

“Running on Empty” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Palm Sunday – April 10, 2022

- I. **Philippians 2:7** – [Jesus] “emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”
- II. **Growing up, I fell for the big lie.**
 - a. The world tells us that all these things outside of us can make us happy.
 - b. I always thought if I went to college, started a career, bought a home, got married and had a family... along with making lots of money and driving a nice car... I would be totally fulfilled.
 - i. None of these things are bad by the way, and God’s gifts are not the problem... it’s about giving them more power than they deserve.
 - c. So I enrolled in college with the idea of getting a degree that could get me a good job after four years.
 - i. It didn’t take me long to figure out that college is really hard... when you don’t really want to be there.
 - ii. Not only that, chasing after things just kept me looking for the next big high...
 1. If I could just figure out how to get that stereo system...
 2. Maybe skiing will be good this weekend...
 3. The weather is nice, maybe we throw a big party...
 - iii. It didn’t take long before the highs of life were not enough, so manufactured highs of drugs and alcohol were the only way.
 1. In a few short years, any dream of attaining happiness was replaced by hopelessness
 - d. The lie is that I can create my own happiness and fulfillment through accomplishments, assets, and acquisitions...
 - i. Chasing after these things will have you running on empty.
 - ii. No amount of material success or achievement will fill us up, because the focus is self-centered... it’s all about me and my own happiness
 - e. A funny thing happens when we are self-centered... it’s like we have a leak that slowly drains any contentment, peace, and fulfillment we may have.
 - f. Only one cure can stop all this emptiness
- III. **In our Philippians reading, Paul holds up Christ as our example.**
 - a. In the verses just before our reading today, Paul says, “³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others,” (Philippians 2:3-4).
 - i. Our reading today follows Paul’s admonition to stop with the selfish gain and desires... and in humility look to the needs of others.
 - ii. Then we begin with verse 5, “have this mind among yourselves,” in other words, have the same kind of attitude that Jesus had!

- b. Do you think that Jesus, as He went down that path with all those people cheering and praising Him, was full of pride and saying, “I’ve finally made it to the top of My game... look at all My fans!”
 - i. No, Jesus had a more realistic view – these people would be the very same ones to scream for His death as He stood before Pontius Pilate in just a few short days.
- c. From the moment of His conception... all the way to His death on the cross and burial, Jesus poured Himself out – as it says in our reading, “emptied Himself” of anything that God might have or do.
 - i. Jesus was God in the flesh... but He was not royalty in a palace with expensive purple robes...
 - ii. He was born in a stable with animals, raised in a family with little status or income, constantly on the move as an adult, and mostly dependent on others to support Him in His ministry...
 - iii. God in the flesh, who emptied Himself of His privileges as God... humbly taking the form of a servant for our sake.
- d. When it comes to buying the lie and seeking out the world to fill us up... Jesus came to show us something entirely different.

IV. **Jesus came to empty His very life.**

- a. He was rejected.... He was mocked... and beaten... given a death sentence even though He was innocent of all the charges.
- b. Jesus could have instantly changed any one of those things because He was God... but He chose not to... so that He could save us.
- c. He humbled Himself to death on a cross.
 - i. Death on the cross was for criminals.
 - ii. It was a slow, awful, suffering death... a cursed death.
- d. But with that death came the forgiveness of sins that we all need so badly as we deal with self-centeredness, and pride, and trusting in ourselves more than God... and all the other things that would keep us from the same attitude as Christ.
- e. As Jesus our Savior, was nailed to the cross – so were our sins –
 - i. Jesus paid the full debt and weight of sin for us...
 - ii. You are no longer running on empty...
 - iii. You are full of God’s grace and forgiveness.
 - iv. You are forgiven...

V. **And it all started through faith and in our baptisms...**

- a. I know I talk about this often, but that really is the place where God transformed you, called you His own, and redeemed you to have the same attitude as Christ.
- b. Baptism is how He gives us His Holy Spirit to transform our mindset... to work change in us... to help us with humility and being fulfilled regardless of our outward circumstances.

- c. In fact, the waters of Baptism are where the Holy Spirit fills us.
- d. Yes, the big lie tells us that we can be filled by worldly things, but the attitude of Christ now gives us a very different way of living...
 - i. Rather than running on empty – we filled with the Spirit! Amen