

# Emptiness

by John Parker

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*The sermon calls for Christians to seek spiritual fullness through the Holy Spirit to avoid the dangers of emptiness in their lives.*

**Duration:** 1:00:46

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 12:43, Matthew 12:45, Luke 11:5-13

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a life filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He uses the example of a woman named Charmaine who is actively sharing the message of heaven to a hurting world. The sermon then transitions to a familiar passage in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, which talks about the coming of the Lord for his church. The preacher focuses on the parable of the ten virgins, highlighting the contrast between the wise and foolish virgins who were prepared or unprepared for the bridegroom's arrival. The sermon concludes with a reminder to stay vigilant and prepared for the Lord's return.

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## Transcript

I'm inviting your attention this evening to the book of Matthew, chapter 12. And as you're turning there, I'd just like to express myself in praise to the Lord for his goodness, faithfulness to us this week. God has been meeting my own heart in a special way, which I've needed and which I've come to expect at this camp meeting.

God has met me so many times. In the early morning prayer meeting, God's been doing special work in my heart, and I give him praise for that. And this morning especially, the Spirit of God was here.

And I would just strongly urge you, I know we're all very weary and we're coming to the close of the camp, but tomorrow morning will be our last opportunity to meet together at the early morning prayer meeting. And I just sense in an urgent way our need to pray. Sunday is a very special day at camp meeting.

Many of our family members come to join us on Sunday, it's traditional, which means there will be many, many people here tomorrow who are backsliders, who are away from God, and it's so vitally necessary that God's Spirit be among us and that the Holy Spirit be here to convict and anoint and help hearts to be yielded to him. So I'm making a special appeal to you tonight to come and pray. If you're not able to come, then please join us wherever you are in praying in the morning that God would especially come and meet

us in a special way.

Camp meeting is a family thing. Many of our camps are actually calling themselves family camps, and I like that. It's not youth camp or children's camp, it's family camp.

There's nothing that builds and helps and blesses the family like camp meeting. My two youngest girls came in today, and I'm really glad to have them with me tonight, but I was telling somebody, I think when they were teenagers, had you given them an option of going on vacation or coming to camp meeting, they would have chosen camp meeting. It's just the highlight of the year, especially children and young people.

And that's the way it should be. I thank God for that. I pray that it is always that way.

And there are multiple generations of us that are enjoying camp meeting, and I thank the Lord that we can do that. It's been nice this week to have my mom and dad in the camp, and little niece. We've got three generations here, and that's blessed.

And I give the Lord the praise for that, and just trust the Lord will continue to help us as families and draw us closer to him. I sense my need in an urgent way tonight of his help, and I've been asking some that I really appreciate and have confidence in to pray for me, ask my pastor to pray for me. And I'm asking you, if you would, to just lift me to the Lord, and I committed at the opening service of the camp meeting.

I'm just a homeboy, probably have no business up here, but I am, here I am. And I just promised God that I would do my very best to obey him, and do nothing more and nothing less than I sensed in my heart, my spirit, that God would have me to do. And for a number of days, I have known what I was to preach tonight, had it bearing down on my spirit.

It's a message that came to me a number of years ago, quite a number of years ago, when I was crying out to God as a pastor, saying to the Lord then as a pastor, Lord, I have wonderful people and a wonderful church, and I belong to a wonderful conference and a wonderful organization, connection of churches. But I believe there's something more. I believe there's a higher level.

I believe that God would be pleased to do more among us. And my frustration came from barren spells at our altar, at our church, and hearts that just seemed to not be very moved or excited about the things of God. Though they're good people doing good things, my cry was, Lord, why is it we're not seeing more? And the Lord brought this message to me as I was sitting in a camp meeting listening to R.G. Humble preach on one of the passages that I will be referring to tonight.

God was talking to me in an entirely different line of truth. And God used the message then to challenge our people and challenge my own heart. And since that time, I've hardly been able to preach a single revival meeting or camp meeting without God bearing this message on my heart.

And with the Psalms, that troubles me a bit because I look at this crowd tonight, and I know that there's a lot of people here that have heard me preach this message, not just once. But I promised you I'd do what God wants me to do. And by his help, I intend to.

Let's pray. Father, I need you. I need your spirit, your power, your presence.

This is your kingdom, Lord, not the Bible Methodist. And I know that if anything happens tonight, it'll be by your power. And I pray it'll be for your glory.

In Jesus' name, amen. Matthew chapter 12, and we'll begin reading at verse 43. Our Lord here is addressing a question, actually a request of the scribes and Pharisees, seeking a sign.

He rebukes them for their lack of faith, and then he gives them an illustration, which I want to read with you tonight, beginning at verse 43. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out.

And when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits, more wicked than himself. And they enter in and dwell there.

And the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. The generation to whom Christ was speaking is the sign-seeking generation.

The words of our Lord of the discovery of the unclean spirit that returns to the house from which he's been evicted are the words of my text tonight. When he is come, he findeth it empty. The thing that the Holy Spirit pressed on the heart of this pastor as I was crying out to him a number of years ago for the answer as to why, the why of our powerlessness, and the why of our barren altars, and the why of our lack of effectiveness was that though we may be good people, doing good things, and living careful lives, and really you can't put your finger on our lives as far as living in sin or disobedience, too often we are living without the power of the Holy Spirit, living in emptiness.

And that was the message that God so forcefully bared to my own heart. I've come to believe, my friends, that it's not enough for us to be sound in our doctrine, it's not enough for us to be careful in our living. God wants us as his people to be a people that are filled with the power of his Spirit.

As Brother Mark Sankey preached last night about peace, the peace of God, the very peace of God, and how it is so easy for us to grieve the Spirit and to find ourselves without the peace of God, losing the peace, leaking out, I thought how true it is, there are so many people who have grieved the Holy Spirit and really if they did a spiritual inventory they'd have to admit tonight that there is no real power, no real joy, no real blessing in their life, they're not living where the Word of God commands us to live, being filled, being filled with the Spirit of God. The reason some are living in emptiness is that they've never gone on to fullness, they've never seen the necessity of being entirely sanctified, cleansed of self-will and self-seeking, crucified with Christ, that they may become a fit dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Some have not been filled because they've never been genuinely saved, and you know, friends, you can't be entirely sanctified until you are genuinely saved, and I'm afraid there are a lot of people in our midst that have grown up around the church and assimilated the lifestyle of the Christian, but have never really had a Christ's salvation experience, a moment when they confessed their sins, turned from their own way, began to follow Jesus Christ, trusting Christ alone for their salvation.

Others have never been filled because they have somehow failed to believe that God can make the difference in their lives, and others have once been filled but stagnated in their spiritual experience, leaked out and grieved away the Holy Spirit, cooled off by carelessness and busyness and lovelessness and neglected the means of grace. Whatever the cause, my friends, of your emptiness tonight, I'm here with the urgency of the Spirit of God on my heart tonight to stress to you the peril of living in emptiness. It's perilous, my friends.

Look at the story that our Lord gives us of the peril of emptiness. Here's a man like so many who comes to God with a messed up life. The evil spirit has taken up residence in his life and trashed and ruined and

wrecked his life, and like many, after having perhaps tried other means of straightening up and cleaning up, he comes to an encounter with God.

How do I know that? Because, friends, there is no way to get rid of the evil spirit except through the power of God. The AAs can do some things to help you, the 12-step programs, even just sheer will can help you to turn over a new leaf and perhaps change some of the patterns of your life, but only the power of God can evict the evil spirit from your life. Here's a man that's had that evil spirit cast out through a divine intervention, but not only has the evil spirit been evicted from his life, but God has gone on to clean up his life, for we read this man's house was swept.

Oh, my friends, I thank God tonight that God is still in the business of cleaning up houses, of cleaning up lives, aren't you? I thank God there are multitudes of you sitting here tonight who can testify of how grace, when God came into your life, began to clean up your life and enabled you to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. God began to change you. All things passed away and all things became new.

The old patterns of life and the old ways of living were gone and new patterns of life came. The old habits God took away, God cleaned up the house. It's been my experience across the years to see God do that, not only spiritually, but actually and literally clean up houses.

I'm thinking of some right now and I wouldn't mention them or talk about them for fear that somebody knows what I was talking about, but God makes a difference in the way you live physically. God cleans up the house. He'll clean you up.

He does a good job of it. He's still in that business, but he doesn't stop there. Not only has the evil spirit been evicted, cast out, and the house cleaned up, but God goes on to do a beautifying work.

The word in the King James is the word garnished, emptied, swept, and garnished. Thank God God is in the business of redecorating, of beautifying. When God comes in, not only does he put the evil spirit out, clean up the house, but he begins to paint the walls, to take away your remembrances, and the marks of sin and shame.

God does a great work of beautifying the house. He beautifies the meek with salvation, and he's still in the business of doing that, friends, of garnishing, of beautifying houses and lives, families. But friends, God doesn't cast out evil spirits and clean up houses and beautify houses, redecorate lives for them to remain empty.

There's a reason why God does that kind of work in a life. That is that that life might become a fit dwelling place for his Holy Spirit. And when we fail to allow God to take us on to that level where the Holy Spirit moves in, fills, takes up residence, possesses our lives, then friends, it's an incomplete work.

And that's where this man stopped. I can think right now the number of people that I ministered to across the years whose lives were wrecked and ruined by sin and shame, who came to Jesus Christ broken and ruined, and God through his power evicted the evil spirit and began the work of cleaning up their lives, not only cleaning up their lives, but beautifying their lives. I've watched them testify with tears streaming down their face.

I've rejoiced with them of the great transforming work of grace, seeing what God was doing in their lives. But friends, also I've seen those people come to a moment in their walk with God, come to a time, a crisis, a crossroad in their lives where it suddenly became clear to them that God wanted more than just to do a

work of cleaning up and redecorating in their lives, that God wants to possess them. God wants them every room of their house, lock, stock, and barrel.

God wants to own them. And at that point, I've seen some of them begin to back up and resist and pull away and draw back. And friends, the experience of the one who fails to allow God to go on is the experience of the man Jesus tells us about here, starting out well but stopping short of the goal, delivered from the evil but not filled with the Holy Spirit, victory in the past but vulnerable in the present, bad in the beginning but worse in the end.

For Jesus said, the unclean spirit goeth and taketh within seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they return and move into that man's life, that man's house, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. My friend, there are a number of new converts in this building tonight, thank God.

God is doing a work in our churches and new people are coming to Christ. And there are numbers of you here tonight that can stand and testify what God's done in your life in recent months and years. God's made a difference in your life.

God's made a difference in your home. God's kicked out the old evil spirit of drink and tobacco and drugs and immorality. And in its place, God's began to clean up the house, take away the things that were habits in your life.

God's come in in his presence and began to bring beautiful, beautiful things into your life and redecorate your life. But I'm here to tell you, God is not finished with you. God is doing all that so that you can make yourself available for the Holy Spirit to move in and possess you.

And if you fail to go on to allow the Holy Spirit to fill you, my friends, you will come to the place this man was and those that I'm thinking about tonight who came to this crisis moment and fail to allow the Holy Spirit to fill them. And the last state of that man is worse than the first. The peril of emptiness.

I'd like for you to turn over with me to the Gospel of Luke chapter 11. I trust you have your Bibles and you're able to do that. Again, the Lord is teaching here a very instructive passage on prayer, teaching his disciples to pray.

Thank God for the blessing, the privilege of prayer. But in his teaching on prayer, he gives another story. And it's that story that I want to call your attention to tonight.

It begins in verse 5 of Luke chapter 11. It's this passage that Brother Humble was preaching on when God began to talk to my heart that night. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend and shall go unto him at midnight and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey has come to me and I have nothing to set before him.

And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not. The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee.

I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him, notice, as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find.

Knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth. He that seeketh findeth.

Unto him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he shall ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, notice it friends, how much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Here is a man I award pictures for us living like so many people are living among us today.

He's taking care of his own needs, feeding himself, living his own life, minus uncaring of the world around him, a self-centered life. No desire, no plan to meet the needs of others. He's just taking care of himself.

You know friends, I think that's one of the saddest ways to live in all the world, to just live for yourself, just taking care of yourself. But that's where a lot of people are living. He's fed himself, he's perhaps begun to retire when there's a pounding knock at his door.

He goes to the door, it's an acquaintance, it's a friend. And the friend is hungry and needy and he's at his door because he's his friend and he's asking for something to eat, he's asking for bread. But this man is not prepared nor has he planned to feed anybody else.

He has nothing to set before him. Living life with an empty cupboard. No plans, no preparation for ministry.

My own God used for the mark to challenge my heart a couple of days ago about our need to live prepared, planning, focused on ministering to the needs of a hurting world around us. Here's a man like so many just getting by. Just getting by.

But a friend in his journey has come. Those words in his journey are interesting to me. You know, life is a journey.

A journey which takes us through valleys and across hills and over mountain tops through beautiful times, but also through difficult times. Life is a journey. And the journey of life will have its good days and its blessed days, but it'll also have its days of need, its days of hurt, its days of heartache.

And you know, friends, that's true for the Christian just as well as it is for the sinner. The good thing is that the Christian has the good shepherd. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for thou art with me.

My Lord, my shepherd brings me to the green pastures, leads me beside the still waters. Even in the dark times, the difficult times, he prepares a table for me even in the presence of my enemies. But the sinner doesn't have that.

So what does he do when he comes to the crisis hour, the time of need? If he has any knowledge of Christians and what they believe and what they teach and what they profess, then he's probably going to do what this fellow did. He's probably going to go to the door of a Christian. Maybe that's a cell phone call or an email or an actual visit.

He's going to show up at that Christian's door. He's going to knock on that door. He's going to say, do you have any bread for me? I'm hungry, I'm needy, I'm hurting.

My friends, I'm afraid too many Christians are living like this man was living. Just barely getting by. Barely getting by.

They're not making any plans to feed a hungry world. They haven't stocked any bread of God's grace and power in the cupboard of their souls with preparation to feed somebody that's in need. They're just getting by.

Without stretched empty hands, they have to say, I have nothing to sit before. Oh, they rush off to prayer meeting on Wednesday night, or when they go to church on Sunday, or perhaps they pick up the phone, call the pastor and say, pastor, you really need to pray for my brother, my sister, my neighbor, the guy at work. He's in real trouble.

He's got problems in his life. Can you put him on the prayer list to church? That's what this fellow did. He went running to somebody that he knew had bread.

And he says, I have a friend at my door in his journey of life who's needy. I don't have anything to give him. Can you lend me some bread? Living on borrowed bread.

If you're a pastor in this congregation tonight, you know what I'm talking about. There's a lot of people in our churches living on borrowed bread. Nothing.

Nothing to sit before him. Some time ago, a good number of years ago, I know because my children were very small, one day I was praying in my study and I said to the Lord, Lord, I want to have as a father, as a parent, what the prodigal's father had. So that if my children ever go astray and go down to the far country, there'll be something at father's house that'll bring them back.

And the Lord said to me that day as I was praying, son, do you want to know what it was? The prodigal's father had. Yes, Lord, I do. Open your Bible and read it.

Well, I said, I remember it too. I said, Lord, I know that passage I'm quoted to you know, he wanted me to read it. So I got my Bible and then opened it and began to read about that young man who took his substance and went to the far country and there wasted it in riotous living.

A famine arose and he was in want, joined himself to a citizen of that country who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have fain had filled his belly with the husk the swine did eat. He's about as low and about as far and about as deep down as low down as a boy can get.

And he would have died there. But no, in that boy's mind was a recollection of a father. And listen to what he says there in that muck and mire of a hog pen, wishing he could fill his belly with the husk the swine did eat.

He said, how many hired servants of my father have bread? Not just bread, but they have bread enough in despair. That's not just sons, that's servants. He said, I'd be a fool to die in this hog pen when I could just go back and be one of the servants, one of the well-fed servants.

So he practiced his speech. I'm not worthy to be your son. I've sinned against heaven and in your sight.

I'm not worthy to be a son. But would you please let me be one of those well-fed servants? Then he started down the road practicing that speech. But all my friends, that father was watching.

He was waiting. He was planning. He was preparing for this day.

How do I know? Because there was a day when that father said to his servants after that boy had left, servants, pin up that yearling. Start pouring the feed to him. What's that for, sir? Well, one of these days my boy's going to come home.

And when he comes home, we're going to kill that yearling and have a party. We're going to have a feast. He's standing on the porch looking down that long road which his boy had traveled when he sees that bitch, stooped, broken, familiar figure coming his way.

He doesn't sit on the porch. He doesn't hide in the house. And so ashamed and embarrassed by what his son has done to his image and reputation.

No, he gets off the porch. He runs down the road. He meets him while he's yet a great way off.

He falls on that boy and hugs him, kisses him, wraps his arms around him, sends his servants scurrying to get the best robe and the shoes and the credit card. And he says, give it all to him, my son, which was dead is alive. He was lost, but he's found.

And while his arms are wrapped around that boy, he looks over his shoulder at those servants standing there, perhaps with tears in their eyes. And he says, boys, kill that calf. Kill that fatted calf.

My boy has come home. Not only, friends, did that father have bread, but he had beefsteak to go with the bread. And I'm here to tell you tonight as parents, friends, if we want something that'll bring them back from the far country, it won't be empty cupboards.

It won't be our profession. It'll only be if there's bread in the cupboard of our souls that'll put a hunger in their hearts to come home. And I'm convinced in my heart tonight, my friends, I'm convinced that God wants us to live on a level that prepares us to give out and to minister the needs of people wherever we see them, wherever we find them.

Somewhere in this congregation tonight, there's a nurse, works in the pediatric intensive or neonatal intensive care unit of our local hospital. I'll never forget when Joy came to church, requested prayer for a young professional mom who had a baby that was very, very ill. It looked like it was not going to make it.

And we began to pray for that baby and that mom. That went on for weeks as she tended to that critically ill baby. But not only was she tending to that baby, but in the process of that, she was giving bread out of the cupboard of her soul to a needy mother.

And when that little baby finally didn't make it, died, and that mother was released from that routine of being with that baby, the next Sunday morning, we didn't have to go calling on her. We didn't have to beg her and plead with her to come to church. When Joy came to church the next Sunday morning, I'll never forget it snuggled right up next to her, right beside her was a hungry hearted mom, a girl that had been raised in church.

She'd been in a number of different denominations. She graduated with a master's degree from a holiness college, one that at least had been. She'd been exposed to a lot of religion, but what she hadn't been exposed to was somebody that had bread in the cupboard of their souls.

And when she came, she didn't come to just sit and watch. She came with a hungry heart. I didn't have to plead with her to come to the altar.

I preached and gave the invitation. I'm not sure it was the first service, but if it wasn't, it wasn't long after. She was at the altar seeking.

She was wanting what she'd seen in that nurse. And I'm here to tell you tonight, that's the way God wants us to live. He wants us to live in a way so that those that we interact with, whether it's at the gas station or Walmart or the doctor's office, wherever it is, there's something about us that tells people, there's bread in the cupboard of our souls.

I thank God this man found even at midnight, a late hour, a door that though it had been shut was reopened. Doors speak of opportunity. Midnight speaks friends of the hour in which we're living, the last hour.

And yet in the last hour, even after opportunities have closed, there is a supply. And Jesus goes on to say, my friends, that you don't have to twist God's arm. You don't have to bang down his door.

All you have to do is ask and you shall receive. All you have to do is seek and you shall find. All you have to do is knock and it shall be opened unto you for everyone that asketh receiveth.

And he that seeketh findeth. And he that to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Not only is God willing to open the door, but God is willing to give you exactly what you need.

Friends, if a father knows what the need of his son is and doesn't mock his son, give him something other than that what that he needs. How much more shall the heavenly father give you exactly what you need? And what that is, my friends, what it is that you and I need to meet the needs of others around us to be able to give out the bread of grace, the bread of heaven, is the power of the Holy Spirit. How much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask you? Oh, my friends, I'm convinced tonight that Bible Methodists can have all the power of the Holy Spirit we're willing to ask him for.

We're willing to receive. I went into Walmart one day, busy, rushing. Remember, I was pressed for time and I bumped into a man in the aisles of Walmart there in Easley that I'd known from a local music store.

I greeted him, Hi, Ronnie, how are things going? Well, Ronnie was sad, quiet, and he looked at me with tears burning up in his eyes and he said, Preacher, things aren't going good. I said, Ronnie, buddy, what's the problem? He said, Preacher, my wife just left me and it doesn't look good. It doesn't look like she's coming back.

Words came right to my lips, William Snyder, good words of a good pastor. Hey, buddy, I'll be praying for you. God bless you.

I got places to go, things to do. But those words that ever came through my lips for the Holy Spirit, checked them. And the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart right there in Walmart and said, No, not you're going to pray for him, but you're going to pray for him right now, right here.

I looked at Ronnie there and I said, Ronnie, I'm so sorry to hear that, man. I know that has to hurt. Can I pray for you right now? The tears spilled over the lids of Ronnie's eyes and began to pour down his cheeks and his lips began to quiver.

He said, I wish you would. I said, step right over here, friend. We stepped in the pool supply section amongst the chemicals.

And I put my arm around my buddy Ronnie and I said, Lord, my friend is hurting. He needs help. Would you not come and give him special help right now? Help him to just fully... God came down in a powerful way, right there in the pool section of Walmart.

The power of the Holy Spirit floated in that place as much as I've sensed him in camp meeting. And Ronnie and I were bawling and squalling and praying together. And God met Ronnie there that day in the pool section of Walmart.

Friends, I just believe that's the way God wants me to live. And I just believe that's the way God wants you to live. So that there's enough bread in the cupboard of your soul, wherever you are, you have something to give out to the needs of a hurting world.

Some of you have heard me tell the story and I need to hurry. A couple of years ago at IH convention in the afternoon, I felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit to go to my room. I didn't know what that was about and I wasn't really sure I was reading it right.

But I felt it enough and real enough. I went to my room across the street in the hotel. I'd hardly walked in the room and I thought maybe God just wants me to rest a minute.

I got a little bottle of water and sat down in the chair and I hardly sat down. And the door just opened wide open and it wasn't any of my family, it was the hotel maid. And she walked right in the room with a vacuum cleaner in her hand.

And then she saw me and she was apologizing. Oh, I'm sorry, sorry, sir. I know I should have been done a long time ago, but I got called away hours ago when I was cleaning your room upstairs and I'm just getting back.

And the Holy Spirit said, yeah, and that's why you're here. And so I began to say, Lord, don't let me blow it. Don't let me miss it, Lord.

Help me to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. I asked her name. Her name was Charmaine.

My next question was, Charmaine, do you know Jesus? Is he your Savior? Charmaine said, I go to church. I said, that's not what I'm asking you, Charmaine. Do you really have a heart relationship with Jesus? She said, no, sir, I don't.

I really don't. And I saw a tear in her eye. I said, Lord, help me.

She was busy finishing up her cleaning. And I said, Charmaine, why are you not a Christian? She said, I'm afraid. Every time I think about getting right with God and giving my heart to God, I'm afraid, I'm scared.

I said, Charmaine, do you want to know why you're scared? The devil wants to keep you scared so he can keep you from being... She'd already told me she was a mom, had children. He can keep you from being a Christian mom to those kids. The devil wants to keep you scared so he can cheat you out of the peace and joy that comes from knowing Jesus Christ is your personal Savior.

The devil wants to keep you scared so he can cheat you out of heaven and send you to hell. That's why you're scared, Charmaine. She looked at me and her lips quivered and she said, that's exactly right.

That's exactly right. She said, I need to talk to you. I said, yeah, we're going to talk right now.

I said, Charmaine, I'm across the street at the convention. I've got responsibilities over there at my missions booth. But all afternoon, the Holy Spirit's been saying to me, go to your room, go to your room, go to your room.

And I walked in here five minutes ago and I hardly sat down and you walked in the door and the Holy Spirit said, that's why you're here. I said, Charmaine, God is on your trail. God cares about you.

She'd about finished herself and I said, sit down right there. Charmaine, I'm going to pray for you. I began to pray, oh God, how you must care for this woman, this mother that you would trouble me this afternoon and send me to this room and then send her off upstairs and bring her back to this room right at the time where I can talk to her about knowing Jesus Christ.

And she began to bawl, I mean cry. I said, God, you really love this woman. You love Charmaine.

I said, Charmaine, is there any reason why you couldn't just give your heart to Jesus right now? She said, no sir, no sir. I said, then let's pray. Father, forgive Charmaine, she sinned against you.

Oh God, forgive me, she said. She began to pray, that girl knew how to pray. She had been around church.

I didn't have to pray it for her. I just prayed with her and all of a sudden, the power of the Holy Spirit came down in that hotel room and sweet peace flooded Charmaine's heart. She was forgiven of her sins.

I was rejoicing and having a time. I went out in the hall and found somebody and told him about it. God did something in that room that day for that hotel maid.

Let me tell you something, friends. I believe that's the way God wants this boy to live. I believe that's the way God wants you to live.

So filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that wherever we are, we can give out the bread of heaven to a hurting and needy world. That's why Charmaine's out there, friends. The peril of an empty cupboard.

Turn back with me, if you will, to the gospel of Matthew and let's bring this to a close tonight. Matthew's gospel, chapter 25. It's a familiar portion.

It's about the coming of our Lord for his church. It's another of our Lord's stories. What a powerful story it is.

Beginning to read at verse one, then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight, notice the familiar terminology.

At midnight, there was a cry made. Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.

But go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.

And the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgin, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, be answered. And said Mary, I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. O my friends, it's one thing for us to miss opportunities to witness and minister to the needs of a hurting world because of emptiness. But it's altogether another thing, another story, my friends, for us to miss the coming of the bridegroom because of emptiness.

And if this is a picture of the church, which it seems it is to me, at the time of our Lord's coming, friends, it's a frightening picture. For here is 50 percent of the church identified with the church, still fitting in, still pure, still maintaining their separation, still getting along, but without oil. And oil, my friends, is clearly in the scriptures, the type of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit.

No oil, no light. I've said often, I think you could have walked into the first church of the virgins and looked at the congregation. And you could not have told by looking at them which were the wise and which were the foolish.

I don't think they were dressed differently. I don't think there were two sets of standards here, friends. They probably all identified with the purity and the standard.

And they were obviously getting along, getting along well enough. They were slumbering and sleeping. That's better than fussing and fighting, isn't it? They were comfortable with one another.

Friends, sometimes we Bible Methodists. We Bible Methodists, good bunch of people. We're so good and so gracious and so easy to get along that we just sit around slumber and sleep.

You know, we feel good about ourselves. We feel very comfy. We feel very comfortable.

Last weekend, friends, I tried to preach this message at the Pilgrim Hole in this camp, camp meeting in Frankfort, Indiana, at that place that Brother Snyder was talking about, Frankfurt Pilgrim College. But the Pilgrims is not my crowd. They're holiness people, and I love them and appreciate them.

But this is my crowd here tonight. I don't know much about the Pilgrims. They look like a good bunch of people.

But I do know something about this crowd that I'm preaching to tonight. Hey, friends, what the Pilgrims do is the Pilgrim's business tonight. But I'm one of you.

This is my crowd. And I want to tell you tonight, I'm not satisfied for Bible Methodists to just be a good bunch of people. I'm not satisfied for us to just be a bunch of people that are easy to get along with, a bunch of people that get along with each other, that are known because we don't fuss and fight and split and square.

That's not enough, friends. That's not enough. Jesus is coming.

I believe he's coming soon. And when he comes, he's not going to come and ask you, are you a Bible Methodist? Yes, sir, I'm a Bible Methodist. Okay, come.

No, it's not going to matter if you're a Bible Methodist or Pilgrim Holist or Southern Baptist. What's going to matter, my friends, if you are living in the fullness of the Spirit? Whether it's in your newly saved experience walking in full obedience to the Lord, full surrender to the Lord, or if it's in your experience where God has led you to the crisis moment like that man whose house had been cleaned up where you realize there's something more. There is a second work of grace and that is when God comes in.

God possesses. God fills. Look at what the empty ones do.

They do the same thing the man who had no bread did. They went running to borrow. Friends, you might get by on borrowed bread.

You hear me? You might get by calling the saints of the church and having them pray for the needs in your family, having them go and try to visit and help, and you might get by with getting a pastor to go visit the neighbor, getting a pastor to go work on the person you work with, to visit them in the hospital in the crisis time in their lives because you don't have any grace, no bread in the cupboard of your soul to minister to. You might get by on borrowed bread, but let me tell you tonight, you'll never get by on borrowed oil. When Jesus comes, if you're living in emptiness, my friends, according to what this scripture is teaching us tonight, you're going to miss it.

They that were ready. What made them ready, friends? The fact that they were of origins? No. All ten of them were.

The fact that they loved one another? No. What made them ready is that they were filled. They were living in fullness.

And those who were not, not only were left behind, but they found no source of help. Friends, I'm glad we're not there tonight. I'm glad heaven's storehouse is wide open.

Amen. God is saying to us, if you'll ask, you shall receive. If you'll seek, you'll find.

Your heavenly Father longs, delights to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. How are you living, friend? When Mary Mark was preaching last night about the backsliding woman who was right at death's door and called out for a pastor and was restored, and the peace came back to her soul just before she went across the line of worlds. Brother Mark, I was thinking about another story.

I had gone to pastor church that I love dearly, and the people, number of people here from that church tonight, and I think that most of you are young enough and new enough that you don't have a clue who I'm talking about. But among the people that I grew to love early in those days, way back there and way back there, was an elderly gentleman, the kind of gentleman you couldn't help but love. He lived a good life, had a good reputation, gave a good testimony.

He was vitally involved in the church, on the board, held positions in the church, and I quickly grew to appreciate him and love him. He'd been one who had fought in the war, had war experiences. We became very close friends, but he took sick and was scheduled for surgery, and I was there with his family and prayed with him as he went off to surgery, and he came back from surgery.

Everything seemed to be routine, but then it wasn't. His condition began to seriously deteriorate, and the nurses and doctors were coming and going from his room, and nothing was changing. It was getting worse and worse all the time.

Finally, they took him back to intensive care, and the family gathered in intensive care waiting, hoping to hear some good news, but the news kept getting worse and worse, and then a nurse came into the intensive care room asking for the pastor, and I stepped forward, and she quickly took me out of the room, and as we walked down the hall to the intensive care, she said, Sir, he's calling for you. I'm sorry we're very, very busy working with him, but it's critical enough. I think you better talk to him.

I walked into that room and found that man in a terrible condition. Right at this door, as he saw me, he reached out to me like a drowning man, grasping, and I came near his bed, just a kid preacher, walked up and took a hold of his hands, clutching for me, looked down into the face of a man that I would have thought, would have said was as good and godly a man as I had in my church, and heard that man say, desperately facing death, that man looked up at me and said, Oh, preacher, you've got to pray for me. I'm not ready to meet God.

I began to try to pray with him, but friends, I wasn't getting very far. There was so much bustling and activity in that room. I was interrupted by one of the nurses saying, Pastor, I'm sorry, but we've got to take him back to surgery.

You'll have to step out of the room. I walked out of that room, having felt like I'd accomplished nothing. Back down the hall, took his wife down to the chapel, got on my knees and began to desperately cry out to God for mercy.

They rushed that man down the corridor back towards the surgery suite, and he would later tell me the nurse began to scream as they walked through that corridor, Doctor, I'm losing him. I'm losing him. I'm losing him.

And the doctor gave her instructions as to what to do. They went in, they ripped him open, literally went inside, found a blood vessel that had ruptured, and within seconds, the doctor clamped it with his own fingers, put transfusions into him, and he later told us he was actually milliseconds away from death. I thank God that God spared his life.

Number of hours later, I was again taken back into that intensive care room. That man now weak, just coming back to consciousness, looked up at me. I felt maybe he would have forgotten what he'd said to me earlier, but the first words out of his mouth were, Preacher, we've got some business to do with God.

Preacher, I didn't realize it until I was dying. I really had not admitted it until I was facing eternity that I've leaked out of my soul. Our church had been through some very difficult days a few years before, with splits and divisions, and that man had allowed some bitterness to creep in his heart, some ill feelings, and those ill feelings had driven out the Holy Spirit.

He'd become cold and empty in his soul, that he'd gone on to maintain his standards, and gone on to maintain his lifestyle, and gone on to maintain his practice of coming and going from church. He was empty in his soul. He said, Preacher, would you go and get, and he began to give me a list of names.

Would you bring them here? I don't want to take any chances. Would you bring them here? I want to get this thing fixed up. I promised him I would.

I went and made contact with those that he mentioned. They came to his bedside. You know, friends, he wasn't willing to argue about whose fault it was.

He was very willing to take the blame. He was willing to ask forgiveness. He was willing to do whatever he had to do to get things fixed up, and he did.

And when he got things fixed up, he told me, he said, Preacher, it's all fixed up. And suddenly the Spirit of God began to flow back into that man's heart, and fill his life. I thought I had a good man in my church before, but friends, I had a saint after that.

We could hardly sing a hymn without him being on his feet with his hands in the air, and the tears streaming down his face, rejoicing in what God had done in his heart. The doctor's report was not good. He had cancer, and that cancer began to spread.

And it quickly claimed the energy and strength of his life. And my friends, I stood around his bedside many a day when the hospice nurse was saying, Any minute, any minute. I read to him the scriptures.

We sang the hymns. We rejoiced. We testified.

We talked about heaven. Friends, for days on end, that man looked across the Jordan River, and let me tell you, not one moment, not one second, did I ever see the slightest trace of fear across his countenance as he looked death's silly stare in the face. Why? Because he was filled.

That's why. I've often wondered what might have happened in his life had he died that day in the hospital. His pastor would have gotten up and preached him into heaven, because as far as I was concerned, he was a great man.

He's a member of the Bible Methodist Church. He's a member of the board. He's active.

He's a good man. I'd have said, man, he's rejoicing in heaven. But I might have been wrong, friend.

What about you tonight? If death were to suddenly find you and claim you, if you were to cross that line of worlds tonight, are you conscious that you're living in fullness? Or have you too leaked out in your heart? Have you become cold and empty, loveless and lifeless and powerless? What if Jesus were to come tonight, friends? I'm as convinced as I am that I'm standing right here in this pulpit tonight that Jesus could come tonight. The trumpet could sound. The saints could be lifted off of this hilltop.

I want to tell you something, friends. Contrary to what Timothy seems to imply, and he's left behind serious, I don't see anything in the scripture that gives you hope there's going to be a revival and there's going to be people getting saved after Jesus comes for his church, especially those who've rejected truth. My friends, if you're living in emptiness tonight, you better get to this hall and say, oh God, I don't want to live one second in emptiness.

I can't afford to as a parent. Lord, I have to have your fullness. I can't afford to, Lord.

There are people around me that are looking to me. And the promise of the word of God tonight to you is your heavenly father delights to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Bow your heads with me.

The walkers are coming. All my friends, God's been burning this message on my heart for days now. I don't know why.

I'll be honest with you tonight. I've struggled as much over this message as any message I've ever preached. I don't know why.

Even while I've been standing here preaching it tonight, I felt like Satan's kicking me in the back. But I'm convinced in my heart, this is God's message for this Saturday night. I'm convinced in my heart tonight, friends, this is what the Bible Methodists need.

We don't need better people. Better churches, better pastors. What we need, friends, are people that are filled.

People that are living in fullness. Oh, my friend, if you're not living in fullness tonight, the heavenly father is inviting you. Ask, it shall be given you.

Seek, you will find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receive it.

He that seeketh, findeth. And him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Your heavenly father delights to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

Are you hungry for his fullness? Stand, if you will, while the waters sing. Number are already here seeking God tonight. Would you join them? My friends, if you've leaked out in your soul, if you become empty in your heart tonight, the father invites you to fullness again.

The father invites you to fullness again.

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