

Puffs That Do Not Satisfy, Part II

Last week I used the illustration of cereal that is full of air that simply does not satisfy and the vain attempt to get full, only to make you feel bloated and not really satisfied. God's Word says, "*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*" (I Corinthians 13:4). The love and life that God gives us satisfies to the max!

Last week we discussed one of the things that does not satisfy in life: Education without instruction. Allow me to address three more things that have proven to be "puffs that do not satisfy."

2. Church Without Worship

Many years ago, a successful young businessman named Steve Boose walked into our services. After a few visits, he, his wife and two sons committed their lives to Jesus Christ. I was touched by something Steve said, "I have gone to church all my life. We sang about God, we were taught about God and I heard preaching about God, but since coming here, well, Pastor, I experienced God Himself; God was here! At this church, we did not just talk about or sing about Him -- He was really here!" It's been many years, but since he said those words, they have served as a catalyst for my prayers for our church that we would always be a place where people experience God Himself!

I am reminded that there are two words that should be taken in mind when it comes to worship: grieve and quench. These are both spoken of the Holy Spirit. "*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*" (Ephesians 4:30). "*Quench not the Spirit*" (I Thessalonians 5:19). At the baptism of Jesus we hear these words: "*And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased*" (Luke 3:22). Here we find the Spirit is likened to a dove. It doesn't take much to frighten a dove away. We must understand that God, the Spirit is very sensitive and repulsed by our sin. When we entertain that which offends Him, He is grieved and His influence in our life is quenched. Like the gentle dove that lifts his wings and departs, we do not lose His life...but we do lose the influence of the Holy Spirit. Without His overwhelming influence, our worship is empty and vain. God commands us to "... *Be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18). When two, three or more come together in corporate worship and everyone is right with God and filled with His Spirit, there is a manifestation of God so strong that the Bible says of someone who visits this kind of assembly, "*And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth*" (I Corinthians 14:25). This is when church attendance becomes worship. There are no substitutes for this that can ever satisfy!

3. Sex Without Love

We live in a secular culture that lets glands, not God be its guide. In this immoral atmosphere many of our youth equate sexual activity with love. This is not love; it is one of life's "puffs" that does not satisfy. When a person gives him or herself to someone in the physical union, science tells us that a chemical change actually takes place within your body. This is no surprise; the Scriptures, as always, are ahead of science because the Bible says, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24). In the confines of marriage it becomes an endearing and liberating bond that benefits multiple generations. When the same activity is taken outside the marriage unit, it becomes a bondage that enslaves. "*What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh*" (I Corinthians 6:16). What a sad parallel, for you see, a harlot (or anyone in that category) does not love you unconditionally; basically, her affection is for sale to the next bidder. She will not commit to you and she will never satisfy the deep hunger that rests far beneath the surface of your empty life. And when a person becomes physically involved with more than one partner, he or she becomes a person with multiple-personalities, a parasite in human existence. He is faithful to no one but himself, driven by the basest of the lower nature and lives as C. S. Lewis said, as "men without chests." In following the decadent lifestyle you are not only bereft of God but you are bereft of the one commodity that He owns: love. We do not have time to list all the attributes of God's beautiful love, but allow me to point out just a few from I Corinthians 13:4,7: Love "...suffereth long..." This means love is patient; it can wait. Lust cannot wait to get, love can wait to give! Love "...is kind..." This means love does not hurt; it helps. Love "...envieth not..." This means love is not jealous. Love "...endureth all things." This means love will last when lust will eventually burn out.

4. Life Without Honor

Sullivan Ballou was born March 28, 1829 in Smithfield, Rhode Island. He was educated at Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island and the National Law School in Ballston, N.Y. He was admitted to the Rhode Island Bar in 1853. Ballou devoted his brief life to public service. He was elected in 1854 as clerk of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, later serving as its speaker. He married Sarah Hart Shumway on October 15, 1855, and the following year saw the birth of their first child, Edgar. A second son, William, was born in 1859. Ballou immediately entered the military in 1861 after the Civil War broke out. He became judge advocate of the Rhode Island militia and was 32 at the time of his death at the first Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861. Just before this battle Sullivan wrote his wife one of the most beautiful letters ever written in the English tongue, rivaling our finest authors and poets. The entire letter is well worth your time to read, but allow me to share with you these words from his last letter to his wife:

“Sarah my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battle field. The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them for so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood around us.” Please note his dying desire: that his sons grow up to “honorable manhood.”

Although Sullivan Ballou did not live to fulfill the obligation, he left a legacy that his two sons could cherish for the rest of their lives. Here was a man who had everything to live for, but was not going to live his life on the sidelines. He was going to believe in something and live for something and if need be die for something, which indeed he did. Far better to die with honor than live as a coward. My dad used to say, “Most men wouldn’t die for anybody’s cause.” I am writing you these words on the National Day of Prayer. How I do pray that America would wake up, repent of her sins and live with that same kind of honor that took Ballou to the battlefield? Make no mistake, we still have that same kind of honor exemplified by some of our most precious young men and women in the armed forces. Yet we have too many “arm-chair” quarterbacks who have plenty of opinions, but precious little “guts” about them. Even a short life lived with honor is more satisfying than a long life of mediocrity that never committed to a cause. Of course, the greatest cause that I am suggesting to which we all subscribe is true and honorable Christianity. Let us follow Jesus without reservations. *“He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour”* (Proverbs 21:21).

-Pastor Pope-