

Jesus Exposed as Scripture full-filled

I love the way Luke sets a scene. Some intriguing details, a suspenseful pause, and then ... boom! He just rips off the veil and **exposes** what is underneath.

In the past two weeks, we have witnessed what I've been calling the "exposure" of Jesus: first as beloved son of God at his baptism, then (in the turning of water into wine) as a painter of 'signs' that point to new things to come. And now Luke, at the very beginning of Jesus' teaching and preaching and healing ministry, **exposes** him as the **full-filler** of of God's Word.

I kind of made up a word there...FuLL -filler. It puts the accent in the right place, on the Full part and not so much on the filler part. Because to understand what Jesus is saying about his relationship to the prophets and the teachers and the history that came before, you've got to have a good handle on the FULL part.

Let me illustrate by way of my favorite example: popcorn. There are three different kind of "fillers" when it comes to bags of popcorn.

First you've got your 'half-fillers' - you know the people who never open the bottom of the bag all the way up or who are just lazy- so that when you shake everything down you end up with something substantially less than FULL. Let's call that for what it is. That's just wrong.

Then you've got your "almost-fillers"- these are the people who have good intentions but they always find some reason to stop a little short. Maybe they think you need need room to fold the top of the bag down. Maybe they don't want you to spill while you walk. Maybe they think popcorn is scarce. But even with good intentions, it still isn't the proper way to **fill** a bag with popcorn.

The proper way is the biblical way - described a little later in Luke's gospel- A good measure, **pressed down**, shaken together, running over. That's a "**full-filler**". That's room for no more. That's completion. Perfection!

And that is how Jesus is **exposed** in relation to the Word of God. He full-fills it. So much so that we can say Jesus IS the Word of God. Everything said before fits within him. Creation, frustration, judgment, redemption... words of joy and sorrow, comfort and hope. Jesus is the not only the period on the sentence he is every letter of every word and there is no room to add anymore. There is no sequel- no more to be said.

Pastor Tim Koester, St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bloomfield NE, 3C 1.27.13

He is alpha and omega, from a to z. If you wanted to sum up everything God wants to **communicate** to the creation, you simply need to look to Jesus. He is the Word made flesh. Law and prophets and history find their completion, their Full-fill-ment in him.

But what exactly is Jesus filled with? What is the nature, the character, the purpose of his' teaching and preaching, his living and dying? In a word...grace. In two words...good news. But even the gospel writers have a little different take on what that means for their own communities, which is what makes bible reading so powerful.

During the coming year, we will primarily be reading from Luke's gospel in our worship and Luke has some very challenging things to say, both to readers in his day and ours. Jesus is exposed as the Word of God that brings good news...yes.. but to THE POOR. Jesus is release, but only to the captives. He is sight... but what good is that if you already claim to see? Jesus is freedom but only for those who understand themselves to be captives. As the full-filler of Is. 61, Jesus will challenge social and economic realities both in Luke's time and in ours.

It has been said that before we can hear Jesus as a word of good news, we must hear him as bad news. Now that may sound strange, even uncomfortable for people who only think of Jesus as "nice". Jesus is nice but he is also more than that; He is loving- and when you love someone you care enough to tell them the truth.

And the truth for many of us is that we tell ourselves (or listen to somebody else telling us) we are already Full-filled. Our schedules are full. Our stomachs are full. Our houses are full. Our wallets may even be full. Our lives already seem to be filled to the brim and running over with more than we can handle already. And yet... and yet deep down, our spirits long for something more. Something more solid, more secure, more trustworthy, more true than "fluff", which can disappear within a single hour. I think we long to be Full-filled with purpose and goodness and courage and love. Things that cannot be taken away. In short, we long to be filled with Jesus.

But in order for Jesus to fill us up, there needs to be room. We need to be emptied of everything that tries to take his place. And that can be bad news for people like us who fear emptiness so much that we are satisfied to be filled with anything. Empty makes us vulnerable. Empty seems weak. Empty means we have to let go of 'things' and if there is one thing modern people have a hard time doing it is letting go.

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But all is far from lost. God helps us even to hear what seems like bad news. God helps us unclench our fists, open our hearts, and let go of our fears. Jesus says that in him, the time of the Lord's favor is Full-filled. Favor is a time of grace, a time of undeserved love and it is that grace which transforms our idea of being "FULL".

Because even when we are think we are empty we are not. That is the nature of grace. Even an empty popcorn bag is filled with air. And trusting that we can never truly be empty or separated from God's goodness, completely and radically changes how we see ourselves and others.

Paul says that being fully filled with the love of God, makes us the "body of Christ". Not symbolically. Not metaphorically. But really and truly. It is our bodies that God has filled with the Spirit - so that God's work might be done through our hands. We too have been anointed to bring good news to the poor, sent out to proclaim release to those held captive and recovery of sight to those who cannot see the goodness of God all around them. Through us, God is working to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim to all people, the time of God's favor and love.

This is who we are. This is what we are filled with. It guides everything from how we conduct annual meetings, how we budget our resources, what we decide to build, and how we view our neighbors -whether they live down the street in Bloomfield or ON a street in Haiti.

Let us pray then, that we might be **exposed** as people fully-filled with the Word of God in Jesus Christ. May this grace, this undeserved love and favor change us and shape us and form us to be a blessing to others as we live FULLY as the body of Christ in the world.