

What's Gotten Into You...An Empty Promise!

Mark 16:1-7

April 21, 2019

Resurrection Sunday

What happens when you come up empty?

What happens when you come up on empty?

Most of the time we don't like it when we come up empty or come up on empty.

Empty is usually not a good thing to experience.

You go to the refrigerator to grab a snack and you come up

empty...someone beat you to it or you forgot to replenish it.

You look in your wallet and discover what's in your wallet is

"empty!" You get in the car and look at the fuel gauge and the indicator line is pointing to the "E" for empty.

Emptiness is no fun.

Anyone ever had an empty heart? A relationship came up empty.

Empty thoughts...don't know what to think or so numb you can't put together a feeling or a thought.

Emptiness can leave us on the side of the road of life wondering, "What do I do now?"

If you and I are not able to gauge emptiness in our lives we can, and will most likely, come up short on the fullness of life we were meant to live.

I recently received a recall notice on our Subaru Outback. It is a fabulous, safe and reliable car, so I was somewhat surprised to get the recall notice. I was even more surprised when I read what the recall was for. Every vehicle has a fuel gauge. It's sole purpose is to let you know how full or empty is your vehicle's gas tank. The more modern cars have an indicator light or warning that comes on when the fuel tank is less than an eighth full; informing the driver you better get some fuel soon or you will be stranded on the side of the road.

The recall from Subaru is in regards to this fuel warning system. They call it the "distance to empty" software. Evidently the current software was not accurate and people who thought their gas tank had plenty of fuel actually didn't and all of a sudden their car ran out of gas...stalled and empty. The recall is to update the software to improve the accuracy of the "distance to empty" feature. In other words, to let the driver know how much further he/she can travel till the gas tank is empty.

I did get the software updated. However, you and I know that even with the updated software it is still up to me to pay attention to the low fuel warning and act upon it, do something about it, get some fuel or else find myself stranded on the side of the road...empty.

Wouldn't life be easier for us if we had an internal software package that informed us on our "distance to empty" in life. I'm talking about that emptiness that can come up on us unexpectedly and leave us stranded on the side of the road.

Anyone ever experience the emptiness of an "empty promise?" An empty promise is a promise made to you or maybe you made to someone that is either not going to be carried out, worthless or meaningless.

Empty promises are just that...empty?

Your boss promised you a raise. You were promised a promotion. You promise your parents you will clean your room. Have you ever heard this one, "If I'm elected I promise..." The political promise! Or how about, "I promise to pay you back!" "I didn't mean to hurt you! It won't happen again."

Have you experienced an empty and broken heart because of an empty promise someone made to you? Empty relationship promises hurt and can leave us empty and stalled in life.

A "distance to empty" promise gauge in life would be great!

There is one other empty promise that we are going to take a look at. It is an empty promise that is actually amazing! That empty promise is today! Easter is an empty promise! Resurrection Sunday is an empty promise! Easter is an empty promise made by Jesus. Jesus made this empty promise to his disciples three different times before the promise came up empty. (Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19) He told the disciples that he would go to Jerusalem, be betrayed, falsely condemned, crucified and die. Then there was one other part of the empty promise...he would be raised up to life.

The women had placed Jesus' dead body in the tomb on Friday. Two days later, early on a Sunday morning, they went back to the tomb expecting to complete the final burial preparations of Jesus' dead body. When they looked inside the tomb they discovered that the place where Jesus' dead body had been laid was empty! The place was empty! Jesus stayed true to his empty promise... his resurrection from the dead. The angels told the women, "He's been raised up! The place is empty...exactly as he said...exactly as he promised."

Easter is an empty promise. The emptiness of tomb...resurrection! Resurrection Sunday is fullness to all who believe and act upon the empty promise.

The women, at first, felt empty. They were feeling the fear of being stranded on the side of an empty tomb. They were confused and scared with this empty feeling in their hearts. Their world seemed empty. Jesus' dead body was gone...missing. The women had gone to the tomb expecting to find it full...the place was empty! Normal wasn't found. The place was empty! An empty tomb, a place of death, was good news! A place of death's emptiness meant fullness of a resurrection life!

Because Jesus kept his empty tomb promise there is given the fullness of hope, life and resurrection joy!

The women were told not to stay at the place that was empty. They were told to go ahead to Galilee where they would find the One, Jesus, who had made that empty promise to them. The emptiness of the tomb meant that there was something of life happening somewhere else. The women were told, "He's not here! He's risen! The tomb is empty! Go out there and find him!"

The emptiness of the tomb hangs heavy in the hearts and souls of those who don't pay attention to the empty promise gauge. If they don't go and search for the resurrected Savior they will be stranded in life with confusion, doubt, fear and hurt.

Resurrection, an empty place of death, makes emptiness fullness...somethingness!

Resurrection offers an empty promise that points to a fullness of life.

This empty promise of today is being issued to all of us. It is a recall to take a look at what's in our heart and soul. Is there emptiness of self or is there the fullness of life in Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life? What is your "distance to empty" faith gauge indicating?

After raising his friend Lazarus from the dead Jesus asked Martha if she had emptiness of self or the fullness of Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. She believed in his empty promise of Resurrection life. (John 11:17-27)

Jesus sends this recall to us today...this empty promise day! Do you believe He is the Resurrection and the Life? Do you believe in his empty promise of resurrection?

Will you leave behind your empty places of life and go seeking Him in your daily?

What's gotten into you? The emptiness of the promises of this world or the empty promise of the fullness of life in the Resurrected Jesus? The distance to empty spirit-ware is in each of us. It depends on whether or not you will respond to His presence in your life. Have you acted towards Jesus' empty promise?

What's gotten into you?

What are your empty places in your life?

What empty promises have others made to you that have left you feeling stranded on the side of the road of your journey in life?

What's gotten into you?

The answer to our emptiness in life is the the empty promise of Easter...Jesus!

He is the one who promised the place of death would be empty.

He kept His promise!

He is the Resurrection and life that brings fullness of life to all who go to find him in their lives.

Easter egg hunts are a reenactment of going to search and find Jesus.

However, we have messed up the promise of emptiness in the way most of us do Easter egg hunts.

Most Easter egg hunts involve plastic eggs.

The plastic eggs usually have candy, or stickers or even some money inside them.

I know of some families who have the "golden egg." This is the one egg that may have 10 bucks inside it!

I want to share with you a true story about an Easter egg that a little boy found that was far more valuable than 10 bucks.

Jeremy was born with a twisted body, a slow mind and a chronic terminal illness that had been slowly killing him all his young life. Still his parents had tried to give him as normal a life as possible and had sent him to St. Theresa's Elementary School.

At the age of 12, Jeremy was only in second grade, seemingly unable to learn. His teacher, Doris Miller, often became exasperated with him. One day, she called his parents and asked them to come to St. Teresa's for a consultation.

As the Forresters sat quietly in the empty classroom, Doris said to them, "Jeremy really belongs in a special school. It isn't fair to him to be with younger children who don't have learning problems."

Mrs. Forrester cried softly into a tissue while her husband spoke. "Miss Miller," he said, "there is not a school of that kind nearby. We know he really likes it here."

As Miss Miller pondered the situation, guilt washed over her. "Oh God," she said aloud, "here I am complaining when my problems are nothing compared with that poor family! Please help me to be more patient with Jeremy."

Spring came, and the children talked excitedly about the coming of Easter. Doris told them the story about Jesus, and then to emphasize the idea of new life springing forth, she gave each of the children a large plastic egg. "Now," she said to them, "I want you to take this home and bring it back tomorrow with something inside that shows new life. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Miss Miller!" the children responded enthusiastically---all except for Jeremy. Had he understood what she had said about Jesus' death and resurrection? Did he understand the assignment?

The next morning, 19 children came to school, laughing and talking as they placed their eggs in the large wicker basket on Miss Miller's desk. After they completed their math lesson, it was time to open the eggs. In the first egg, Doris found a flower. "Oh yes, a flower is certainly a sign of new life," she said. A small girl in the front row waved her arms. "That's my egg, Miss Miller," she called out.

The next egg contained a plastic butterfly, which looked very real. Doris held it up. "We know that a caterpillar changes and grows into a beautiful butterfly. Yes, that is new life too." Little Judy smiled proudly and said, "Miss Miller, that one is mine."

Then Doris opened an egg and gasped. The egg was empty! Surely it must be Jeremy's she thought, and of course he did not understand her instructions. If only she had not forgotten to phone his parents. Because she did not want to embarrass him, she quietly set the egg aside and reached for another.

Suddenly Jeremy spoke up. "Miss Miller, aren't you going to talk about my egg?" Flustered Doris replied, "but Jeremy-your egg is empty!" He looked into her eyes and said softly, "Yes, but Jesus' tomb was empty too!"

Time stopped. When she could speak again Doris asked him, "Do you know why the tomb was empty?"

"Oh yes!" Jeremy exclaimed. "Jesus was killed and put in there. Then his Father raised him up!"

The recess bell rang. While the children excitedly ran out to the school yard, Doris cried. The cold inside her melted completely away.

Three months later Jeremy died. Those who paid their respects at the mortuary were surprised to see 19 eggs on top of his casket, all of them empty." ---Written by Ida Mae Kempel

Jeremy found the empty promise egg!
Jeremy understood the resurrection love Jesus had for him because of the empty promise.

He's not here!
He is risen!
The place is empty just as He promised!
Go and find new life in Him.

I want to challenge you to take an empty Easter egg and give it to a friend, a family member or a total stranger. Ask them to open it. When they open it and find it empty; share the true story of Jeremy's empty egg!

Where is your "distance to empty" faith gauge today? Full, half full, empty?

If you have not discovered the fullness of the emptiness of today, I would encourage you to seek Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life. His empty promise will bring to you a fullness of life.

What's gotten into you? An empty promise?