

Philippians 2
“Full for Eternity”
3rd Sunday of Easter

May 5, 2019
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[Introduction]

People often describe themselves as optimists or pessimists. The optimist sees a glass half full, the pessimist half empty. Either way, the goal is to have a full glass, right?

An empty glass is just something to look at,
while a full glass means you have an entire beverage still awaiting you.
A full glass gives you hope and anticipation;
an empty glass means the happiness has departed.

Sometimes Christians are mocked for the hope we have.

Many will say that Jesus’ Passion,
riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday only to be killed on Good Friday,
demonstrates that we Christians love wallowing in pessimism,
that celebrating Jesus emptied of all dignity, even of life itself,
expresses some kind of deep-seated need to beat ourselves up,
always looking on the dark side.
They’d say we Christians must feel too guilt-ridden
to ever allow ourselves a full glass of life.

Then, by Easter morning,
we’d be mocked for foolish optimism—
for believing an ancient myth
that Jesus Christ actually rose from the dead.

Get a life, we’re told.
Deal with the realities of this world as they are.
Address the problems going on around us
rather than wasting our time dreaming of some
pie in the sky, foolish, glass-half-full,
whistling-in-the-dark optimism.

The core of our beliefs —

Holy Week is not about a glass half full or glass half empty;
it's about Jesus emptying himself in order to make us full.

That's what St. Paul in our epistle teaches us really happens.

Jesus emptied himself for you so that you may be full.

This isn't pessimism or optimism. It is truth.

[*Pessimists*]

You know, of course, why people charge us with being pathological pessimists.

It's because we so often start by talking about sin.

For if you don't see your sin, you don't need a Savior.

And so we look into the mirror of the ten commandments...

Oh... We all have fallen short of the Glory of God.

We all have disobeyed our parents and those in authority.

Broken the fourth commandment.

We all have disliked being in church, or Bible study or devotional time.

Broken the third commandment.

We all have misused or missed opportunities to use the Lord's name.

Broken the second commandment.

And because we have broken these commandments,

We have broken the first commandment.

In fact, we have broken them all.

As we look into the mirror of the ten commandments, we come up empty.

You see,

you're commanded to empty yourself following Jesus' example,

but when you empty yourself, you just come up, well, . . . empty.

It's Paul who tells us to:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus (2:5 ^{ESV}).

1. That's a mind that is the example of perfect love.
2. A mind that is humble, coming into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey.
3. A mind of perfect obedience that allowed himself to be arrested and tried, tortured, and killed,
all according to the Father's will.
4. A mind determined to give his own blood for your salvation.
5. Christ was mindful that he had to empty himself to serve others.

You're commanded to empty yourself like that, but we always come up empty trying.

Instead, we're quite full of ourselves, acting out our own selfishness.

You see...

The world sees those who serve as less "successful," and we won't settle for that.

Trying yourself to empty yourself, you'll always come up empty.

[Exalted]

But Jesus emptied himself,
and when he emptied himself,
he didn't come up empty.

During his time on earth, Jesus didn't always and fully use all his divine powers.
We call this — his state of humiliation (vv 6–8).

The state of humiliation begins when he emptied himself to become one of us,
a tiny baby inside Mary. It began at conception.

It meant putting himself in our place—the place of sinful mankind, under the Law.

Ultimately it meant not using his divine powers to defend himself —
Ultimately it meant enduring the temptation in the wilderness,
the taunting of satan,
his arrest, trials, beatings, and death—
Yes, even death on a cross . . .

Ultimately it meant allowing himself to be killed.

But Jesus emptying himself didn't leave him empty; God highly exalted him (vv 9–11)!

Every name — A name that is above every name.
Every knee — bowing before him.
Every tongue — confessing him as Lord.

And now Jesus does forevermore always and fully use all his divine attributes.
We call this his state of exaltation.

That's not just half full. It's Full! Very full. Over full!
And it's not foolish optimism; it's true!

[*We are Exalted*]

In Christ Jesus, then, we who are empty are also fully exalted.

Jesus is not just an example of perfectly emptying himself for us to follow;
what he did counts for us.

We still can't empty ourselves of our selfishness perfectly as we ought.

But he took the place of us sinful mankind under the Law to fulfill the Law for us.

He humbled himself even to death on that cross to take our death.

Now we don't have to pay for our sins.

And that means each of us now shares fully in Jesus' exaltation.

We — for all eternity — wear his name!

When we kneel before him, it will not be bowing in shame but in faith and joy.

With the angels, our tongues will sing his praise forever!

[*Conclusion*]

By emptying himself, Jesus fills you.

He gave his life so that you would not die, but live.

He gave his blood to cover you with his righteousness.

He came down from heaven in the form of a man to live a perfect life for you,
his atoning death taking death from you,
and giving you a mind like Christ's.

All this he did willingly and without complaint.

He sacrificed himself for you.

He emptied himself so that you would be full for eternity. Amen.

REJOICE always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. AMEN! (1 Thess. 5:16–18)
