

Fullness

The early followers of Jesus were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). But what does it feel like to be filled with God? Is it a feeling of satisfaction, like sitting back with a sigh after a rich meal? Or is it a feeling of security, like having a full wallet or a full tank of gas? Sometimes this is how people talk about God: God makes us happy; God provides good things for us. And this is not entirely incorrect. The problem arises when we think that this is all God does, that God is there simply to make our lives better, like a cosmic service provider.

But this is not what happens to the disciples. When they are filled with the Holy Spirit, the kind of fullness they experience is not one of personal satisfaction. Instead, it is a fullness like when a cup overflows (Ps. 23:5). They are so full of the Spirit that it spills over onto the world around them. It drives them out into the street to share their new life with others. It is a “fire” and a “violent wind” that shakes the disciples and jolts them alive. It transforms them from a cozy community huddled “all together in one place” (Acts 2:1) into a scattered group of missionaries active in the world, spreading life and healing wherever they go, even when it costs them their very lives.

During this time after Pentecost, we have an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of fullness. What things, relationships, or preoccupations fill our calendars and minds with clutter, weighing us down? And what practices and relationships fill us up with God, with the kind of energy and love that spills over onto others? What truly nourishes us at the deepest level?

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