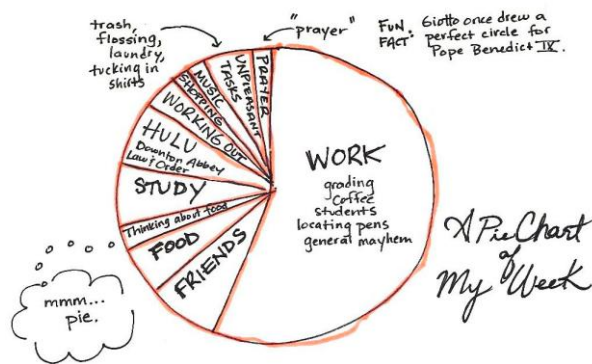


Filled With Good Things Blanket Sunday

Psalm 104:27-30, Mark 10:17-22

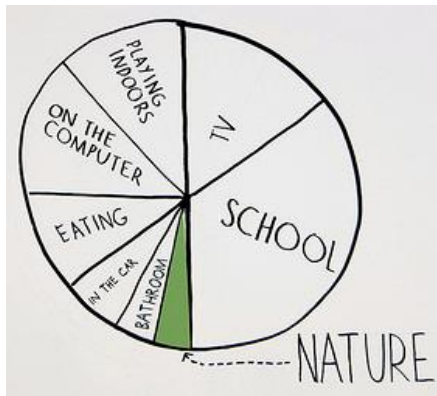
Rev. Jo Ramsey ~ October 11, 2015



What fills your days? I mean--if someone asked you to create a pie chart of an average week of your life---the way you spend your time on a day-to-day basis---what would it look like?

Maybe you'd include going to school or work, doing homework, commuting, sleeping, playing or watching sports, doing

laundry, shopping, preparing and eating meals, watching tv or facebooking – This person includes “prayer,” and even “thinking about food,” (which I think is funny).



Here's a kid's time chart. He lists tv, on the computer, playing indoors, in the car and even the bathroom! And, he has a little slice for nature.

Lots of things fill our days, and undoubtedly, my circle would look different from yours. And each of ours would look different now than it did 10 years ago. New parents might have a much smaller slice of sleep and a bigger slice of care giving. Older people might include a more time reading or watching tv.

Thinking about how we spend our time allows us to see if we are doing what we really want to do and what might be wasting our time. In other words, what really fills us up inside and what depletes us...

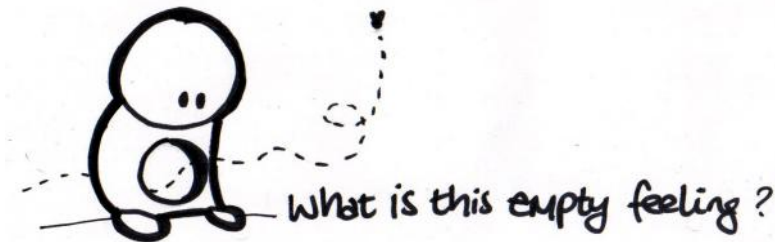


Our scriptures this morning are all about being filled or being emptied, especially as they relate to our priorities, possessions, faith and food. Many of us might associate being full with being stuffed – as with Thanksgiving dinner. And in this day and age, to be empty means we need to turn on the spigot or stop at the gas station.



But for people back in Bible times being full or empty was a matter of life and death. They had no fridge to stand in front of at 10 p.m., looking mindlessly into the light to see if anything seems appealing. There was no faucet to turn on. In fact, even if you had a steady supply of food and water, you likely searched for it, carried it, and rationed it.

These days, our plates are full, our glasses are full, our closets are full, our schedules are full. But, for all our fullness, many of us feel empty. Tiffanie DeBartolo, in her book God-Shaped Hold, put it this way, “We’re all searching for something to fill up what I like



to call that big, God-shaped hole in our souls. Some people use alcohol, or S-E-X, or their children, or food, or money, or music, or [drugs...Some people use religion or even shoes.] A girl

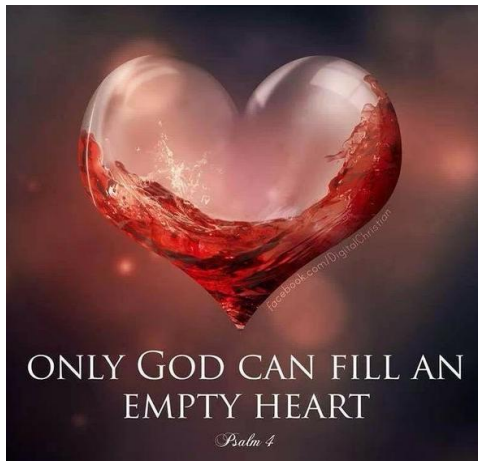
I know has over two-hundred pairs. But it’s all the same thing, really. People, for some reason, think they can escape their sorrows.”

St. Augustine believes this emptiness is built into our souls, and there is only one fix. “God made us for relationship with Him,” he wrote, “and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God.” Only God can fill that hole and make us whole.

The rich man we read about this morning, wanted to be made whole. He thought he



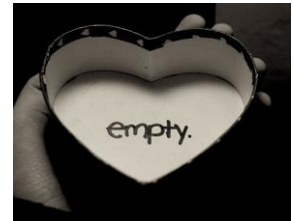
could find salvation by being good enough. He thought he could fill his empty places himself...not just through his righteous behavior, but through his things. When Jesus looked upon the man, he loved him. Jesus understood the rich man was looking for love in all the wrong places. He knew the man needed to empty himself of his pride and possessions, so he could be filled with peace and purpose.



Jesus, and his mother Mary and his great, great, great grandfather, King David all understood that God alone fills us with 'good things.' God provides all we need to survive and thrive---food, shelter, family and friends. It is God who fills us with love and hope and purpose and peace. He blesses us with unexpected treasures that fill our bodies, hearts and minds.

Maybe you aren't so sure about God's good things. Maybe you believe God doesn't have good things

for you. You're too anxious, too sad, too bitter, too broken. Or, maybe you sense that nothing will ever really fill you. Most people keep looking for the next thing to make them happy. They think, "Once I get into that school, land that job, meet that perfect person, have kids, buy that car" ...you fill in the blank. But then, even when they obtain their goal or receive God's blessing, it doesn't ultimately make everything perfect.



You know why? We can never be perfectly full because all of us are broken.

Singer-songwriter David Wilcox puts it this way, in a song he wrote about his wife...



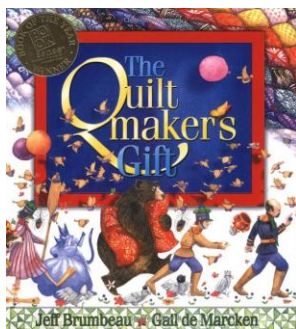
"I try so hard to please you,
be the love that fills you up.
I try to pour on sweet affection,
but I think you've got a broken cup.
Because you can't believe I love you
I try to tell you that there is no doubt,
But as soon as I fill you with all I've got,
That little break will let it run right out.
I cannot make you happy,
I'm learning love and money never do.
But I can pour myself out 'til I'm empty,
trying to be just who you'd want me to.

Wilcox realizes his wife tries to do the same thing for him, and they both end up feeling depleted and disconnected. Finally, he realizes, "We can't trade empty for empty, we must go to the waterfall, for there's a break in the cup that holds love inside us all."



As Christians, we know ourselves to be a broken people. Even when we know Jesus, even when we have been baptized in his name, our healing is not complete. Like Wilcox says, we can only return again and again to God's waterfall---to be washed clean and drink deeply of the living water that Jesus offers. His grace is new every morning. He refreshes and satisfies us as no thing, person or activity ever can. We have to trust that no matter how empty, how broken we are, God will fill us again and again with good things.

Today we celebrate Blanket Sunday, one way East Union provides 'good things' in the name of Christ. These blankets are used throughout the world to provide warmth and comfort to people in crisis. They remind me of the quilt maker. You might know her story. I'll share it briefly to wrap up our time together in God's Word.



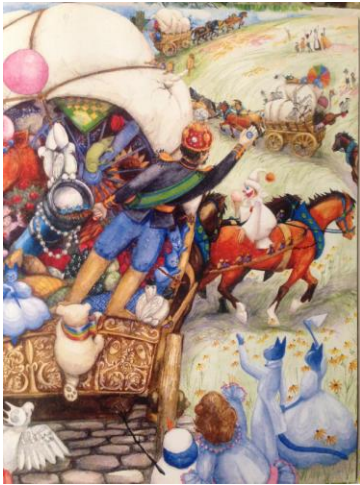
The quilt maker lives in a mountain cabin, and spends her days sewing quilts. Her blankets are so beautiful they seem to fall from heaven itself. The fabrics are incredibly rich in color and soft to touch. People come from all over to buy them, but she will never sell. She will only give them away, and only to the poor, the hungry and homeless.

A powerful and greedy king rules the land. Like the rich man, his castle is full of the prettiest things in the world. And yet, with all of these marvelous treasures, the king never smiles. He wonders if he can ever find the one thing that will finally make him happy.



When the king learns of the quilt maker and her fabulous quilts, he demands that she create one for him. She simply replies, "Give away everything you own, and I will make a quilt for you. With each item you give away, I'll sew in another piece of fabric."

The king is very angry. He tries to take a quilt by force. He locks the seamstress up, he banishes her. But, she will not relent. Finally, the king agrees to give away his



treasures. It's very hard at first, but when he sees how much delight his gifts bring, his heart fills with joy. Eventually, the king travels around the world trading his treasures for smiles.

Many years pass, and finally the king returns home empty-handed. His royal clothes are tattered and his toes poke out of his boots. That night, the seamstress hikes down into town, bringing the king his very own quilt. Tenderly, she wraps the blanket around his shoulders.

"What's this?" the king asks.

"As I promised long ago," she replies, "when the day came that you, yourself, were poor, only then would I give you a quilt."

The king eyes shone with joy and he laughed warmly.

"But I'm not poor! I may look poor, but in truth, my heart is full to bursting, filled with memories of all the happiness I've given and received. I'm the richest man I know."



From then on, the king often visited the quilt maker's cabin. "By day, she would sew the beautiful quilts that she would not sell, and at night the king would take them down to the town. There he searched for the poor and downhearted, covering them with a treasured quilt, never happier than when he was giving something away."

In a full heart there is
room for everything,
and in an empty heart
there is room for
nothing.

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Antonio Porchia
Italian Poet

You see, the rich man and the powerful king both learned that a heart full of God's good things is much better than a castle filled with empty treasures. For such a heart always has room for more...more joy, more love, more hope.

For no matter how lost or broken we might be, God will continue to pour his grace down upon us, filling us again and again. He is a waterfall of love. And when our hearts are full to bursting, filled with good things from God, we will overflow—spilling and filling, sharing and caring---wrapping the whole world with love.



In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.