

EMPTY

On Sunday afternoon I noticed my bird feeders were empty so I went out to refill them. After I did this, my bird feed container became completely empty. About twenty minutes later I took my daughter out driving and noticed my windshield wiper fluid was empty when I tried to clean the back window. I solved one empty on Sunday but discovered two new ones. These kinds of empty are not too bad as I can easily go and get more bird seed and wiper fluid. It is more difficult however to replace what is empty when it comes to our feelings and emotions.

Unfortunately, the Christmas season can leave many people feeling empty emotionally. It is supposed to be a joyous time of year reflected by some people asking us if we are feeling the Christmas spirit. Many of the songs in this season talk about feeling the joy as well. Some years we may feel this kind of joy, but it often depends on what is happening in our life. When life is going well for us, then it is easy for us to get into the joy of the season. It is when we are going through seasons of loss, hardship, suffering or disappointment that we feel empty when it comes to the joy of the season. Maybe this is the case for some of us reading this mid-week message. Perhaps we are struggling with some challenge in our life right now that is causing us to feel empty emotionally, or even physically. These challenges may be:

- grieving the death of a loved one,
- a care giving situation that is draining us of all patience,
- added responsibilities at work or in the home,
- sadness or depression that affects many of us as the nights become longer and the days shorter,
- health issues that linger or still go undiagnosed,
- money issues as we adapt to the rising costs of utilities, gas, and groceries.

These kinds of struggles do not make us feel empty right away but rather gradually over time. Before we know it, we begin to notice that we are on empty when it comes to our strength and emotions. I hope this is not a reality for any of us right now, but if it is, then we may find strength from being reminded how God steps in and deals with empty things when He sees them.

One example we see of God doing this is right at the beginning of the Bible. In **Genesis 1: 2** we read how in the beginning the earth is formless and **empty** and darkness covers the deep waters. Reading on in Genesis 1 we see how God fills the once empty earth with light, sky and water, land and seas, sun, moon, stars, seasons, birds, fish, animals and finally humans. At the end, God

looks over everything that He has filled the once empty earth with and sees that it is very good.

Another instance when we see God at work filling something He sees as being empty can be found in **2 Kings 4**. A widow comes to God's prophet Elisha one day worrying because she has no money to pay the creditors to whom her deceased husband owed money. These creditors want to make her two sons into slaves in order to pay off the debts. Elisha offers to help and when he asks what does she have in her house, the widow acknowledges her shelves are empty except for a flask of olive oil. Elisha tells her to borrow as many empty jars as she can from friends and neighbours and then pour the olive oil from her flask into each of these jars and set them aside once they are full. She does as she is told and is able to fill jar after jar until there are no more. When she sells the olive oil in these jars, she is able to pay off the creditors and has enough money for her and her sons to live on.

These are just two examples from Scripture where we see God being aware of things and people being empty and filling them again in His special way. Being all-knowing, He is very aware if we are feeling empty right now either emotionally, physically, or spiritually. If we are experiencing feelings of emptiness, perhaps He is just waiting for us to **seek His help** like the widow did.

Maybe we do not feel desperate enough yet to do so. My response would be why wait?! Why should we wait until we are absolutely on empty in order to seek God's help? Do we take this same approach with our gas tanks? No, we go and refill our tanks with gas so that we do not end up stranded on the side of the road. Let's take this same approach when it comes to asking God to help refill our emotional, physical, and spiritual tanks before they become fully empty. He will be pleased to do so and as we see from these two stories the emptiness will be replaced by something very good from God. **If we do this now rather than later, we will begin to feel the joy that comes with the season of Christmas.**

My bird feeders are no longer empty as I write this, but my container is. It is better when my feeders are not empty, not only for the birds, but for me too. The reason why I say this is, whenever I wait for my Keurig to brew me a coffee, I often stare at the birds gathered at the feeders. It always makes me smile to see them gathered there filling their empty bellies. Some moments in a day my face may be empty of a smile, but never when I look at the birds at my feeder.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean