

## **Empty 1: Filled**

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

### **Empty litany adapted from Isaiah 45 (ESV)**

Pastor: The Lord says, ‘Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!’

**All: For He is God, and there is no other.**

Pastor: Only in the Lord, it shall be said of Him,

**All: are righteousness and strength;**

Pastor: to him shall come and be humbled

**All: all who were incensed against him.**

Pastor: In the Lord all the offspring of the church

**All: shall be justified and shall glory.”**

Pastor: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All: Amen**

**Acts 4:32-35** <sup>32</sup> Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold <sup>35</sup> and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**1 John 1:4-2:2** <sup>4</sup> And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. <sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

righteous. <sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

**John 20:19-31** <sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

<sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

*A church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. 'I've gone for 30 years now,' he wrote, 'and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.'*

*This started a real controversy in the 'Letters to the Editor' column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:*

*'I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this..*

*They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!'*

**You can get stuck on who should be cooking dinner... or hear the promise. The promise that God will feed you spiritually. And although the feast is every sabbath rest (Word & Sacrament), God gives you His Spirit in every moment.**

**...he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."**

**What do you think? Do we need to be breathed upon in some way to receive the Holy Spirit. Let me be crystal clear with you today. This Holy Spirit thing is completely dependent on God. You are completely dependent on God, ...but not just in the 3,000 sermons you might hear, or the 32, 000 meals you might eat... but from moment to moment... God is filling you with His Holy Spirit!!**

**<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the**

**Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”**

**Believe me, the empty tomb was not a comforting experience for anyone involved. The experience of emptiness is a scary one. This was a very anxious group of men and women locked behind closed doors. Filled with fear.**

**It was not until this moment when Jesus gave them peace (and His Spirit) that they were given faith in place of their fear.**

**To be filled requires being empty, but here is the thing none of us are empty, thus the constant work of the Spirit to rid us of ourselves.**

**What feeling or thoughts filled your mind as you woke up this morning... What feelings are in your mind even now as you sit in the pew this morning?**

**What is it that helps you let go of those feelings or forces you to be emptied of yourself?**

**I like the image of letting go. I think so much of our lives are not about working hard to get what you want... so much as learning to let go of that which was never meant for you.**

**Letting go of ideas that sparked our energy and attention at one time. Letting go of plans and investments that we may have given a lot of ourselves to. Letting go of relationships, for a season or until the new heaven and earth.**

**I don't necessarily need God's help to achieve things, but I certainly need God's help to let go of things.**

**I have told the story of our little baby Myka before (my Senior in high school) When Myka was oh...6 weeks old 😊 One night Molly and I were laying on the floor watching our new bundle**

of joy kicking her legs and waving her arms as she lay on her little pink baby basket. There is one thing you do need to know for this story to make sense. Myka was born with a thick head of dark black hair. I think it was the half a cow that a farmer had given us. We ate that throughout Molly's pregnancy.

We were all on the floor... I was doing the little tummy game where you bury your face in their tummy and ...don't laugh you've done it. 😊

As I bent down to tickle her tummy she kind of put up her little arms like she was relaxing or stretching out, but then out of nowhere her face got this awful expression and became bright red and she started to scream.

I had no idea what it was, I looked to make sure I hadn't put my knee on her foot. ...we got kind of concerned until we noticed that her little arm that was behind her head wasn't moving and in fact she was kind of jerking it like it was stuck on something and so I picked her up and sure enough there was her hand clenched tightly around her long hair which was wrapped around her fingers. The harder she tried to move her arm the harder she clenched her fist and the more she pulled her own hair. I had to pry her hand open to get her to stop all the while she was screaming worse than I had ever heard before.

*I am sending you ...breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."*

Maybe that which you need to lose is your own failures, your own mistakes, things that you have done to yourself. Maybe the feeling you were wrestling with this morning are regrets or doubts. Maybe you need to let go of your own hair.

**We are not empty jars. We are often filled with fear and anxiety. We need God to come into our lives to unclench our fist ... forcing us to be empty of ourselves and our anxieties.**

**And Christ does this by filling us with something else. His Holy Presence, His Holy Spirit. This most certainly happens in church, hearing God's word... but it also happens in every moment of your life. You are completely dependent on God!**

**My hope for you this morning is that you see very clearly just how real and alive God is in your life. How many times Jesus has filled you with what you need in the moment to be His presence for another... teaching a lesson, lending a hand, walking beside, forgiving, encouraging, ... All the ways in which the Holy Spirit can use you. The true you... a vessel for something greater.**

**When is the last time you were filled with the Holy Spirit? Let me assure you that the voice in your head now that says you have never been, or insists that it has been a long time because that is a holy sacred mountain top experience... That doubt is not from God.**

**God is here now! And He is again and again in our lives giving you what you need for the moment. And it is in those instances that you are being filled... There is another power at work in you, often in spite of you. And we take for granted just how often this happens on any given day much less each interaction with another human being. You are God's promise!**

**We can easily focus on the times we failed to rise to the occasion, rather than marvel at all the times we have and do.**

**You have been and are being filled with the Holy Spirit, not just here at church, during the sermon, or in the sacrament (Although you can be assured that God does not hide himself from you in those sacred moments).**

**God is not limited by your ability to understand what He is doing in you to fill you with his presence. Let me tell you clearly we, all of us, vastly under estimate just how dependent on God we are.**

**You have been filled with the Holy Spirit not just now as you read these words, but daily... moment to moment you are dependent on the Holy Spirit at work in and through you. God is everywhere, in all things and He has filled you and will fill you with His presence.**

