

AO, ad 001010: The Key to fullness of life

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Festo Kivengere Tape (#104) Message - The Key to Fullness

Elisha the Widow
Nothing But Jesus
Add to the Cup of Life
Cup of Life

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C. I.

Tonight's message is The Key to Fullness of Life, and that sounds quite big and it's quite complicated because Christianity has a knack for complicating things, particularly those of us who preach. We have developed a genius in complicating things, and you know in the world in which we live, the more complicated you are the more intellectual, or the more confused you are the more relevant. Therefore, we will need special grace from above, from the Holy Spirit who when he comes will clarify a lot of our confusion, for God, if you read your New Testament, meets people in deep confusion and God always is simpler than the man He meets. He blesses more readily than we are ready to accept, that's why you find that whenever God blesses a person it's a shock. Something I didn't expect. I simply wasn't open to that kind of blessing, it takes us by surprise because God isn't complicated.

God is always simpler

God is straight. You see this clearly in the way he went about when he sent his beloved son into a complicated world, you couldn't have had it simpler than that. Others have sent in philosophies, and teachings, and long catalogues of laws and moral attainments and distractions, and God so loved the world that he sent his only son, much simpler, because knowing that we are all complicated he didn't want to add to the confusion. He came to unconfuse us and to usher us to the presence where we could stand and see life as he meant it to be.

God never meets men except at the point of reality until we are exactly what we are, what he knows we are, not what other people think we are, not even what we wish we could be. God never meets fake human beings, he meets real ones. That is why in the New Testament you have got case after case, names included properly and the settings beautiful. Very real you can't read it without knowing it is real because God meets us at the point of faith and reality that is the Key to Fullness of Life.

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I believe if you are a Christian you desire to be filled. To be filled. What is fullness of life? -- Again here I am involved with long theological explanations of the New Testament is very simple. It says, "It pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in Him and you are complete in Him." Can you have it simpler than that? It pleased the father to put the fullness where you can reach. Not in the clouds where I am going to strive, making ladders like Jacob and never getting them. That would be dangerous and tragic. That would be

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perhaps Buddhism, Hinduism or another kind of religion, not Christianity.

Christianity is God making himself available for my emptiness. It's God stepping from where he is, in the person of his beloved son, and becoming the kind of God to whom I could apply in any time of the day and have my empty heart filled. That is what the cross is all about. The cross is where God actually acts ^{as} man's felt needs. The cross speaks about you more than you realise if you look at it closely, the cross is you and actually pitied, betrayed. There is no room for God to be naked, but at the cross of Calvary you need a naked God. There is no room for God to be wounded. At the cross you meet God bleeding. God can never be lonely yet at Calvary you meet a lonely God. God is the spring of all freshness and eternity and unlimitedness, but at Calvary you meet a God who could never drive away a fly. ^{Edm. Dwyer} ^{Ph.D.}

This is strange isn't it? And yet it is the heart of the New Testament. I am not adding anything, all you need is just go back to the book. This is the confrontation on the cross, whom are you meeting? Whom are you meeting in this kind of God? You are seeing the revelation of eternal love meeting eternal emptiness. You are meeting God in his unlimited grace, meeting the deepest ^{need} meaning that you can think of. Here is a confrontation of fullness and emptiness, of guilt and grace, of burden and relief. No wonder in the Old Testament it is put at the cross, and the writer was looking forward: "Justice and Mercy kissed each other." This is the God of judgement forgiving the burdened sinner.

Now what am I trying to say? In the cross you see yourself, the cross is where God portrays your human need in clear colours, you can't miss it especially when the spirit of God takes you there. When you see your loneliness in the loneliness of Jesus Christ, when you see your spiritual nakedness in the nakedness of Jesus Christ, when you see the tiredness of the Son of God, then you see your own tiredness in that. This is tremendous.

Here then you are actually looking at yourself, but in what colour? Not looking at yourself because you analyse yourself, the more you analyse yourself humanly speaking, the more you are confused. You keep on discovering mud and more mud, and the thing becomes terribly confusing. You meet Jesus and just look at yourself in Him, the eternal mirror, and you'll see how bad you are and in that eternal redeeming fullness, catch glimpses of what he did for you. How far he went to meet your need.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for they shall be satisfied. The two words hunger and thirst are extreme words. They are not respected words at all, they are tough words. In fact I don't think they fit in (4) American ^{category} - you don't know anything about them, but, there are places where the word hunger would make people weep because they know what has happened. Where thirst is felt more than war and ^{with} Jerusalem in Palestine when he spoke about hunger and thirst, the Jews understood beautifully what those words depicted. They spoke of the cry of the heart, the felt need at its extremity, the burden, the desire unmet.

The lady in our story, let us go and visit her. The Old and New Testaments are wonderful books. The inspired writer gives us a beautiful realistic hard story and in the light of Jehovah, the eternal God who meets men and women when their needs are absolutely desperate. Here is a case in hand. A lady with her two little boys, her husband died, he was one of the sons of the prophets. A God fearing, God loving man, call him a pastor or a seminarystudent if you like. The man died and when he died he had a debt and the debt was a left fun paid, now we approach the house of the lady. The house is empty, circumstances around speak of emptiness, there is a gap she can never fill.

The little boys have no father, there is no money in the house, and to make things more difficult the creditor comes demanding that the money should be paid immediately or the boys were going to be taken as slaves according to the law of Israel. His mother and her two boys are there, and where can they turn, absolutely at the merciless hand of the creditor and hearing that demand, "Pay immediately, pay now! Pay now or the boys are going to be taken as slaves." And the poor woman, stroke after stroke, blow after blow, husband is dead, empty house, the penniless experience, the crying boys, the future is terrible, nowhere to turn. Nothing on the account, nothing at all in the house.

Do we know that experience? This is need at its most biting. Crushing the heart, one thing after another, one thing after the other, and you don't know what to do. The lady was a child of Jehovah and in her extremity there was only one ray of light and direction, not two not three. She turned upon herself it would be more miserable, if she turned at her boys they were utterly helpless, if she turned to society it would not understand, someone very good on a fast would say, "Why why if he were a man off God would he die with a debt?" and so in her extremity she turned to the only one man, a man who understood because he was only one man for one purpose, a man of God. Jehovah's representative in that society.

A man who did not stand on his own feet but who stood before the Lord. (A man who did not exist for any other purpose except to interpret how God cares, how God meets people, Elisha.)

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So the widow rushed to Elisha, came heart beating hard, and as she same very simply, this is the key to the days. Mother running from the empty house and does she know that she is trusting? The only thing she knows is that she is empty and my children are going to be sold and my husband is dead and the house is empty, and we have no money. Empty, empty, empty. That's all she knew. A crying need, crying need, and the crying need pressured her into the right direction. I hope your spiritual crying need will pressure you into the right direction.

She was pressured to the only one who could meet her need. The God of Israel, and to a Jew that means so much. The God of Israel. The merciful God, and then she came to Elisha and she made a confession, she told the story as it was. My husband has died, he had a debt he couldn't pay, he died and he left me with the debt. Very clear, very simple. She didn't have to wash, she didn't have to pretend, no masks, she stood there just as she was in her emptiness. In the New translation of the living bible, after the confession, she says, "What shall I do?"

After a little silence, "What shall I do, prophet?" Then the man of God looked at her with a beating heart and the spirit of God who used to come upon the prophet did come, and he spoke naturally. He turned round and said, "In this category, tell me what have you in the house?" The woman said, "Nothing at all except a jar of olive oil." Nothing at all that needed to be mentioned in the present need. My jar is absolutely ignorable, however, I have to confess it, I prophesy I have nothing except for that little jar of olive oil, that's all I have. Then she waited a little bit, to see what the next instructions were going to be. However, faith was coming up as he spoke to her, and immediately the man of God said to her, "All right, hurry up, return home my dear. Go back to where you live, and work with your children. Go in the neighbourhood and look for as many empty vessels as you can. Don't borrow a few, please. The condition for the vessels is that they must be thoroughly empty. Every vessel you can find and get make sure it is empty."

She went back, and it is a blessing to take God at his word, this is where it all begins. To be simple enough and need can make us simple.

I was reading today in one of your famous papers, and I read about

what happened in this terrible tragedy in New York, and one of your columnists, Mr. Tom Wicker, has a way of putting things. He was there when all these terrible things happened. He made a remark and I just want to read it to you because it stuck with me. Giving his own way of looking at it he said,

"I remember being in the yard beside that terrible place at night, I had an enormous feeling of genuine out-going sympathy with the prisoners. At that moment in time they so nearly represented to me humanity crying for help." Mark those words. This is an ordinary human being and he is just there as a reporter, he's not a preacher, he's not even identifying himself with the prisoners, they are too bad, but he says, "As I stood there something of which I need, the misery, the despair, so affected me that I looked at them and heard at that time at that moment in time they so nearly represented to me humanity crying for help." Need has a way of unifying and simplifying, and the woman I now takes God at his sword although she doesn't know if it's going to work. So she goes and tells the little boys to go quickly and get as many empty vessels as they could, asks us and so to give you these empty vessels. She tells them to get EMPTY vessels.

The little boys can't understand but they take Jehovah's word anyway. They rush to the neighbours, "Please, our mummy sends us for some empty vessels, please if you have any empty vessels give or lend them to us". Empty vessels? What for? Some good neighbours would say, "Shall I put there some little oil?" "No, no, no, mummy said they must be empty."

Do you mean, prophet, that in order to help this poor lady to be filled she must be emptier still? She is already empty, her husband is gone, there is no money, the boys are about to go, the creditor's crying and she's thoroughly bankrupt and now you ask her to go and collect as many empty vessels as she could - You mean add emptiness upon emptiness? Make the case worse in order to do what? However, she being human I'm sure, she couldn't get it but she looked, when you are pressured by need you forget all the nationalisation. You just go because need pushes us where we really can be helped. Like ^{Mr. Wicker} when he was a leper until the pressure was too much and he jumped into the river against his own understanding and came out clean. So this wonderful lady, the boys bring all the empty vessels and they fill the house with empty vessels. Everywhere you look there were empty vessels, vessels.

I'm sure she must have offered a little prayer to strengthen her faith. So she took the little jar, imagining being that woman being humiliated as she was, and taking that little jar, that little oil which she despised because she had said earlier that she had nothing, and she takes the nothing according to the word of Jehovah through his prophet and she was told to empty it into the empty vessels. Empty the nothing into the vessel.

So, she poured whatever little oil she had and poured it into the first empty jar, and as she poured she watched the oil level rise. And she sees the big vessel fill up to the brim. I'm sure that now the tears are now flowing down her cheeks for she no longer sees evil anymore. She sees the intervening mercy of the God of Israel, and she moved to the next vessel and the jar never empties and she fills and fills to the brim. DO you think if you were alongside her you wouldn't compose a hymn? By the time you get to the third vessel and the fifth and the tenth and the twentieth and all the vessels are absolutely flowing over (full) to the brim, you'd compose a song, 'My cup runneth over.' Wouldn't you? This is Christianity. This lady is no longer looking at nothing, out of nothing has come something, and this is something is not this little vessel, no it is the God of Israel. He became so small that he even is willing to come from a little jar of oil. She could no longer see the little jar, she now saw the God of mercy meeting the happiness of the home. Intervening when she was desperately in need, and she goes on until she feels, "Oh, this is a lovely world." and then she turns in excitement to the boys who'd objected.

You be the boys. I think the boys were absolutely in the grip of some tremendous experiences. What is happening? The little jar is filling every vessel. Then the woman turns and asks the boys whether there are anymore empty vessels. They say there are no more, and scripture says, "And the oil is topped flowing." The oil never stopped flowing as long as there were some empty vessels to fill. It simply stopped as soon as there were no more empty vessel to fill. Do you realise that we are talking about the Holy Spirit? In the Bible the Bible the oil always represents the Holy Spirit, Luke chapter four verse eight and ten.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me with oil. This is the oil, but many times God in order to point this out, He had to be glorified: so says 244, 1 John 7:38-39.

When Jesus looked at the thousands of Jews in the great feast of seven days, when they had sung their hearts out, the final day they

looked rather tired. Ceremony after ceremony, tradition after tradition, reading after reading, walking up and down to the pool. Priests and everybody getting a bit tired towards the end, and among the crowd stood the despised jar of oil. The one who was born like a poor man, the son of Joseph and his heart was touched by the need of his people, and he cried and shouted, everyone, if any man is thirsty let him come.

No longer going to Elisha, a greater than Elisha is in this church tonight. You don't have to go to the prophets for there is a greater one than the prophets. "Let him come to me and drink. He who puts his confidence in my words, out of his emptiness shall flow rivers of living water!" Let any man who has got that felt need, who admits and acknowledges that he is thirsty and empty spiritually and is deceived in his daily experiences, let him come to me, let him not waste time, let him not go to the ceremony, let him not go to Siboum, let him not go even to the harvest just as yet, you've had enough to come to me. Come to me and drink. How simple. And anyone who puts his confidence in me, come and buy milk and honey without money. How can you buy without money? If you admit your need that is the only price a sinner can pay because you have nothing to pay with. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Naked I come to you for dress and happiness I need grace.

So, I come empty handed and as I come that happens, those who come like that out of their inner emptiness shall flow rivers. Do you see the little jar in the house? Do you see the fullness of oil? Do you see the woman mourning of Jehovah? And that the house is no longer empty now? The woman goes with great speed to the prophet to give a testimony. She rushes to Elisha to tell the news. Bless her heart, and the boys are left in the house singing songs about the eternal God, Jehovah, "The Lord is my shepherd shall not want."

He even prepares a table before my enemies. In the wilderness, in the emptiness of this house. The widow reaches Elisha's house and says to him,

"My lord, the house is full to overflowing. Every vessel is just full to the brim. What shall I do with it now? She forgot that she could sell. The prophet instructed her to go and sell the oil and pay back the debt, and even after that there will still be oil to keep her and her sons from need.

I Wish we knew that the point where God fills the soul is when

you begin to pour out, and the reason why your cups are not filled is because we dare not open them. We are so respectable that we don't want the Spirit to see in. We dare not have the cleansing precious blood to clean that terrible cup, do you know what he did on Calvary?

"Oh Father if this cup will not pass by me except I drink it, Thy will be done!" Jesus took your poisoned cup, because not only are our cups empty but they are full of poison, they are full of sins. They are full of killing attitudes, cutting remarks, sharp criticisms, infectious gossips, these are the things which fill our lives, which are the cups and we dare not empty them because we fear that people will see what we are like. As long as we keep them like that there is no possibility of fullness for he must cleanse the cup, he drank it for me to the dregs. I have to present it as it is and let him do his gracious work, let him do his beautiful work. He cleanses and when he cleanses he fills. The spirit always fills where he cleanses.

The spirit cleanses with precious blood and then he fills the cup with Jesus the fullness of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God, the love of God and tonight it is going to be by your night my brother or my sister, you take your place alongside that blessed lady and let the Holy Spirit apply the blessed remark. Will you like to enjoy the blessedness of a satisfied heart, the blessedness of a dissatisfied heart? A heart which has lost its self-complacency, a heart which stands where hearts are blessed? Open to the influence of the spirit to open to the cleansing precious blood, willing to repent of whatever has filled the cup because when we fill the cup with emptiness we are like Jacob, so says Isaiah. "Jacob is an empty wine for he brings fruit unto himself!"

When we are full of ourselves we can't be empty. The only worse thing is that there is an empty cup ready to be filled, there is an empty cup which is full of itself. I hope tonight we are going to expose ourselves to the influence of the Holy Holy Spirit. Let Him lead you will you? To that blessed place where we all come like that blessed lady, admitting how empty we are. Empty with love, is your love full? Do you love others? Is your sympathy there? Do you sympathize with people who seem to appeal to you and the rest are left out? Fellowship, is it real? Are you safe with each other? What about the world around you? Do you embrace it?

Do you embrace it with all its rags and tatters? Hatred and meanness. How can I embrace it when I can't even embrace myself? My arms are frozen, I can't stretch them, I need the Holy Spirit to touch them with heavenly love that I may ^{WCP} be liberated to embrace my world in which I take my part.

Tonight can be a blessed night. You take your place and please begin where you are. Don't despise the little jar. The blessed Holy Spirit is in you already. Don't you feel his tuggings tugging on your heart. That's how he begins. He doesn't blow trumpets, usually he starts in a small way tugging on hearts. Don't you hinder him, let him do his glorious work introducing you to that blessed place where empties are filled to the brim, and where is that place? At the cross. Beneath the cross of Jesus I take now my stand, I know what I'm like in his light, and how I know the blessedness of a satisfied heart. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after right relationships with God and with each other. Take your stand and I want to take my stand alongside you, that I'm preaching to you does not make me a better Christian at all, in fact, I don't know a better Christian in the world, the word better is a wrong word in the vocabulary of grace. No one is better. Christ never makes men better he makes them new creatures. This sounds much better and more very true.

He recrates the whole human being doesn't take pieces and patches here and there. He takes a character completely empty and cleanses and fills them. Meet that lady now as she's going back home. That day the whole village had a rough time with her didn't it? Do you think she could pass so easily and not tell her story? Do you think she didn't tell everybody what had happened? As she sold the oil to people they were asking questions, "Where did you get that oil?" She replied, "Oh, this is not my oil, it's Jehovah's oil. I am actually selling what Jehovah gave today. This oil actually came direct from heaven." And she gave her testimony. This is a liberated heart, a heart whose needs had been met, sharing the goodness of Jesus Christ.

Pour out what you have tonight will you? Pour out your heart in prayer. I know we Presbyterians and Anglicans find it terribly hard to pour out. We've been so taught that pouring out sometimes smells of fanaticism and emotionalism and those those controlled religious experiences which

take place in times of revival. So we show away from that kind of thing and in my own church in the Anglican Church, we are so orderly that sometimes we look like corpses in coffins. Absolutely almost statues in a church, and we forget that when Ezekiel was preaching to the bones in the valley, the first element was that there was sound. A rumbling sound, a movement of bones, as if clicking together in fellowship, flesh and bones, and then an army moving out. Ezekiel 37, 37, there was no longer that kind of deadly order. Actually there was no order in the valley of Ezekiel, bones were scattered all over the place, the only procedure was that they were silent, that's all. So, it was silent disorder.

Many times we think we are orderly because we are silent but all there is in silence is absolute disorder, and when the bones were brought together by the blast of breath, breath, 4 Breathe on me breath of life, needed to be stuck together, we don't read that there was a committee in Ezekiel's valley of bones that decided when to get together.

When the spirit of God began to breathe the bones stuck together, back to the right one, you don't hear that the leg bone went to the head. You don't get human beings that way. They knew they were guided by the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit moves in a church like this, the young and the old are like children. They all speak together. Beautiful thing, I've seen it in my country I've seen a sixty year old man standing and repenting all in tears, and a fifteen year old standing on the same way. When they shake hands, the old man and the young man. Both born again brought by grace sticking together, here you have got a beautiful community filled with the presence of Jesus Christ and no more fighting one another, a river of living water.

I hope before this week is out every Christian man and lady will know that the best place to stand where men and women can be blessed. I desire the blessing of an unsatisfied heart tonight.