

Text: Romans 15:13
Theme: Fill'er Up

December 4, 2016

As a child, I remember my Dad pulling into the gas station and saying to the attendant like so many others, "Fill'er up," which meant, "Fill my gas tank all the way to the top." Today, with the absence of full service stations, we seldom hear the phrase. Even so, those words are fitting words in our text, fitting words as Paul asks God to fill us up with joy and peace. In the midst of this Advent season, we, too, ask our God to fill 'er up.

I. God's desire is to fill us up with joy and peace. A. But why do we need Him to fill us up? 1. We need Him to fill us up because our joy level is running on empty. Have you noticed? We're not living in a joy-filled world, but a world that's all too eager to syphon the joy right out of us. Every day, we encounter those empty joy tanks as we meet people complaining, grumbling, finding fault with everyone and every thing. Over the years, it's become much worse. More bitterness, more unhappiness, more dissatisfaction, more discontentment. We may be surrounded by more of many things, but it's more of the things that deplete our joy leaving us running on empty.

2. We need our God to fill us up because the world has stolen our peace. How many of you would stand and watch someone steal your vehicle from the County Market parking lot or do nothing as someone stole your ATV from your garage? It sounds absurd, but that exactly what we're doing. We're allowing the world to steal our peace, to rob us blind, to convince us that peace no longer exists in this world, that it's impossible for you and I to find or to be at peace. Worst of all, frequently, we believe them. Too often, we think peace is based on our surroundings and the longer we believe that lie, the quicker our fuel tank of peace runs empty.

3. We need our God to fill us up because our minds are operating on vapor. When you open the gas cap on your vehicle on a hot day, what do you smell? You smell gas or diesel vapor. It's not the real thing. It won't run your car or truck, but it smells like the real thing. So many today are living on peace and joy vapor. It resembles peace; it looks like joy, but it's all vapor. As Christians, we don't want to admit it, but some days we're attempting to run our lives on vapor, on joy and peace that's temporary, that's artificial, that won't last beyond the moment. Because it occurs so subtly, we find ourselves running on empty when we think our tank is still full.

B. How, then, does God fill us up with His peace and joy? 1. He fills us up by connecting our joy to the manger. Christmas Day is only three weeks away, but whether it's three weeks or thirty weeks, our God says, "Look in the manger. Look at the Baby. There is your joy. There is the One who brings joy to your heart, a lasting joy, a joy that's more than vapor." God wants us to overflow with joy, yet for that to occur, we need to find the source, the origin of joy. That origin is found in the life and work of that little Baby. Because of that Baby, our lives are filled with a joy that enables us to be joy-filled even while we're surrounded by less than joy-filled people.

2. He fills us with peace by connecting our peace to the manger. Some thirty years after that first Christmas, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. I do not give as the world gives. Let not your heart be troubled, neither

let it be afraid.” We can find our peaceful spot at the cabin or wherever else, but none of that ever bring us the peace that passes all understanding, the peace that originated for us in the manger Baby. As we reconnect our heart and our minds to the manger, as we look in the manger and see our Savior, we find a peace that fills us up, a peace that remains even though we live in a war-torn world.

3. He fills us up by connecting joy and peace to faith. Merely looking in the manger will never bring us peace or joy. We need to look through the eyes of faith, to see peace and joy in the manger, a peace and joy the world cannot see. Without faith, peace and joy are invisible. Have you ever tried to catch a snowflake? The moment you squeeze it in your hand, it disappears. Peace and joy without faith function in the same way. First, we must cling to our faith as a matter of life or death. Then, as we have that firm grip on faith, our God shows us His peace and joy, a peace and joy apart from the world, a peace and joy that is beyond our comprehension.

4. He fills us up through the power of the Holy Spirit. Left to ourselves, there would be no peace, no joy, and ultimately no hope. Years ago the S-4 submarine sank and the entire crew was trapped. Ships rushed to the scene. We don't know what took place down in the sunken submarine, but we can be sure that the men clung bravely to life as the oxygen slowly gave out. A diver placed his helmeted ear to the side of the vessel and listened. He heard a tapping noise. Someone, he learned, was tapping out a question in Morse Code, “Is ... there ... any ... hope?” For us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can say with confidence, “Yes, there is hope after all.”

C. As God fills us up, we abound with hope. 1. As we abound, we endure life's storms. In the midst of a crisis, who is more likely to give up, the person with no peace, joy, or hope, or the person who overflows with all three? Life has its share of storms. Some last a few moments, a few days. Others last for months or years. Whatever the storm, that peace, joy, and hope is what carries us to the other side. When we hold on to that hope, when we find joy as the storms rage, and peace within when the war rages on, we look for the light at the end of the tunnel and we're convinced that, somehow, some way God will give us the strength needed to endure.

2. As we abound with hope, we unite to glorify our God. Paul writes, “That together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” People of hope eagerly gather to share their hope and to praise the God who has given them such hope. As our great God fills us up with hope, as He shows us the peace and joy that is ours by faith, praise becomes our response. When you give it thought, could there be any better response, any more fitting response, any other response to our God of peace, joy, and hope? Because of Him, He sent us a Baby who changed our lives forever, who brings us joy, peace, and hope.

3. Maybe you don't have the opportunity to say, “Fill 'er up”, but you can always say it in your heart. In prayer during this Advent season and long beyond, say to your God with great confidence, “Fill 'er up, Lord. Fill me up to the brim with Your peace, Your joy, and Your hope!” Amen.