

Fill My Cup

Three cups... Three very different cups, but each one can help us understand something important about being a Christian in today's world.

The first cup is empty. Empty—that's often how we feel—as if the cup of our life is empty. We want our life to hold more—more meaning... more joy... more love... We look around us, and we see other people—their lives seem so full. They never struggle. They have it all together. But for ourselves, it feels like something's missing. We're running on empty.

I wonder if that's how the Samaritan woman felt—the woman in today's Bible reading from the Gospel of John. She had come to the village well at noon to fill her water jars. There was a Jewish traveler sitting by the well, weary & thirsty after a long morning of walking many miles in the hot sun, and he asked her for a drink. The man was Jesus, but of course, she did not know that. She was shocked by his request, and she expressed her astonishment: “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” You see, in Jesus' time, a man never spoke to a woman, unless she was a relative. And the Jews hated the Samaritans so much that they avoided them completely.

However, Jesus' response was even more astonishing. “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” Jesus goes on to promise, “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst; the water that I shall give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

What is Jesus promising? There's a double meaning of the phrase, "living water." It means running water—water from a spring, not from a cistern. But it also means, life-giving water. In other words, water for when we are spiritually thirsty, water for when our life's cup is empty. Jesus promises us meaning, joy, love... eternal life. Life that is rich and fulfilling, life with Jesus which begins on earth and continues forever in heaven.

So how do we get this empty cup of our life filled? As high school graduates, as college students, as we serve in the military, as fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers, in our daily life and in times of crisis—how do we get this empty cup of our life filled? By spending time with Jesus—just like the woman at the well.

Now, how we spend time with Jesus—that varies for each of us. Certainly, worship services are an important way. I'd encourage you to continue to make Sunday morning worship a regular part of your life. Most college towns have some amazing opportunities for worship; I can help you college students get connected with a church. Along with worship, God uses Holy Communion to fill our hearts.

Reading the Bible & spending time in prayer—those are also ways that we stay close to Jesus and allow him to fill our lives. Music, nature, talking with friends about our beliefs—these can enrich our lives. Finding a place to volunteer, a place to help others—whether that be a mission trip with a group at college, or helping out tutoring kids, or visiting senior citizens, or working in a homeless shelter or soup kitchen... These are just some of the ways that Jesus uses to fill our empty cup.

"Fill my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul."

However, there's also a second kind of cup that sometimes represents our life. That's a cup like this—a full cup. Our days are crammed full with activities—work, studies, family responsibilities, time with friends, taking care of the house & yard & laundry & meals, social groups, church work, shopping, sports, TV & computer games & Facebook & internet & Instagrams and...

God wants to pour out his blessings on our life... God wants to give us living water, welling up to eternal life... but there's no space left.

What can we do? We can seek God's wisdom. We can take some of the busyness out of our cup of life. Some things that don't belong... Some things that are less important... Some things that may fit in the future, but are too much now.

Then, we can say to God:

“Fill my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.”

There's a third cup that may represent our lives—something like this... God pours the living water, his blessings, into our lives... but the blessings don't stay, they drain out. Our cup is cracked.

Do you ever feel like that? Other people seem to have beautiful, perfect cups... but our lives are flawed. Sometimes these cracks are visible—we cannot hide them; other times, we keep them carefully concealed. Sometimes these are cracks we caused ourselves; other times we have been hurt in ways that leave us broken & fragile.

How do we deal with the cracks in our life? By focusing on God's love for us. That's the heart of Jesus' life and teaching. “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that

God sent his only Son [Jesus] into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.” [1 John 4:9-10].

I think it’s human nature that our flaws & brokenness often occupy our minds. But what would Jesus say to us? That we are loved, and forgiven, and strengthened by his grace.

Sometimes, it helps to have a Bible verse to hold on to at times like this. “I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you & not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” [Jeremiah 29:11, NIV] “Fear not, I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you.” [Isaiah 43: 1b, 4a.]

Focusing on God’s love & peace, the cracks in our lives no longer hopelessly drain us, but instead they become opportunities for empathy, for understanding others, for patience, for reaching out to bless.

There’s a story about a man...

A house servant had two large pots. One hung on each end of a pole that he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. The other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

For two years the servant delivered each day only one-and-a-half pots full of water to his master's house. The perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, but the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable over accomplishing only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the servant one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"What are you ashamed of?" asked the bearer.

"For these past two years I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you don't get full value from your work."

The servant said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." As they went up the hill, the cracked pot noticed the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path. When they reached the house, the servant said to the pot, "Did you notice the flowers grew only on your side of the path, not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table."

Each of us has flaws. But if we allow it, the Lord will use our flaws to grace his Father's table.

As seen on the Internet; submitted by Phillip Gunter

A cracked cup... an over-full cup... an empty cup... whichever is the story of our lives today, we pray:

“Fill my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.” Amen.