

Topic	Rooted and Established in Christ
Reference	Colossians 2:6-15
Date	14 January 2018
Speaker	Pastor Massimo Gei

HOW EMPTINESS LOOKS LIKE

WHERE WE LOOK TO, TO BE FILLED

THE ONE WE HAVE TO GAZE UPON TO BE FULLY SATISFIED

WHAT EMPTINESS LOOKS LIKE

I was looking at some counseling websites and one of the websites gave some good insight and it talked about things that we say to ourselves or things that we talk to others about or things that we think or few phrases that are common to people who feel empty.

- Have you ever thought about these things?
- Have you ever said that to somebody?
- I feel nothing,
- I am detached from people and activities,
- I am an empty shell,
- I feel like I am just going through the motions,
- I don't know who I am anymore,
- Nobody cares,
- Life is not worth living,
- There is no hope.

If we have ever thought these thoughts, we are probably familiar what it feels like to be empty. When you feel empty, you kind of feel helpless, like there is nothing you can do to get rid of this uncomfortable state. It is hard for us to determine why we feel this way and you may try to blame external factors for your empty feeling and this makes a lot of sense because we want to leave from this uncomfortable state of being, the truth is none of these external factors that we can think about are the cause of our emptiness.

Emptiness is connected to our internal emotional spiritual world. Emptiness is not a feeling that is easy for us to get rid of. We feel empty when we compare ourselves to others, who seem to have it all and we are then left with feeling of despair and for all we know the person that we are looking at might be feeling empty himself. Feeling of emptiness can happen to any kind of person. If you are here and you are a Christian, you can feel empty. Paul is talking to Christians here and he is asking for the fullness of Christ to be in them. In Ephesians Paul is talking and praying and he is praying that they will experience the fullness of Christ.

Many people experience kind of emptiness at some point in their lives, the feeling can be triggered by different kind of events, such as loss of relationships, a death of a loved one. For some people emptiness becomes like a chronic feeling, that detach from their lives and this is kind of shake the sense that something is missing. This can happen to even people who seem to have everything together, who have a healthy family, who have a good job, they have a rocking body. It is not exclusive to people who are missing this life achievements, just because emptiness does not come from the outside as I said, it comes from the internal state. That being said, even though it comes from the internal side, it effects all of our lives, it effects every area of our lives. Some people when they say, how does emptiness feel like, they report that emptiness is like a physical sensation in their bodies, it may be an empty feeling in your chest, you may feel tired, you may feel lethargic. Other people report that they emotionally feel that sensation, you might be feeling bored all the time, you are on your couch watching show after show, you think that nothing matters, if that sort of kind of emotional numbness, you may feel a sense of despair that you cannot explain or seem to shake.

If you explore emptiness a bit more fully, you may start to recognize your empty feeling when you notice parts of your life not going according to plan. We may ask this question to ourselves, why do we feel so empty? It is entirely possible that our emptiness may come from something that is missing in our lives. May be you had certain ideas about where you would be at this point of life and you aren't quite there yet that's why you feel empty. Life goals include relationships with friends, with family, career goals, health and fitness goals, may be you plan to have a family by now but you are not even dating anyone that may leave you feeling empty. May be it is your job that is leading you feel unsatisfied and unfulfilled. You may have rather considered a good job and is making plenty of money to support your lifestyle, either way you can feel discontented because you spent so much time at work and unsatisfying work life can take a toll over the overall satisfaction of our life. Another possibility is that you just don't have the body image and the health that you wanted might be because of a chronic sickness, it might be because of disease, it might be that you have been trying to shut that weight and it just doesn't go away or health issues that can't just be fixed.

The truth is as we just looked at it, there are so many reasons that there could be for us to feel empty, but truth be told they are merely symptoms of a bigger root problem and it is important for us to understand where this feeling of emptiness ultimately come from. What is that thing that we long for, what is that thing that we hope that will come into our lives and truly fill us, what will take away that void and to quote James McDonald he said this, that the Greeks when they looked at that thing that would fill us, they call it the unknown. Rudolph Otto called it the supernatural, Aldus Huxley called us the mysterium tremendum, the terrible mystery, Paul Tilik called it the ground of all being. Very often people at the end of their ropes called it, the higher power, transcendence is what is called in the abstract but manifest presence, something that manifest and something we can feel in the presence is what is called an experience. If you don't

know what it is, you might give it a lot of names but if you know what it is, you call it glory. Seeing feeling empty isn't caused by lack of money, romance or success, it is the lack of glory in our lives.

We were created to be in the presence of glory and as we were created God made a plan for us on how we should live our lives in his presence and live out that glorious plan he had for us, but we departed from that plan, that deportations what we call sin and because of our sin we are no longer with God, we have been separated from God, we have been separated from glory and now our hearts are empty and we yearn for it, we long for it and that's the emptiness that we cannot shake away, that the emptiness that we try to fill with so many things in our lives. So that is what emptiness looks like. It is that whole that we have in our lives because we have been separated from glory.

WHERE DO WE LOOK TO, TO BE FILLED?

In our lives there are so many areas that we look to and in this passage today Paul writes that see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition or according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ. This is strange though that when we feel there is emptiness these are exactly the things we look to. We look to the things that ultimately hold us captive. Now depending on what culture you live in, what time age we live in or what kind of person you are, you might look to different things, they might be defined differently in your culture, it might be defined differently in history but ultimately all these things whether they are human tradition or they are elemental spirits or they are philosophies, the things that we usually look to can be defined in three things and the first thing that we usually look to, to fill that void of glory is carnal desires.

It is things that gives us instant gratification. They are usually sex, food, material possession, because they give us this instant fullness. We just take a bite, we just have a touch we have a sensation and immediately we feel full and though it might be temporary we go to it because it is so easily achieved and depending on where our hearts are rooted, what carnal desires take root in our lives, these are the ones that we usually go to the first.

Now the second thing that we go to usually are things that build us up, things that make us feel good about ourselves, so we can hug ourselves, things that make us feel good about ourselves, like whatever the philosophy of that day, whatever the human tradition of the day, whatever society is saying right now, makes you a success and when you achieve it by your own works you feel good about yourself. Self help books try to tell you that you must do, so that you have a happy life, these are the other things that go through, anything that builds us up, usually it is work accomplishments. May be we are getting that other degree, the next Ph.D. or maybe we have that other business or we do really well in our work, so when we look in the mirror we say

yes, well done. Things that make us feel good about ourselves, because when we feel good about ourselves when we look into the mirror we don't feel that empty anymore, at least for that moment of time, for some of us it might be fitness goals, we go and we work out and we have that self-glory that we look at, for some of us it might be family, we go to our family and all these things I am mentioning in itself some of them are not bad things, some of them are good things but when these good things become ultimate things in our lives, become the idols that we worship and thereby create things that actually ultimately leave us feeling more empty. So things that give us instant gratification, things that make us feel good about ourselves when we look upon ourselves and the last thing is, things that establish us and give us praise and applause in this world.

They are very similar to things that make us feel good about ourselves. The difference is when we feel good about ourselves, the ultimate goal is for us to like ourselves, while here the ultimate goal is for other people to like us, things that establish us in society. The word establish is an interesting word, it means like a guarantee or a business deal but when we look at the word establish we are very familiar with this because especially us here who live in the city are all about establishing themselves. I mean whoever live in the villages, why do they move to city, they move to the city so that they can establish themselves in their business, in their careers and establishing yourself is ultimately about making your name known.

If you want to go to an established accounting firm, you probably go to one of the big fours, because they are established and their name is known. So we go and we try to do everything, so that our name may be known, so that people can give us praise, because as Toll Kin said, the praise of the praiseworthy is above all reward. Whenever who we think is worthy of all praise, praises us, whoever we hold in high esteem, whoever we value praises us, now that's above all reward, that is something that we really want, that gives us that temporary feeling of glory. This problem is not a new problem that is hear in this world, just in this modern age, it was the problem of the world since the tower of Babel.

In the tower of Babel, people said, come let us build a tower so that we can make our name great. People until today build buildings to make their name great. We want to have a great name, because we want the praise of the praiseworthy, we want to be established but where are we establishing. We might be different kind of people and we are trying to establish ourselves in different areas in our lives because we are different kind of people, usually what we try to do, we try to establish ourselves in the areas that we value most, because we think that when we achieve that status, when we have success in getting that thing that we value most, when we have our name great, when we have the success, we will have reached glory, we think the bridge to glory is success and because we have experienced it in our lives, so often, every time we do well people applaud.

Where are you trying to establish yourself in?

Usually we try to establish ourselves in the areas that we have a highest value, the thing that we treasure the most, that's most important to us, these are the areas that we are going to try to make ourselves feel good in, these are the areas we are trying to get satisfaction from. If we look at our lives now right now, where we have been spending time to try to establish and build our lives upon. You see there is a good litmus test for us to figure out what we truly treasure in our lives. It works like this, our actions, our words, our thoughts, our deeds are all controlled by a control centre and that control center is our heart.

Scripture says that, guard your heart upon with all vigilance, why because, from it flows the wellspring of life. So our heart is kind of the control center of all our life, so when we look what we do with all our lives, what we say, what we think, what we do, the conversations that we have with people, we can figure out where our heart is, because our activities signals and signs about what the control center is trying to do.

There is something that controls your control center and that is the thing that you value, the thing that you treasure. Scripture says, where you lay your treasure there your heart is also. ***So whatever you treasure, controls your heart, it controls all your life.*** So let's be real about it, we live in a dying age where we value authenticity, where we don't like hypocrites, where you want to be real, just for yourself right now reflect back over the last one or two months and see where have you been spending your time on, what conversations did you have, where are you trying to establish yourself in, where are your desires rooted in and when you look at all the activities and all that you have said and all that you have done you would probably figure out what your treasure is in life. Sadly, to say, most of our treasures are not things that last, most of our treasures are things that fade and perish and all our lives is like a quest to find that treasure and when we don't find it, we feel empty and when we find it and we open it and we taste it and we see it, we realize it doesn't fully satisfy.

What we look to usually fades away, what we look to usually can get stolen, what we look to what we treasure usually perishes, when we don't have it we feel empty and when we find it and have it, it leads us unsatisfied.

So then the question is, who do we have or what do we have to look to, to be eternally fully satisfied. While there must be something that changes our desires, that doesn't focus on just instant gratification but then, let just focus our desires on eternal value. It must be something that is not based upon our own accomplishments because they are perishable, it must be something upon somebody else's accomplishment and somebody else's works, not something that we have built but something that somebody else has built, it must be something that doesn't establish us in this city but something that establish us in the city to come, something that keeps

us established for eternity, not in this kingdom but in the kingdom to come that's why we must look to the one, we must go to the one we have to gaze upon to be fully satisfied and that person is Jesus Christ. We must go to Jesus; he is the only one who can fully satisfy. Here in this word it says this,

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

All the glory, all the fullness, all that we have been looking for, the only thing that can truly satisfy is pleased to dwell in him. In Colossians 1:15 it says

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Paul when he says that, we must be filled with Christ, says that not because when we are filled with Christ we are going to be rooted in him, we are going to build our lives upon him, we are going to be established in him and how do we do that, by looking upon Christ and his finished work and Paul for the next couple of verses just keeps on hammering home what Jesus has done. He says here that, in him also you were circumcised but the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh but a circumcision of Christ.

He gives us a new heart, he gives us new desires, he changes our heart, therefore our hearts are no longer rooted in carnal desires, our hearts are now rooted in him,

Colossians 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we die to our old selves, we die to all the old things that we are used to doing, but being ourselves and trusting in our own works and we being raised in him and we are being made alive to this new person who is Christ and in him we then have life.

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

We must put our faith in Jesus. Now you may say that I already have put my faith in Jesus, but I still feel empty, it still doesn't change me. Now that I am a Christian, I know that I am supposed to be filled, but I am not. To address this issue, Paul said in the opening verses of this passage,

6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

So in the same way that you received him by gazing upon the gospel, by looking upon his beauty and his majesty, in the same way that you have been saved, in the same way you walk, in the same way you get filled.

Knowing that some place exists and standing at that foot of the building and looking upon it and gazing upon its majesty and its beauty is a completely different thing. Just that we know that they exist, keeps us filled with nothing, it keeps us empty, it doesn't fill any void, knowing that it exists but when we go and we stand at the fountain, full of colours and when we gaze upon that building, we stand there at the foot of the building and we stand with awe because we have experienced a little bit, a glimpse of that glory of that building. How much more when we gaze upon Jesus, we must continue to look and gaze upon his beauty and his majesty and his finished work, we must gaze upon the cross, because on the cross he who had everything didn't find equality with God something to be grasped and he emptied himself for us. In Isaiah we read that there was no majesty, no beauty, there was nothing that was desired when we looked upon him, he emptied himself of all these things so that we be filled. He was obedient in everything that we were not obedient.

When on the cross the authorities of that time and the principalities and the powers of that time thought that they had victory, they did not and he put them to shame because three days later he rose again and when he rose again scripture tells us that he was given the name above every name, it says that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He has the name that is most praiseworthy, he is given full glory and guess what the praise of the praiseworthy is above all reward. The most praiseworthy did not just praise you, he laid down his life for you and when we look upon that and when we see that majesty and when we reflect and gaze upon Jesus we will realize that he is like a pearl and when we see it, we were nothing else, we will sell everything just to own that pearl.

When we gaze upon Jesus, we will realize that he is just like a treasure. He is a treasure that when we find it we will bury it back into the land that we had and we will sell everything we have just to purchase that land, so that we can own that treasure. A famous hymn said this,

*O soul are you weary and troubled
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free.*

*Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
O'er us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conquerors we are!*

*His Word shall not fail you, He promised;
Believe Him and all will be well;
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!*

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face and the things of the earth will go strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. The path to glory isn't success, it is grace and when we learn to treasure it, treasure Jesus and everything he has done in our lives, our lives will be changed because he has grafted us into the plant, we will be deeply rooted in him. He has become the cornerstone, upon we build our lives and that foundation will never shake, whatever wind will come, whatever storms will come, whatever troubles will come in our lives, it will hold, it will fully establish us in the kingdom to come because we take on his name. We will have the name above all name, we are his family, we share his inheritance, we share in his glory and that frees us, it frees us now no longer to be about making our name known, but it frees us to be about making his name known, it frees us to live our lives for him, to be about his glory.

Do we treasure Christ?