

Full Filled

Matthew 5:3-10, 17; 1 Timothy 6:17-19
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Web Description: There are so many things in this world that make empty promises to us. We are promised happiness if we buy the newest product, self-esteem if we dress the right way, good friends if we learn where to find them and how to keep them. In this message we hear Jesus' own words on the "Full-fulfillment" that he offers us and invites us to trust.

I. Welcome...study guides...ushers distribute Bibles.

II. Introduction.

A. Anybody else here listen to Billy Joel? You don't hear much of his music anymore. Most of his hits were from 10 or more years ago, but his music is still current. They just did one of his songs on Glee this season. The one they did on Glee was kind of a controversial song, and it's one that I've always thought was really important. It's called "Only the good die young." Do you know that song? There's a line from this song that has always stuck in my head. If you know it, I bet the melody will come into your head even as I say the words – the song says, "I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints, the sinners are much more fun. Only the good die young." That's a powerful line. And lots of people believe that. The sinners are much more fun! Christians probably shouldn't believe that, but I think a lot of us actually do at some level. We're signed up to believe in Jesus, because we want to go to heaven when we die, but we suspect that the people who aren't following him are the ones who are really enjoying life now. Sin seems really good.

III. It's ok to admit this. The Bible admits it too. There's a verse in the Old Testament that sympathizes with this predicament. It's Proverbs 14:12. It's on page 927 if you want to look it up. The Bible says **"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." Proverbs 14:12 (page 927)**

A. I've heard people use this passage pretty judgmentally. Anything that feels right to you or good to you or makes sense to you is probably wrong. So stop trusting yourself.

B. But I think that's the wrong tone. I think this proverb is meant to be sympathetic. There is a way that appears to be right. It seems to be right. It feels right. Other people will tell you that it is right. It will be an easy trap to fall into. It will be like a desert mirage. It will look so real, and you will think that it is going to lead you to fullness and life, but, the Bible warns us, it's going to steal life from you. When you drink it, it's going to leave you with a mouthful of sand.

C. Most of us have had to learn the lesson, for example, that accumulation of stuff will not really bring you joy.

1. Seems like it might be true. I would really get a lot of pleasure from a nice new TV, new electronics, new clothes, new car, or whatever. It feels like that should work. Most of us have to go through a phase of believing this before we figure it out.

2. Very smart people spend millions of dollars trying to convince you that it is true and it will work. It's hard to go very long in this world without hearing or seeing an advertisement that promises you fulfillment or security or deep happiness if you'll

buy the right stuff, their stuff. Most of the time it's more implied than said, but it's definitely out there.

3. This looks like it should work. And at some point in life, many of us have made some number of decisions as if it would work for us. But it didn't. No matter how much it might appear to be right, it'll steal life from you in the end.
 - D. Similarly revenge is not really satisfying. It appears to be. It seems like it should be. You settle the score and get even, and your life should improve. But that never works long term. You don't get back what you lost when you get revenge.
 - E. Some of us hold grudges, thinking that will somehow help us. But it doesn't. Those things just poison us. Forgiveness looks so unappealing in the midst of anger, but it has much more promise to give us our lives back than holding onto a grudge.
 - F. How about winning an argument? Isn't that supposed to make us feel good. I heard someone once offer some marriage advice. Maybe you've heard this too. The advice came in the form of a question, "Do you want to be right, or do you want to be married?" Which one matters more to you? You can be right all you want, but in any relationship, winning an argument is not nearly so satisfying as reconciling a relationship.
 - G. All of these things draw us in. They appear to offer us some fullness and some life. Have you ever been sucked in by something like this? I have. The sinners look like they're a lot more fun. There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.
- IV. When Jesus was teaching his first disciples, he taught them about this. And these lessons are some of his most famous sayings. And I think they're so famous because they speak to this same part of our hearts. They're called the beatitudes.
- A. **"Blessed are the poor in the spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted; Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:3-5 (page 1416).**
 - B. At one level, this is just kind of the flip side of the verse from Proverbs. That verse warned us about paths that do not lead to life. Warning: wrong turn ahead. Here Jesus tells us on the positive side about the path that does lead to life. He told us to walk this way instead.
 - C. But these verses are also different. They're kind of hard to believe. They aren't just general descriptions of character traits that you could choose to make you happy. These actions and attitudes only work reliably when they describe a life in Christ. Let me give you an example.
 1. One of the next verses after the ones we read says, **"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7 (page 1416)** Now that works in this world... sometimes. Sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes if you show mercy, you will just be taken advantage of. And if there is no Jesus, if there is no deeper reality and no eternal reality for you in Him, then all you did was lose and enable somebody else. Mercy does not always work out on the surface and in this world. In this world, Blessed are those whose friends and family are merciful, for you will always have suckers to steal from. The merciful are only truly blessed if Jesus is right, and the Kingdom of God is coming, and these ways are the ways of the Kingdom that will endure.

2. Let me give you another example. We read, “Blessed are those who mourn.” There are psychologically healthy things about mourning. That’s a human truth. If you lose a loved one, it’s good to grieve. But you can’t go around telling just anybody who has lost their spouse or parent or child that that they’re so lucky to be in that situation. What a blessing, I’m so glad you lost your mate, now you can grieve! That’s terrible. You can’t say that. And so this is a monstrous thing to say, unless Jesus is right that the Kingdom of God is coming and even death will be defeated. It is the one who would triumph or the grave himself who can say to those who follow Him, Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.
- V. Jesus taught about a life that is truly blessed, and he taught about what it means to be fulfilled. Let me show you another verse that puts this a little differently
- A. **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Matthew 5:17 (page 1417).**
 1. Now Jesus said this to people who knew the Bible. They knew the law and the prophets. And they knew that it promised them the way of life. And he says this remarkable thing: I have come to fulfill the law and the prophets.
 2. One the one hand, this is a major validation of the OT for followers of Jesus. (We’ve been reading and learning the Big God story. We read the story of the OT all fall, up through Christmas. So that’s good, right. We weren’t just wasting our time on that Old Testament stuff.)
 3. On the other hand, Jesus says, all that stuff we read wasn’t full yet. It wasn’t full without him. Jesus needed to full-fill it. (And that’s actually how we read the Old Testament, we were always looking ahead to Jesus. He was the Savior God promised to Adam and Eve after the fall, he was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that his descendants would bless the whole world, he was the King in the line of King David who would sit on God’s throne forever, he was the Messiah promised by the prophets who would usher in the beginning of God’s new covenant and God’s new creation.)
 4. There’s a difference between being half-filled and being full-filled. And Jesus said that not even the Bible is full-filled if you read it without knowing Him and him at the center of its story. The Bible’s a good thing, let’s be clear on that, but without Jesus it can’t fill you up.
 5. Really all the things we’ve been talking about are good things until you look for them to fill you up. The basic pleasures of life are a blessing from God, they’re not a bad thing. But no matter how many you collect, they’ll leave you empty. Justice in our relationships is a good thing, a gift from God, but when you try to enforce it vengefully, it leaves you empty.
 - B. The verses from Jesus all say the same thing to his disciples. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the merciful, those who mourn, for *they* will be comforted or shown mercy or enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Not every path leads to fullness. Some lead to death. Let me read you one more of these verses:
 1. **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” Matthew 5:6 (page 1416).** *They* will be filled. Not every path leads to fullness and life, but this one does.

2. Our calling to be disciples of Jesus, our mission to be and make disciples of Jesus, is a high stakes calling. Life and death are in the balance. Fullness and emptiness are at stake.
 3. What are things that tempt you most effectively? We've all got different triggers. No need to judge someone else's. What's yours? What is it that promises you life and fullness and joy, what is it in your eyes that appears to be right but winds up stealing life from you? Jesus invites you to follow him instead, to find your fullness in Him, to know that you are loved, that you are secure, that you have a calling and role in the work of God in Him. Pretty much everything else could be a mirage, but He offers you life. I pray you take him up on that offer.
 4. But let's not be stingy with this good news, shall we. This is a high stakes game, not just for us but for the world. They're in the same predicament we are. There are ways that appear to be right, that provide pleasure, that promise fullness but can't ultimately deliver. Our mission is to be *and* to make disciples of Jesus. To introduce hungry people to the bread of life and let them eat their fill.
- VI. Today is a day of special commitment to this mission. It is a day of commitment to proclaiming the gospel in all our ministries. To teaching the ways of Jesus in our Sunday School programs, in our confirmation programs, in our adult groups, in our worship services, in our community groups, in our partnerships to serve the homeless, through our partnership in Haiti, in our commitment to our neighbors right here in the NE metro area. There are so many empty promises in the world and we have so many ways to communicate the one promise that can actually deliver life.
- A. In just a minute I'm going to close this message in prayer for both our worship venues. I want pray for God to lead us in the way of the fullness of life in Jesus Christ and not to settle for counterfeit, even when it appears to be right, even when it looks like it's a lot more fun. And after we've prayed, we'll have the opportunity during the next song to bring our commitment cards up to a specially designed box at the front. Many of you will already have filled out and sealed the commitment cards you received in the mail. Some of you may also have found them in the worship bulletin this morning. Either way, please make sure that your name and address are on the outside of that envelope. Nobody else will ever see what's inside. We're going to keep them locked in these boxes until later this year, and then we'll mail them back to you, unopened, to be a tool in your own faith.
 - B. Let me close now in prayer, and then each room will receive some more specific instructions for that space.

PRAY