

July 16, 2017
On the Mend: "Healing Fears"
Mark 8:34-37
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MY FEAR OF EMPTY

In my, recent work history, I had a job that required an 80 mile commute every day, six days a week. It was a stressful time and a demanding job and consequently on more than one occasion in the three-years of that job, I ran out of gas on the way home. Which reinforced in me, the fear of getting to empty, and being left high and dry.

EMPTY MAPLE SYRUP

We don't celebrate empty. And thus, we focus on full, and even overflowing as signs of success, achievement, and fulfillment. When was the last time someone found the maple syrup container empty and said, "I am so happy, think of all those pancakes, and waffles we enjoyed! Instead, all we can think about is – I have no syrup. We fail to see what has come of it, all we can see is where "it" once was!

LOSSES AND LETTING GO

Let's talk about loss, because that plays a part in our fear of empty; the loss of friends, co-workers, neighbors and family. These all have an impact on us. They all color how we read and respond, once we have reached or we think we have reached—E!

Then, there is the life cycle: of grabbing ahold of, nurturing and comunioning, and then letting go. That transition from full

house to empty nest is hard. That transitions from crammed to cleared is life altering – and that is how it was meant to be!

LOSE THEM IN THE MOVE

As I was leaving one position, and getting ready to start another, I talked with a friend about my concern over leaving certain people. She asked me about them, and in so doing, she found out there were elements in each of those relationships that were problematic for me. So, after listening to my gigantic list of what was not good about those relationships and the one bullet point about what was good, she simply replied, “lose them in the move.”

GRAB, HOLD, DON’T LET GO

Why do we hold onto that which is problematic, as well as that which is not good for us. Why do grab, hold and fail to let it go when it’s destructive to our wellbeing? Jesus asked the same when he said, “Why do you toil for that which does not satisfy? Why do you seek to gain the whole world only to lose your own soul.”

My guess is maybe when we were little, we learned at somebody’s knee – that this is what life is all about: acquiring and not divesting. Maybe, it is just so ingrained in our culture that we never thought to question it, much less reject it. Maybe, because we thought it was worth a try, cause who knows, it might work! Maybe, we thought this was the only option, or the best one.

JESUS: EMPTY AND POUR OUT

Yet, Jesus tells us there are other options. And one of those options is the best – empty, pour it out, maybe even pour it all out; not fill and then hoard, guard, and defend.

JESUS CELEBRATED EMPTY

The world does not celebrate empty. Yet, Jesus was a big fan, and he went as far as to say, if we really want to live, find your soul and feel fulfilled, then get busy moving toward empty.

MARK 8: ITS ALL ABOUT EMPTY

Mark chapter 8 is all about empty. It starts with the feeding of the 4,000 – the story is about people coming empty handed, only to find out that the emptying of what the disciples had, made plenty for all, and at the end the baskets were full.

Next, comes words from Jesus about his ultimate gift of being totally poured out even to the point of death. At which time, Peter tries to block him, to which Jesus responds by calling him Satan and tells him to step aside, get out of the way of emptying. Peter wanted to hoard, guard, and defend that which he mistakenly thought would bring him life. Yet, Jesus was to go about emptying via the cross, then get buried in a dark tomb (empty again) in his resurrection, at which point he made for all, that which brings life!

Where does all of this leave us? It leaves us with the possibility of finding satisfaction and fulfillment. And in the end, isn't that what we all want?

It is a mind bender to realize that less is more when all of society tells you the contrary - more is more. For it is not in acquiring more and more that we find fulfillment. Rather it is

in the emptying of what we have been given and who we are that life takes on real meaning and brings us real richness.

Fear can be a life stopper! We don't find the joy that comes from pouring ourselves out and into something or someone because we think somehow we will end up in a deficit. Yet, whenever you invest in loving, you never end up with less than you had, you end up with more – more satisfaction, more joy, even more love.

They were curious about following Jesus, are we?
They were concerned when Jesus told them following him would mean taking up the cross. Were they curious about what the cross could accomplish or were they focused on what they thought could only contain suffering, rather than the emptiness that was the ultimate victory – the resurrection!

Could it be that we could come to the point of letting go with the spirit of curiosity, and not the spirit of fear?
Could it be that we could come to the point of going to empty with the spirit of curiosity, and not the spirit of fear?
Could it be that we could come to the point of looking at that which is no longer and be curious about how God will do next. With that, that appears to be nothing more than a void, an abyss.

I don't know about us, and what we will do. But, I do know what God will do, for when we make the first move in relinquishing, giving, and pouring out, God meets our move with a counter move that is sure to bring us and others satisfaction and fulfillment.

