

June 2005

The Problem With Emptiness

The Problem with Emptiness

Hear the word of the Lord,

O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.

Thus says the Lord,

“What injustice did your fathers find in Me,

That they went far from Me

And walked after emptiness and became empty?”

(Jeremiah 2.4)

The Problem with Emptiness

- Emptiness versus Substance

- *The Wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away (Psalm 1)*

The Problem with Emptiness

- Substance: Fullness of Life
- *"I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10.10)*
- *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" (Jn 7.38)*

The Problem with Emptiness

- Life: Expansiveness
- Creativeness
- Fruitfulness
- Outreach
- Orderly Replication

The Problem with Emptiness

- Life: Responsiveness
- Compassion
- Moral Outrage
- Companionship/Fellowship
- Gratitude
- Praise/Honor
- Truth/Understanding

The Problem with Emptiness

- The Enemy of Responsiveness: Sin
- *"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more." (Eph 4:18)*

The Problem with Emptiness

- The Weapon of Sin: Deceitfulness

- *"So that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"* (Heb 3:13)

The Problem with Emptiness

- The Weapon of Sin: Deceitfulness
 - That evil is power (e.g., vandalism)
 - That evil is actually good (e.g., manipulation)
 - That evil is not really *that* harmful
 - That evil is 'natural' and inevitable

The Problem with Emptiness

- Investments: Bad to Good
- *What you sow/reap:*
- Willful, 'obvious' sin --> Selfishness, Discipline
- Pseudo-goods --> Disappointment, Dryness
- Less-than-Best --> Sadness, Restlessness

The Problem with Emptiness

- Recovering from Emptiness
- *For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water (Jer 2.13)*
- *Before you go there: prevention, vigilance, engagement*
- *As you are going there: honesty/prayer, regret, self-judgment*
- *While you are there: honesty/prayer, reflection, resolve, return*
- *After you are back: thankfulness to the Shepherd/Teacher*

The Problem with Emptiness

- Emptiness versus Substance
- Substance: Fullness of Life
- Life: Expansiveness
- Life: Responsiveness
- The Enemy of Responsiveness: Sin
- The Weapon of Sin: Deceitfulness
- Investments: Bad to Good
- Recovering from Emptiness

The Problem with Emptiness

Be not drunk with wine...

But be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5.18)

Being filled with the fruits of Righteousness (Philp 1.11)

...to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with
all the fullness of God (Eph 3.18)