

Introduction: Pg. 977 -- NEXT - Next Week (January 28th back at the Chevalier).

“The Fullness of God in Us”
Ephesians 3:14-19

Today is Vision Sunday. It is the Sunday where we lock in together as a church on what we believe should be our one driving pursuit in the coming year. If nothing else happens 2018, we want this one thing to happen.

This is so important because the life of church is like our personal lives. There can be so many good things, so many worthy endeavors, that we can feel like a child riding a merry-go-round with our vintage point constantly in motion, leaving us with inability to FOCUS on the one thing God is saying: whatever you do, don't miss this!!

There are two things I really love about our vision this year:

1. Not only do I believe this pursuit is simultaneously the most beneficial pursuit for you *and* for Redemption Hill,
2. I believe if this one thing happens, everything else God wants to happen, will happen.

So please lean in with me as we consider what it means to seek...

The Point: The fullness of God in us, overflowing through us.

Read 3:14-19

I. Seek to increasingly reflect the fullness of God in 2018. (Eph 3:19b)

Paul's prayer culminates in one ultimate goal: "that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God."

This goal is the keynote of our 2018 Vision: "The fullness of God in us." That's why I want to begin with the end of the text.

What does Paul have in mind when he prays for them (all of these Jesus people, not just a few) to "be filled with all the fullness of God"?

- We first see there is a filling that leads to fullness. For us to "be filled with or to the measure of" conveys the idea of making progress toward a goal.
- That goal, the abundant fullness of God, "refers to God in all his perfection, including his presence, [power, and life.]" (O'Brien) Wow!
- What is even more mind-blowing is that God's presence, power, and life IS *already* IN everyone who *is* IN Christ. Check this out: Being filled happens as all of that is increasingly realized and displayed in our daily experience.
- What Paul has in mind here is nothing less than each one of us becoming just like Jesus.
 - This has always been God's goal. As those made in God's image, we failed his image because of our sin, but now, IN CHRIST, God is renewing his image in us (Col 1:15; Hebrews 1:3)
 - But it does not happen overnight. It is a thing of degrees.
 - **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18**
 - The Spirit transforms us to increasingly think, love, and act like Jesus, and that is a miracle!
- Let's not minimize the miraculous!

T: Is this your greatest pursuit? "ALL the FULLNESS OF GOD."

Because God is infinite, our pursuit of him is an infinite pursuit!

- We never reach the end. As Tozer said: *“the glorious pursuit... of the infinite riches of God [has] neither limit nor end. . . To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul’s paradox of love.”* - A.W. Tozer
- Did you catch that? We have God, but we want more of God. That’s how true love works.
- Pic: You see this {wedding} ring? That girl is mine, but I want to know her, walk with her, serve her, love her, be moved by her more and more and more.
- When we’re truly locked in with God on this infinite pursuit, it never becomes stale, we never lose interest, we never get tired of him.
- The wonder of it all, the infinitely more astounding truth, is that he never gets tired of us.
 - He pursues us. He woos us.
 - Even when we run from him... He runs after us. “I want you!” “I love you!” “Come home!”
- Can you say the passion of your life is: experiencing all of who he is and all of what he wants for you? Jesus lived and died and rose victorious over the grave, so we can go deeper with him *every single day.*
- With God, there’s always MORE! Don’t be satisfied with the surface!!
 - Would you pay \$1000 to watch the Pats win another AFC Championship, then leave at halftime?
 - Would you say “I do,” then sleep in different rooms? C’mon now. There’s more!
- Do you hear God’s invitation to you? “Seek my face.”
 - Does your hear respond like David: “Your face do I seek.” Psalm 27:8
 - This is the same dude who “meditated on God in the middle of night” (Psalm 63:6) and would “awake the dawn” with God’s praise (Psalm 57:8). Whoa.
 - What do we do with that? Oh, that was David....
 - What’s stopping you?

T: But this filling is God’s work. Did you see how Paul uses what scholars call a divine passive? It’s not “fill yourselves.” But, “be filled.” Paul’s prayer shows us we must...

II. Be filled with the fullness of God through God’s work in you. (Eph 3:14-19a)

Ask for God's Fullness in you.

It all starts with a humble posture before God? (*Verse 14*)

- This is not a metaphor. Paul is *really* on his knees! :)
- He knew this fullness he wanted to see in them would not be dependent on him, but on God.
- He possessed a certain sense of desperation.
 - God, if you don’t move, nothing is moving.
 - God, if you don’t show up, nothing really matters.
- Our prayer life is a barometer that reveals our humility before God and our hunger for God.
 - When is the last time you, whether alone or with others, spent considerable time in prayer?
 - How frequently do you find yourself on your knees seeking more and more and more of God?
- Perhaps the best thing you could do today is come to God and pray: Show me my need. Increase my desire. Make me desperate for you.
- Let’s not be content with a couple of extra ounces of God, when he is inviting us to oceanic depths.

Jesus told us to ASK, SEEK, KNOCK. BE PERSISTENT and CONFIDENT! GOD WON'T HOLD OUT ON YOU, but WILL GIVE YOU the greatest gift, the gift of himself in the Holy Spirit! (Luke 11:1-13)

- After all, we are coming to our loving Father who wants the best for his children and who has the power to make it happen! He is the one who names “every family in heaven and on earth” - ha!).
- So run to him. Ask boldly for God’s fullness in us.

T: But what exactly is Paul praying for? Look at *verse 16*. We...

Ask for God’s fullness by the power of the Spirit.

- When we pray for one another, it’s good to pray for physical needs (God cares about everything in our lives), but we should prioritize prayer for God’s Spirit to strengthen our hearts, where he cultivates godly thoughts, emotions, desires, and affections.
- Paul knows the Spirit is already dwelling in believers, but he wants the Spirit to empower them.
 - The word “strengthened” means to be “fortified, braced, invigorated.” (F.F. Bruce)
 - And he gets the job done “according to the riches of his glory.” Confidence through the roof!
- Now, we are going to talk *a lot* more about the Spirit next week, but let me share...

Why this is this so important.

- If the Spirit doesn’t strengthen us, we will be operating in our own strength, and we don’t want that. Why?
- Self-reliance leads to spiritual exhaustion and self-reliance leads to spiritually anemic existence that leaves us only scratching the surface of our potential in Christ.
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- T: But Paul doesn’t stop there. He...

Ask for God’s fullness through experiencing more of Christ’s love.

To be strengthened by the Spirit and Christ dwelling in us by faith are the same reality. Jesus dwells in us by his Spirit.

- The word Paul uses for dwelling refers to a permanent residence. Jesus doesn’t check in and out of our lives. This isn’t the Hyatt Place (Shoutout Medford Sq.). He’s here to stay! And he roots us and grounds us in his love.
- Think about that: Can you see the roots of a tree or the foundation of a building? Generally speaking, No. What does that mean? The “unseen cause of [our] stability” is Christ’s love holding us together and pushing us forward.

But God (in his grace and mercy) wants to take us into an ever-increasing realization of the ever-increasing measures of his love. Check *verse 18*

- Only God’s grace can teach us how expansive God’s love truly is. Look at how Paul puts it: “may have strength to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth.”
- Jesus...
 - Became weak that we might be strong IN HIM
 - He died that we might have life IN HIM.
 - He emptied himself that we might be filled with him.

We get to know the love of Christ by walking with him daily, mediating on his work in the gospel, and “allowing [his word] dwell in you richly.” Col. 3:16

- That’s why in 2018, we’re providing you a new reading plan every month! Jump in! Be saturated with the Word to be filled with God’s fullness.

- I'm praying that you can't get enough of it, because you can't get enough of him! (Preach) Morning. Noon. And Night. Every day. Give me, more.

Oh, that sounds legalistic. Maybe it sounds like love.

"If the living are not alive, what hope is there for the dead?" - Edwards

T: Paul's entire prayer shouts the all-important message that God not only wants to see his fullness in us, but he provides everything we need to make it happen.

I want to ask you a couple of questions to prayerfully consider as we dream about God filling us with himself until we overflow with him.

Vision Picture

What will your life look like full of God?

- We asked this question a couple of Saturdays ago at our morning of prayer. Here are a few responses:
 - I will look to God first in all things, not fearful, but full of faith.
 - I will be patient in the storm for the Lord's timing and leading.
 - I will selflessly serve others.
 - I will see sin decrease and God increase in me!
 - I will hear my heart saying: Jesus is better. I need him more than my next breath! C'mon!
- What would you add to that? How about? I will place myself in the streams of grace that will fill my life with increasing measures of God.
 - Because God has spoken in the Word, I will dig deeper than ever before.
 - Because time builds intimacy, I will spend more time in prayer.
 - Because I need encouragement in this journey, I can't miss Sunday worship or connect with my group during the week.
 - And because Jesus is so amazing, I will be an example in my workplace, neighborhood, home, wherever he places me *so that* I can share this news become alive in the people I love.
- What will your life look like full of God?

Listen: as much as I want this for you, I want this even more for us!

- What happens when the fire of a few ignites a wildfire that spreads throughout our church?
- What happens when the rumbling in a few becomes an earthquake *in us* that shakes the city of Boston?
- What happens? Revival happens...
 - Brian Edwards said: **"A true Holy Spirit revival is a remarkable increase in the spiritual life of a large number of God's people, [REPEAT - what happens in those people?] accompanied by an awesome awareness of the presence of God, intensity of prayer and praise, a deep conviction of sin with a passionate longing for holiness and unusual effectiveness in evangelism, leading to the salvation of many unbelievers." (28-29) Wow!**
 - Edwards goes on to say: Revival is simply a "a people saturated with God." Ok, God, then saturate us, with you!
- I believe it's coming, and I DO NOT want you to miss it.
- You say: "You can't know if revival is coming." You're right, because revival is God's business. He's the only one that can bring it.
- But I do know this: we can pray until it happens.
 - "God, I'm not moving until you show up in my life and their life."
 - "I'm beating down the doors of heaven and battering the gates of hell, until you turn this city upside-down."

So... What will our church look like full of God?

- *Each person's greatest prayer for and *WITH* one another will be for more and more and more of God.*
- *Each and every person will be saying: this starts with me, but I'm going to make sure no one is left behind.*
- *We will not only enjoying being saturated with the Word, we will share it with each other. [Copy, paste, send.]*
- *We will see complacency and cowardice replaced with boldness and a burning passion for God. (Ps 27:4, 8)*
- *We will anticipate every gathering (for Worship, Groups, Teams, Serve Medford, Prayer, Dinners, Hanging, whatever) not simply as an opportunity to receive, but an opportunity to give ourselves away.*
- *We will expect the miraculous!*
- *Our greatest concern will not be our performance but God's presence powerfully changing us.*

"If the living are not alive, what hope is there for the dead?"

T: When each person is increasingly seeking the fullness of God in us, he will OVERFLOW THROUGH US.

Two years ago we laid out our 2020 Vision that said we want to grow to be one of many churches around Greater Boston that consistently and effectively multiplies new churches to see God turn this city Upside Down (Acts 17:6).

I really believe this will be breakthrough year toward that vision. I'm talking about God doing such an amazing work in us and through us, that IT IS UNMISTAKABLY HIS WORK. So clear that no one could assume it happened because we had a good plan or good venue or good band or awesome people or decent leadership, ONLY HIM!

So here are a few ways to pray for the overflow as God makes us a church full of him:

1. **Everyone experiencing MORE of God.** "The fullness of God in us overflowing through us." Praying that for every person.
2. **30+ new followers of Jesus (50!)**
3. **270 in weekly worship attendance. (300!)**
4. **200 people in Groups and Teams (75% of our weekly attendance)**
5. **40 new members joining the family (50!)**
6. **\$345,000 giving goal met (\$400,000!)**

But let me be very clear: The metric I care about the most is #1 - God's fullness in you.

The overflow of God's fruit and numerical gain is secondary (*Luke 10:20*), but it *will be* the natural consequence when we are being filled with the fullness of God.

Family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, classmates will be changed when they see the overflow of Jesus in us in 2018. I have no doubt about it.

Conclusion:

In this new season of becoming a praying church, what better move could we make than turning this **vision** into a **prayer**. God, fill us, until we overflow with you.

You got that? God, fill us, until we overflow with you.

Response:

Call up band... Lead in prayer. Pray that for you. Pray that for the person on your right and on your left.

Into Song... Set a Fire... Simple Prayer... "There is no place I'd rather be, than here in your love. (That broad and long, and high and deep love of Christ). Then...