

There are two types of people in this world, "Full people and empty people." If I were to take a poll this morning and ask the question, "Which would you rather be: full or empty?" I'm guessing that most of us would probably say, "Full." Right??? Think about it. "Full" is good. -----a basket Full of Easter eggs? Good. – A Full church, or rather a full parking lot on Sunday morning? For me as the pastor, that's good. - Children full of respect and manners? A marriage full of laughter and love? Good and good. - A full bank account? Good.- A full pantry? Good.

I think you probably get the point. A person who is "full" is typically one who's able to look at his or her life and say, "Dang! Every one of my needs is met, every fear is silenced, and every obstacle is overcome." In fact, I bet most of us would say, "That's what I want. That's what I'm aiming for!" And perhaps as we begin to take a good long look at our lives, we will see that this is who we are, too. Perhaps it is who we all are. We're "full." Even if we haven't had our Easter breakfast, or Easter dinner yet.

But let's be terribly honest. If we believe that we're complete, that our lives are as they should be, then this day, this message, this reality of the resurrected Christ just isn't for us. Here's the deal: Easter isn't really for full people. It isn't for the "have-it-all-together-life-is-good" sort of people. No, Easter is for empty people. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is for those who've figured out that in this life, "full" is a fleeting feeling. Let me offer up an example: if you were to analyze the spending habits of a typical American family, you would most likely discover that a vast majority of our income is spent on items that need constant replenishing. We spend almost all of our treasure on food that will be eaten, gas that will be burned, clothes that will wear out, and on entertainment that doesn't seem to last us very long.

Some of us realize that no matter how many pounds of ham you put away, or deviled eggs you down later today, that come Monday morning you'll be hungry again. Maybe you've discovered that on this side of eternity, the beauty of spring always fades, turning into a summer that is often fairly hot and humid. The cutest of Easter dresses on your daughter, or the sharpest of suits on your little boy, will be grown out of by next year, or stained and dirty if they end up hunting for easter eggs later this afternoon.

Some of us have felt the emptiness of losing someone close. Others know what it's like to have their health fading, or their family fighting. In fact, let's be a little interactive this morning and try not be shy.....raise a hand if you have: - a prayer that's unanswered, a fear that's haunting you, a depression that's lingering, a faith life that's stagnant, in-laws who can sometimes be a little overwhelming, kids who can be pretty downright wild and crazy at times, or a future that's uncertain.

Apparently, it would appear that there are people here this morning who understand that fullness is fleeting, and who know what it feels like to be empty. And the good news, is that for all of us who fall into this category, we are the ones Easter is for. Easter is not necessarily for full people. Easter is for empty people.

Don't quite believe me, then perhaps you should listen to these words from Mark's account of the Easter story. "And [the angel] said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go; tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Did you hear me mention words like "alarmed," "fled," "trembling," "amazed" and "afraid"? Easter itself has its origin in the emptiness of disciples' hearts overwhelmed from witnessing their Savior die, and who were filled with a

certain amount of anxiety that came from expecting to see his body, only to discover that due to a miraculous resurrection it is gone. The temptation is to look at such emptiness and see it as a bad thing. But let's not go there! The truth is, that our emptiness is and can be a great thing. And maintaining a realistic view of this fleetingly full world, can be a crucial and critical thing for us to possess.

Look at our second lesson this morning from 1 Corinthians 15. Here, the apostle Paul helps us understand the blessings of the **empty tomb** upon our fleetingly full lives. "... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

Paul's point is this: If Jesus is still dead, then all we have is another great teacher who promised the world but died before he could deliver -- like everybody else. If his bones are still stuck in some tomb, then it means there is still no clear path to the Creator, no certainty about our life after death, and no trustworthy teaching about why we exist in this world. If he is still dead, all we have is our emptiness. But thanks be to God, Christ is not dead. Christ is *risen*!

As a side note, for the skeptics out there, perhaps it's time you stopped doubting the resurrection. Sure, maybe you saw some special on the History Channel that made you question it. But... how much trust can you give a channel on television that you have to pay for to entertain you? The resurrection of Christ is not a myth, or a rumor. It's a fact. The disciples recorded it, and later willingly died for it. History says that more than 500 people were willing to attest to it. The Roman authorities never disproved, and they didn't attempt to argue with it. Likewise, in a male-centric world, why would the gospel writers, like Mark, dare make up a story about women being the first to find Jesus? They would be inviting

scandal and scorn; unless, of course, it happened, and other eyewitnesses were unable to say otherwise.

Therefore, since the tomb was empty, it means that everything Jesus ever preached or promised is true -- which is good news because Jesus has some amazing things to offer those of us who know the emptiness of this life. The empty tomb means that Jesus' death on the cross was, in fact, a work of forgiveness. It means that all of the mistakes we've made that leave us wondering whether or not God loves us, have been punished and put aside. But that's not all!

According to Paul, Christ's resurrection is a glimpse of our own future resurrection. There will be a day, when Jesus returns and gives to us the same experience he had on that first Easter. He will bring us back to life! That is one of the promises that Christ places in the hands of those who are willing to admit they are empty and that only Christ and his promises can truly fill them.

So what are we? Empty or full? It's an essential question because if we truly believe that our life is full, then we have no room for, and no need for, the great things Jesus can give us. But if we're able to admit that we're broken, needy, and often empty, then the fulfilled promises of Easter are ready and waiting to fill us up.

Now... just in case you are someone who is a bit skeptical: maybe you are here at church because you were brought here by a good friend, or perhaps a special lady in your life, be it a spouse or a girlfriend, looked at you and said, "It's Easter! All I want are some beautiful flowers and your behind in the seat next to me at church." Here is my gentle and loving response to your doubt, "If you are here, and still refuse to believe that the resurrection is true, that's perfectly alright. But at the very least consider this. At the very least you should *want* it to be true!

Why? Because if Jesus is risen from the dead, it means death is not the end! That's huge! It means a kingdom is coming that will bring an end to all war. It

means poverty will someday cease, and everyone will have a seat at the table. It means sickness will be destroyed and there will be no more need for cancer centers, addiction counselors, or children's hospitals. Surely, you can get behind that, can't you?

The resurrection means that every husband who's buried a wife, or every woman who's lost a baby, will one day have his or her grief overshadowed by God's glory at Christ's return. It means one day our stormy, tempestuous, tsunami-filled planet will be replaced with a calm creation. It means that soon there will be a day when all those who can't walk, or hear, or see, and those whose minds are slow, or bodies are broken, will rise from their chairs, step out of their beds, leave all assistance behind and be whole. Totally amazing!

We believe because Christ is risen, all of that is guaranteed for us tomorrow and can be tasted today. And although you have a choice of whether or not to believe in Jesus and his miraculous Resurrection, no matter how full you think you are, deep down you should want it to be true!

There are two types of people in this world -- empty and full. Which one are you? Empty isn't a bad thing. An empty tomb means Jesus is alive. Emptiness, in your life, simply means you're the one Jesus rose for, and that you are ready to receive all that he has to give to you. Sure, full pantries, full gas tanks, full hearts, and full bank accounts are good. But when it comes to Easter, empty is *great*. Being empty is everything. Thanks be to God. Amen.