

I have a glass full of water. Which is fine if it is water that I want to drink. But I want lemonade. This glass full of water presents me with a problem. If it were empty, then I could use it to help me quench my thirst with lemonade. But as it is, full of water, it is of no use to me. Were I to pour lemonade into it, much would be lost, both water and lemonade, and the drink I would be left with could either be called polluted water, or diluted lemonade, I'm interested in neither.

What shall I do? I must empty my glass, so that I can fill it as I wish with lemonade. Only empty is it ready to be of use to me.

~~People come into my office to talk.~~ <sup>People talk to me</sup> They come with problems, or concerns, seeking something from ~~me~~. <sup>us</sup> Some come like that full ~~galk~~ glass of water. They describe their problems, and then, no matter what ~~I~~ <sup>we</sup> say, they say, I've tried that, or that won't work. They are full, they want nothing more added, indeed there is room for nothing more or different. All they seek from ~~me~~ <sup>us</sup> is ~~for~~ <sup>to hear</sup> ~~me to say~~, Yes, you've done everything you could, or yes, you have made the right decisions.

Others come like a glass partly full. They are ready to hear a little, try a little, but soon they too are filled. They may be uncomfortable with their life or their marriage, or their children, but they too want ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> cling to what they have been doing. A few little changes they can tolerate, a little advice, but after some ~~is~~ <sup>we</sup> has been added to their glass, they too are filled.

But some come to ~~some~~ <sup>we</sup> empty. Their life has drained them, there is nothing to protect. They listen, they hear, they are ready to change, to be filled.

Today you have come here ~~before~~ before God. How have you come? Think about yourself for a moment. Are you a glass full? Have you come here waiting for God to bless you and your life? Do you come seeking to hear him say, "You are just as I desire you." ~~Ex~~ Continue to be what you are. ?

Or are you a glass partly full? Do you seek a little from God, mostly content with your life as it is, but willing for God to fill in the gaps.

Do you look to God to deal with those few problems that have you stumped, but not to interfere in the rest of your life?

Or have you come here this day empty? Ready to sing the hymn, Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee. Are you here a self made person or do you come ready to let God make of you what he will?

I have met some Christians that I wanted to be like, from whom faith and love radiated. One was a woman, when I would come to talk with her she was a fountain of love and warmth, and sincerity. She was full, a glass filled to the brim, but not filled with herself. With the love of Christ she was filled. I envied her faith, her love, her devotion, but not her life. Pain she lived with every day, crippling arthritis. The Death she had endured, a son, a daughter in law, their children killed in an accident. She had been emptied, in sickness, in grief she had been poured out until empty, God was able to fill her again with his spirit.

There was a man named Gordon. I had heard of him from friends. They had all spoken of him in glowing terms. His love, his warmth, his caring. He sounded too good to be true, and I was sure he was. I was convinced that he was one of those who build a kingdom, all right, but not God's Kingdom, rather their own. I was certain that he was a pastor who when people left church said, what a wonderful pastor we have, rather than what a wonderful Lord. But then I met him in an interview. The people who had spoken of him had never mentioned what I first noticed. He was a hopeless stutterer. Every sentence was interrupted, broken by his affliction. I sensed in him God's spirit. Emptied by his stuttering, God had been able to fill him, pour the glass to full with what he wanted.

In our second lesson for today, St. Paul speaks of this experience in his life: And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn ~~was~~ given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."



One day we shall, each of us, be poured out in death. Expired to the very bottom. Then we shall know the perfect power of God, he who ~~is~~ creates out of nothing and gives life to those who are dead. Then we shall know beyond any doubt that God's grace is sufficient, in now and all eternity.

I am sure that like St. Paul the woman afflicted with arthiritis prayed and prayed for deliverance from her thorn in the flesh, yet God's grace was sufficient, his power was made perfect in her weakness. I am sure that as Gordon grew up he begged and pleaded with God to be able to speak without stuttering, yet God's grace was sufficient even to make of the stutterer an outstnading preacher.

The prayer of Paul is like the prayer of Jesus. Abba, Father, let his cup pass from me. But not my will but thine be done. Yes, Jesus too begged and pleaded not to be emptied poured out. Yet through Jesus weakness, his giving up all even his life, God has acted for the salvation of all. Not in demonstration of power and strength, but in dying and ~~and~~ weakness the love of God reached out ~~him~~ to his world. God's grace was sufficient.

None of us seek our thorns in the flesh. <sup>From Adam we have inherited the need to be self sufficient.</sup> ~~We would be regarded as mentally ill if we did.~~ <sup>But no</sup> But as they come to us, burdens and griefs that are laid upon us, God is able to be strong in our weakness. Therefore we need not fear. Whatever ~~is~~ the path that Lies ahead, God's grace ~~will~~ will be sufficient. The more that life empties you out, the more God will be able to fill you up with his word, his sacraments. His power is made perfect in your weakness.

It's funny. I know all of this is true, but I still struggle against it. I fight against being emptied out. As much as I want to be the vessel for the love of God, the temple of his Holy Spirit, I struggle with all my might to remain a full glass. I am emptied in this way and that, but immediately I fill myself. Receiving from God letting him provide, I know it is the way, yet I resist.

And so I am emptied, a little more, year after year, more griefs, more failures, more failing of my body. Until one day I shall be emptied completely in death.

All along the way, in life and in death one thing shall remain true, God's grace is sufficient, for his power is made perfect in weakness.

I will all the more gladly boast of my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

For the sake of Christ they have content with weakness, want, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.