

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
~John 1:1

The Lord's Flock
Growth
DIGEST
PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



Aug 22, Sat
Sacramento, CA

more info to follow

“Filled to the Brim – Part 1”

June 10, 2015

Sis Techie Rodriguez, Head Servant

June 10, 2015

There are times when life drains us to the point that we are running on empty. We feel emptiness in our life, like there is something missing. Have you experienced that? Sometimes, that emptiness is so sickening. We have everything but still there is something missing in us. That is why in the parable of the Lost Coin, in Luke 15:8-10, the woman had to find the coin she lost in order to feel complete i.e. including the missing coin.

Life is empty without Christ. But, with Christ, you are satisfied because Christ has everything and, when you are with Him, there is nothing you shall want.

Sadly, sometimes, we let life rob us of our joy. What happens when you ran out of joy? You have an empty bottle. Life is not quite as good when you ran out of joy. Maybe you have lost some of your joy today. Maybe something is troubling or bothering you. Maybe today, you worry about something or someone that impacts your very being. Maybe you have been disappointed, hurt, or grieved. You are running on empty. You have lost our joy.

Brief sharing:

When I first found out that I had first stage breast cancer, I thought I was going to be sad and discouraged like everyone who found out that they had cancer. Until now that I had already been operated on and healed by the Lord, not a drop of tear due to sadness escaped my eyes. I only cried once and it was because I was filled with joy for I felt the love of God.

John 2, the story of the wedding at Cana, tells us how Jesus restored joy. Only Jesus can restore joy because the joy of the Lord is our strength. So, the question is, how can Jesus restore our joy?

5 WAYS ON HOW TO LET JESUS RESTORE YOUR JOY

1. Be where Jesus is

- In Jewish culture, a wedding feast lasts for one week. It begins with a parade. Then, the father of the bride will escort his daughter to the groom's house. The whole town will join in on this parade. It is a huge celebration for the family and when they arrive in the groom's home, the marriage ceremony will take place at the front door. Then, the seven-day feast with lots of food and wine paid by the groom's family will begin.
- Three days after Jesus called his first five disciples, Jesus, along with his mother and disciples, was invited to a wedding celebration at Cana in Galilee.
- Let us pay close attention to this change. At least two of Jesus' disciples used to be followers of John the Baptist and he was not what you would call a 'socialite'. He ate grasshoppers and wild honey, wore animal skins for clothing, and lived in the wilderness. He probably would not be comfortable at a wedding feast. But Jesus was different. He cherished being with people. He loved talking to people. He enjoyed social occasions.

• In John 12, He ate supper at Martha and Mary's. In John 2, at the wedding at Cana, he also socialized with people. He also came with Zacchaeus to his house in Luke 19.

- Jesus was a much sought after dinner guest. Most people were very comfortable around Him.
- He was criticized by religious leaders. Jesus was compared with John the Baptist for his love of life and of people, as it is written in Matthew 11:18-19, *"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."*
- Jesus brought joy into people's lives. This happens when you are where Jesus is. When Jesus is in you, you will bring joy to other people's lives too.
- In John 15:11, it is written, *"These things I have spoken, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."* With Jesus, your joy will be complete- perfect.
- The closer you are with Jesus, the more joy you will experience in the midst of trials for it is written in James 1:2, *"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,"*
- So when you are close to Jesus, when you are beside Him, no matter how big your trials may be, you will be able to encounter these trials and tell yourself, "I am fortunate. Indeed I have joy." This is because joy only comes from Jesus.
- In Nehemiah 8:10, Nehemiah the prophet put it this way, *"...for the joy of the Lord is your strength."*

Brief sharing:

Do you know what gave me joy and strength as I battled with cancer? It is the joy Jesus gave me. It is the peace and deep serenity that He placed in my heart that I cannot comprehend.

- if you have lost some of your joy, then you need to spend some time with Jesus and be close to Him.
- True joy does not come from experiencing happy situations or from enjoying your life. It is the joy in the midst of trials, joy that makes you feel so fortunate having different trials because you know this is just a test and that there is a purpose; and, you find yourself filled with joy.
- Jesus' passion is to win souls. He is happy when we do what He wants us to do. So, obey, be closer to Him, and be with Him.

2. Be aware of your needs

- At the wedding at Cana, in John 2, Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to Him with a problem. They ran out of wine.
- It is important that we understand that wine, often times in the Jewish literature/culture, was used as a symbol of joy. So, to run out of wine was to run out of joy. This was a very serious problem at a wedding feast. The groom's parents were responsible in ensuring that they had enough wine for the whole seven-day celebration. For some unknown reason, they ran out of wine. Maybe for us today it is not a big deal, but for the Jews it was a disastrous thing to happen and it could ruin a family's reputation.
- Jesus cares about all our needs. It is imperative for you to know that you are important to God. The Lord promised to meet all our needs according to the richness of God's glory. It is written in Phil. 4:19, *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*
- If you have lost the sense of joy, if you have a problem that seems too big, a yoke that is so heavy, He will carry it for you. Just cast all your cares upon Him for, in Psalm 55:22, the Lord said, *"Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you."*
- In Matthew 9:36-38, the Lord said, *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like a sheep without shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The*

harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

- This proves that the Lord sees our predicament and, as our good shepherd, He cares for us. He will meet our needs because He knows our condition. Because of His compassion and love for us, He prayed to the Lord of the harvest to send workers to minister to the needs of those who are lost.
- The Lord knows all our needs and we must turn to Him alone. So, go to Him and seek his presence. He wants to give joy into your life.
- Jesus' response to His mother in John 2 was not as harsh as it sounded. He did not call His mother "mother" or "mommy" but He called her "woman," which is a term of very great respect. Jesus called His mother "woman" one other time and that was when He told John, the beloved apostle, to take care of His mother while He was crucified on Calvary as it was written in Matthew 19: 26, "...Woman, behold your son!"
- Jesus' answer to Mary was difficult for her to understand but maybe that is the point. Mary did not understand what Jesus was going to do. She just trusted Him to do what was right.
- Do you have needs right now? Do not teach the Lord what to do. Just leave your needs to Him. He will provide. The best way is not your way but His way. He knows your needs so allow Him to move in your life.
- Mary made Jesus aware of the need. Their joy was gone and Jesus could do something.
- Those who believe in Jesus but run into situations they cannot understand must continue to trust Him. He will work in the best way. You sometimes may not understand but let Him do what He wants to do.
- You can ignore the fact that you have lost your joy or you can take it to Jesus.

Transcribed by: Sis Jen Ilagan

Printing Sponsor: Sis Lily Echiverri

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
~John 1:1

The Lord's Flock
Growth
DIGEST
PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



“Filled to the Brim – Part 2”

June 17, 2015

Sis Techie Rodriguez, Head Servant

June 10, 2015

3. Obedience

- In John 2:5, Mother Mary said, "Do whatever He tells you."
- Jesus' answer when His mother came to Him was, as it was written in John 2:4, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."
- Jesus' answer to Mary was difficult to understand but maybe that is the point. Mary did not understand what Jesus was going to do but she trusted Him to do what was right.
- Despite saying that His hour has not yet come, Jesus did not ignore His mother's wish.
- So, let us also tell God what we need and ask for the intercession of the Blessed Mother. Let us ask her to appeal to Jesus, her son, for us.

Brief Sharing:

A Methodist woman, married to a Catholic man, gave birth to a baby with a serious heart problem. When the baby was diagnosed, the man introduced the woman to Jesus and His mother Mary. He said that Jesus is Lord and Mary was a great intercessor because Jesus, her Son, loves her very much. So, one day, the woman passed by a Catholic church and saw a statue of Mother Mary. She went to her and said, "Catholics say your Son is Lord and that He can do miracles. I'm a mother and you are too. They say you are very close to your Son. Please appeal to Jesus for my baby to be healed." She did this not only once but quite a lot. Then, when it was time for her baby's next check up with their cardiologist, her baby's heart was miraculously found perfectly healthy. She praised Jesus, thanked Mary for her intercession, and became a devout Catholic from then on.

- Those who believe in Jesus Christ but run into situations that they cannot understand must continue to trust that He will work in the best way.
- Sometimes it is hard to understand Jesus' ways.

Brief Sharing:

For example, in my case, it all happened within a span of sixty days. The cancer was discovered, the signs were not good, but then during those days we prayed, along with the Blessed Mother, and presented our need i. e. healing from cancer to Jesus. And, praise God, as we all know, the Lord granted our request.

- Mary knew her Son would obey in John 2:5.
- Mary probably was not asking Jesus for a miracle. She was simply hoping that her Son would help solve the major problem of the family by finding some wine out of her concern for the family.
- Joseph, Mary's husband, was dead at that time so she was probably used to asking for her Son's help in certain situations.
- Mama Mary submitted to Jesus' way of doing things. The proof of this is the fact that she did not force Jesus to do something, when He said that His hour has not yet come. She simply placed her full confidence in Him. She recognized that Jesus was more than her human Son, for she remembered what the angel said to her years ago. Jesus is the Son of God, and she is just going to be the mediatrix because she was going to conceive and bear the Son of God.
- Because Mary knew Jesus was the Son of God, she knew what to do. She turned to Jesus and let

- Him handle it. She was confident in Him.
- We too must be like Mary. We should let Jesus handle all our situations.
- When we bring our problems to Jesus, we may think we know how to take care of them, but Jesus may have a completely different plan.
- In Jer 29:11, the Lord said, *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*
- The Lord said, in Isaiah 55:9, *"For as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."*
- God's ways are different from ours so when we bring our problems to God, let Him solve these His way.
- Like Mother Mary, we should submit and allow Him to deal with the problem as He sees best. Mary did not command Jesus to do a miracle, she told the people to do exactly what He said.
- Mama Mary always draws us closer to her Son. She always points beyond her Son. That is why Mama Mary does not want us to worship her. What she wants us to do is to follow her Son, Jesus. She wants us to do exactly what Jesus wants us to do.
- We do not have to teach God what to do with our situation.
- Wine is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In Eph. 5:18, *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit."*
- When you say filled, it denotes a vessel or a container.
- Sometimes we have no more wine in our lives. There is no more excitement and power. The Holy Spirit always brings joy. He always brings power and gives us enthusiasm. He is the one who leads us to serve. He equips the saints. It is written in Eph. 4:12, *"To equip the saints for the work of ministry..."*
- Sometimes we have no more wine because of sin. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is not with us, when we sin. It is written in Ps. 51:10-12, *"Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation..."*
- Some Christians are so dry and cold. How can this be when fire and wine are symbols of the Holy Spirit? So, we should always be joyful. When we are drunk, we forget about our problems. However, when we are sober, we realize that we still have our problems. The wine, which personifies the Holy Spirit, will not make us forget your problems. Instead, He will enable us to bear them with joy in our hearts.
- Wine also emboldens. Drunk people have little or no inhibitions.
- So, if we have lost our fire and zealotry; and, if we are not as enthusiastic as the time we were first renewed, let us ask the Lord to restore the joy of our salvation.
- At the wedding feast, they ran out of wine and were left with water. Eventually, wine runs out. Let us ask ourselves, have we run out of wine?
- King Solomon had so many magnificent mansions. He had money, music, possession, and mistresses. He indulged in every pleasure, but still he had nothing to fill the emptiness. In conclusion, in Ecc. 2:1-10, vanity of vanities all rot.
- The miracle at the wedding at Cana happened, and God used six large empty water jars.
- Whenever you bring your problems to Christ, always have confidence that He will make a way for us. Remember God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see, but He will make a way.

We will continue with the six empty stone jars next week.

Assignment: Bring six things that are empty next week and we will pray for miracles.

Transcribed by: Sis Jen Ilagan

Printing Sponsor: Sis Lily Echiverri

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
-John 1:1

The Lord's Flock
Growth
DIGEST
PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



“Filled to the Brim – Part 3”

Sis Techie Rodriguez, Head Servant

June 24, 2015

At the Wedding at Cana, Jesus turned ordinary water into pure wine. It was Jesus' first miracle and it was a story of purification because it convinced His disciples, along with the people of Cana, that Jesus was the Son of the Living God and not just an ordinary man.

Frequent washing for the Jews is so important because it is a way of purification which they do before coming into the presence of God. The message of turning water into wine is one of Jesus' greatest miracles. Jesus showed that He could purify water and turn it into the best wine ever tasted.

This is proof that Jesus can purify us- “broken and soiled vessels”. One day, we can all say that Jesus took care of our sinful, rotten flesh and, with the miracle of His touch, with just a whisper of His word, with just the light of His presence, everything in darkness was turned into light. All those who were desensitized with evil He can make new. All of us are purified and holy and He wants us to remain as such.

Brief Sharing:

Have you been to Sipalay Mines in Negros? Those are mines of coals and there are houses nearby. The dirt coming from the mines covered every surface. So, when I saw the white, clean and coal-free flowers in front of the houses, a thought struck me. Despite the dirty environment, the flowers remained pure. Later, I found out that it was sprayed with a chemical that repelled coal residues.

We, like the ever-clean white flowers, were purified not by a type of chemical but by the Holy Spirit. So we too can truly become pure in the middle of our soiled world. As it is written in Romans 12:2, *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* Hence, it is possible for us not to live according to the flesh because the grace that the Lord gave us is more than sufficient, if we only try to be holy and keep in mind that God wants us to be holy, as He said in 1 Peter 1:16, *“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

What they needed at the wedding was not water but wine. Water, in John 7 and Luke 4, has been used as a symbol of the word of God- the living waters. In Eph. 5:26, St. Paul told us, *“That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”* In John 15:3, Jesus told His disciples, *“Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.”*

3. Obedience

- Let us go back to John 2. It says there, do exactly what the Lord tells you to do. We must be careful in following God's directions for it is written in 1 Chronicles 22:13, *“Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel.”* So, it is only when we listen to all of the Lord's instructions that we will be successful. The Lord said He would instruct us in Ps. 32:8, *“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”* Therefore, let us always remember Mama Mary's instruction in John 2:5, *“...Do whatever He tells you...”*
- If you want joy to be restored in your life, obey Jesus, because when we live in disobedience to God and His word, then we will begin to lose our joy.

4. Be the Best

- Usually, they serve the best wine at the beginning of the feast to make a good first impression. In some translations, they referred to Jesus' wine as the best wine they had ever tasted.
- Right now, are we the best that we can be for Jesus? Are we giving Him the best, the highest honor, the best service, the best time, the excellence in our work? Do we spend time preparing for the Lord's work or are we just giving Him the leftovers? Are we just giving Him the least that we can give the King?
- Today, what did the Lord ask you to do? Did you put your best effort forward or did you ignore the Lord's request?
- Most of us will probably settle for God's second best. Do you want God's best for your life? Are you the best that you can ever be today?
- Remember, the measure that you give Him will be the measure you get. However, when the Lord gives back, it would be "...good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." as it was written in Luke 6:38.
- Sadly, we have settled for so much less than God's best. We even ask for just enough instead of overflowing blessings. We ask for little things in life instead of having an abundant life. God can afford to give you the best. If you are blest, however, do not forget to share.
- It is up to us for we are like stone jars. The scripture tells us that we are earthen vessels in 2 Cor. 4. We are earthen vessels that the Lord wants to fill with blessings so that many people will be blessed through us.
- In 1 Tim. 6:17-19, God said to the rich, *"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."*
- Be on guard with that has been entrusted to you.
- You must always remember that when the Lord wants to use you as His vessel, He can fill you to the brim with the Holy Spirit. However, when that happens, do not be like the Dead Sea, whose waters do not flow. Instead, be like the Nile River, whose waters flows freely to many different channels.
- The Lord uses the ordinary and turn them into extraordinary things. Remember, the Lord turned ordinary water into the best wine ever. The Lord can use you and do to you just as He did with the wine. He can give you overflowing blessings because He knows that you do not rely on your money and that you are filled with generosity.
- Our bodies were not designed to be empty. The Lord always wants to be present in us. In Matt. 12:43-45, the Lord said, *"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first..."* So, when we are empty, or without the Holy Spirit, we give room for Satan to enter us, dwell in us, and destroy us. This is the reason why empty people must be filled with Jesus.
- In Eph. 5:18, it is written, *"... be filled with the Spirit."* This verse tells us that we are like a vessel, a cup, or a container designed to be filled to the brim with the Holy Spirit. He wants to pour out all blessings upon us all so that everyone who sees us living a life that is complete and joyful will praise His holy name.
- The problem is that we are so often filled with the old wash water of the world and there is no room for the new wine.
- The wine here symbolizes the Holy Spirit. When we feel like there is no more joy left in us, let us ask ourselves if we have grieved the Holy Spirit. Maybe, for quite a while, we have been disobedient. Maybe we have stifled Him when He wanted to empower us and use us for the glory of His kingdom. Maybe we had been selfish. Maybe we withheld our time for Him to use

us. Maybe, we are full of pride, bitterness, guilt, sorrow, resentment, and we need to be emptied out. We need to come to the foot of the cross as empty vessels so Jesus can fill us and make us new persons.

- Our old life is like old wineskins, which will burst when new wine is poured into it. We must be like new wineskins so that the Lord can fill us up to the very brim of our being.
- So empty yourself and be filled to the brim with the new wine and overflow with the spiritual fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Be filled with joy unspeakable.
- Some people believe that God just gives them just enough to get by. This is false because our God never gives just enough. It is always more than enough. He did not create just enough trees, mountains, and oceans. He created more than enough. He did not just give just enough joy. He gave us overflowing joy. He did not just say I gave you life, He said I gave you abundant life. What does this mean? It means it is super; it transcends the ordinary and is overflowing in all areas of our lives.
- If Jesus can turn water into wine, He can turn an ordinary person into a supernatural person with spiritual gifts.
- Beloved, empty your vessel of all dishonors, of things that dishonors our Lord, and He will fill you anew and to the brim with the new wine and His joy.
- Does your life right now feel incomplete and unfulfilled? Are you still unsatisfied? Brothers and sisters, the Lord has come to give you the best and He satisfies. He is Yahweh Yireh, our Provider. He provides all of our needs according to His richness in glory as it is written in Phil. 4:19. The Lord is able to make your life overflow with abundant blessings.
- God is able to make every grace abound to you, so that in all things, always, having all you need, you may abound. This is written in 2 Cor. 9:8.

Let us Pray:

Oh Father, help me to yield all that I am to Your transforming love. Break me when I need to be broken and strengthen me when I need strength. Father, I empty myself so that You may refresh me with the Holy Spirit and with the joy of my salvation. Oh Heavenly Father, fill me now with Your love. Fill me to the very brim of my being. I am now asking You to bless my life, to bless me, so that I can be a channel, a vessel, and an instrument, to be used by You for Your glory, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Transcribed by: Sis Jen Ilagan

Printing Sponsor: Sis Lily Echiverri