

*Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Yes he is. But on this day, at this time, is that enough? Or is your post-Easter life feeling kinda empty? What is it, after all, that makes your life full? The money you earn? The stuff you have? A job you enjoy? Friends to visit? A vacation on the calendar?

That's what the world calls **the full way of life**. But what happens when along come inflation and cancer and COVID and accident and those balloons get popped one by one? What happens when, even when you've got all that, your life *still* feels more empty than full?

You look for ways to fill it, right? And the world has all sorts of suggestions for you. It tells you that a full life is about finding yourself and being true to yourself because a full life is all about you.

But when you listen to the world and fill your life with everything all about you – cram it full of me myself and I – you're really just emptying it. Because that nagging feeling that you get, that voice that tells you to look for something more, that's not the voice of God. That's the voice of the devil.

Just think of Adam and Eve. They had the perfect life in the perfect world. Yet the devil convinced them that they needed more. So instead of sticking with the fullness of God, they chose the emptiness the devil offers (Genesis 3:6), the emptiness of self.

And he makes that same offer to this very day. Don't listen to him. Instead, listen to the Apostle Peter describe **the full way of life**, a life that understands its focus and its future.

He starts with an extremely important truth: **Since you call on a Father (1:17)**. This shows that Easter changes your relationship with God.

Remember, after Jesus rose from the dead, he said to the women: "Go and tell my brothers" (Matthew 28:10). Not my disciples, not the Eleven, not those cowards hiding in that locked room; no he said "Go and tell my brothers."

The empty tomb means that Jesus is your *brother*, and if you can call Jesus *brother* then you can also call God, *Father*. The God who created the universe, the God who made you and owns you, just welcomes you into his family as his heir. Because of Easter you have an "inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4), because you're part of the family.

The empty tomb fundamentally changes your relationship with God, but don't make the mistake of thinking that it changes God. Listen to what Peter says next: **Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially (1:17)**.

Some people say the resurrection proves that God does not care about sin. After all, if God is your Father, he should indulge your every whim and wink at your evil behavior. Because what's really important is that you are happy and fulfilled.

What happens when you view God that way? Your personal fulfillment becomes more important than God's commandments, what you want carries more weight than what he wants. And *that* is exactly what *the devil* wants! He cannot take away the inheritance that your Father has given you. But he can convince you that your inheritance is worth so little that you set it down, walk away and focus on yourself.

But Easter does not change God's nature. Yes, he is your Father, but he is still the Judge who lays out his expectations in black and white: "As obedient children, do not conform to [your] evil desires; [instead] be holy in all you do" (1 Peter 1:14, 15).

That is why Peter tells you that God will judge your work impartially. By work Peter means the sum and substance of your life, and it all comes down to this: either your life is characterized by faith in Jesus or it is characterized by rejection of Jesus (Mark 16:16). Peter forces you to consider what your work says about your heart. What is your focus? Are you chasing after emptiness?

If you think success at work is **the full way of life**, give it time, it will leave you empty. If you think youth and beauty are **the full way of life**, give them time, they will leave you empty. If you think just a little bit more money or doing that thing you know is wrong or pursuing that dopamine hit you're after – if you think *that* is going to make things right ... it will leave you empty.

Why? Because all of that is what the Bible calls *perishable* – it doesn't last. A life built on the perishable will always leave you empty. It cannot last (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

So **the full way of life** has to come from something other than the empty pleasures and useless treasures of this world; it has to be a life that understands its focus and its future.

Listen to this: **For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (1:18-19)**.

Your focus does not need to be you, because God's focus is you. He redeemed you from the empty way of life. Redeem means paying a price to free someone from captivity. What did God pay for you? How much are you worth to him? God's answer is simple: you are worth Jesus. You are so valuable to him that his perfect Son poured out his precious blood to free you from sin.

*Precious*, by the way, is an understatement. This is the blood of God (John 1:14)! This perfect Lamb shed his blood that you should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

That is Jesus' plan to fill your life. And you know it. So do I. So why we don't act like we believe it? Why, instead of being obedient children, do you and I so often live like selfish children, focused on ourselves?

Remember, your Father judges impartially. He doesn't play favorites. He accepts no excuses and just judges what you do. It makes you wonder: "Can God really forgive me after what I've done?"

Good question. God answered it. In fact, God answered that question way before you ever thought to ask: **[Christ] was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake (1:20).**

Before the creation of the world, God knew what you would do, knew that you would fail him, knew that you would not live like his obedient child. So, before the creation of the world, he chose his Son to be your Savior.

Whenever you wonder if God still loves you, remember that before you ever even asked the question, before the world was made, God answered it. Christ defeats sin before there is sin. Christ is victorious over death before death even enters the world. And your Father promises that all this is done for your sake.

So Peter finishes: **Through [Christ] you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God (1:21).** There it is. **The full way of life** is filled with faith and hope in God, not in yourself.

That full life is very different than the world's idea of a full life. That's why Peter says, **Live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear (1:17).** Since you are a child of your heavenly Father, this world is not your home. You have another home, a better one, an "inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

You are a stranger here, so don't live like you want to settle down and make this place your permanent residence. Treat this world like a hotel room. You're using it for a while, but it's not really yours. You can't take the towels and the bed and television with you when you leave. You can't take the perishable things of this world with you either. Why would you want to? Your heavenly home has way better stuff!

**The full way of life** means that you know your focus and your future. Your future is heaven. What's your focus? Peter says it's living **in reverent fear (1:17)**. *Fear* does not mean *terror*, it means an awareness of your place before God – you are his obedient child (1 Peter 1:14).

Now, obedience to your Father in heaven means focusing on the people around you (Matthew 22:39), and not on yourself. In the verse after our Reading, Peter writes, "Love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

Deep, heartfelt love can be a tall order sometimes. And it is completely counterintuitive, because the world beats the drum that getting is better than giving and selfish is better than selfless.

So ask God to realign your focus: off of yourself and onto them. Serve the people around you instead of looking to be served by them. Pray for it. And you will find that when you empty yourself for God and for those around you, God will fill you up.

The world is skeptical of that. So what? You are not a child of the world, because Christ is risen, he is risen indeed! Alleluia and amen.