow contemptuous. Like Bill Murray to come out of our front door and look at every day as the same old garbage as the day before. We fill ourselves and surround ourselves with contempt. Think about the news, the songs, the literature we read...and remember, David was surrounded with contempt as well. He wrote Psalm 34 in the midst of being chased down by King Saul his own mentor who had gone a little crazy with pride and paranoia and wanted to kill David. And also King Achish, David's enemy who had vowed to take him out. David could've looked at his situation and thought God wasn't with him - but David, being filled with the Spirit, could see the greater goodness of God even through his difficult situation. The filling he experienced did not allow for contempt to grow. David filled his heart & mind with the

³ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ec 12:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁴ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Eph 5:15-20). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Word of God; with Truth of who God is - he contemplated and plumbed the depths of God's Word and was better for it.

What do you fill yourself with? Because as we think of filling we must realize that we both have some control, yet no control over that process at the same time. We swim in a world which is geared to fill us with junk food and junk messages. We have little control over some of that. We can and should choose more wisely concerning what we put into our mouths and eyes - that is for sure, but it will not turn off our own dark hearts - that takes divine intervention.

Yet when it comes to being filled with the Spirit instead, John 3 tells us that the Spirit of God will not be caged or manipulated - the Spirit blows where the Spirit pleases. That is true, so what's the Christian to do? How are we to be filled?

Let us remember that for the person who has been redeemed, whose life is now hidden away with Christ, a few things stand true of us. One is that you have been given the seal of the Holy Spirit as an everlasting guarantee of your adoption as a son or daughter - the Spirit has chosen to blow in your life already. As it says in Ephesians 1, ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.⁵ That cannot be taken from you, because you didn't earn it, it was God's gift and promise to you. Not even you can screw that up!

Secondly, now Scripture commands you to be filled with the Word of God as it says in Colossians 3, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.'⁶ So, being filled means that I acknowledge my absolute need for God, my total depravity - that I am at the mercy of his blowing. And also that I submit myself to his Word and allow it to enrich my thinking in the context of community (CG's/Discipleship Relationships). We should not only be open to teaching and admonishing someone in light of the Scriptures, but also to have that done to us.

Being filled means we choose to walk in the way of holiness craving God's leading. As it says in 1 Peter 2:1-3, 'Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.'⁷

What that says to us is the same - live wisely, throw off sin, live in holiness, and crave to be filled with the Word of God, and, like Lays Potato Chips, as we taste a little we will want more and more. Peter has credibility to say these things since in Acts Chapter 5,

⁵ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Eph 1:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Col 3:16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁷ *The New International Version*. 2011 (1 Pe 2:1-3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

people were literally bringing their sick out in the streets in the hope that even Peter's shadow would fall on them and they would be healed - Peter was filled with the Spirit & overflowed with the Living Word of God.

So, our part of this act of filling is to pursue God, to feed on his word. And where do we go for that? We go directly to the source...Jesus who said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst... Remember Peter said to him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:35,51,66-69). And these Words have been left on the pages of Scripture, those words alone can fill a lifetime of study and never be exhausted. If we say we love Jesus, then we must be in love with the Scriptures. If we say we follow God but never crack the Bible, that's an impossibility. Being filled by the Spirit means being filled by his Word.

So, get hungry & get thirsty...

"Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled." (Luke 6:21).

"For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring." (Isaiah 44:3).

God's Word tastes good...

"How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth." (Ps. 119:103).

"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63).

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).

God's Word is refreshing...

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit." (John 7:37-39a).

Choose to meditate on it...

"May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love. That you may have the power to grasp with all the saints the experience of that love... That you may know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!" (Eph. 3:17b-19, Amplified).

Plumb the depths of the Divine...

"Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... (For my determined purpose is) that I may know Him, (that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly)." (Phil. 3:8,10, Amplified).

There is nothing more urgent & rewarding than knowing Jesus more fully, of being filled with the Spirit. So I invite you today to begin your journey of exploring the vast ocean and wonders of God this year; be filled to overflowing!

(Piper Blogs)