

Ephesians 3:14-21 - 7th Sunday of Easter [Exaudi] 8.5.2016

Having life in full!

¹⁴ When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. ²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹ Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. [NLT]

One can often hear when someone has passed away that it is said of them, 'He/she had a full life.'

What exactly is that - a full life? Is it when you have travelled a lot and seen many things - you certainly could have very full photo albums, but is that necessarily a full life? Is it when you have been hugely successful in business, or have done all manner of adventurous things - from bungee jumping to having white-river rafted down the Zambezi?

We can fill our lives with many things - but that is not the same as

Having life in full!

Really living - that is something we all want. It is to really live - to have life in full - that Jesus Christ came into this world. For many people the idea of living life to the full and church don't go together. And those who ask like that may have a point. We have so often created the impression that church is about rules. Rules which tell us what to do - mostly those things we don't want to do; and rules which tell us what not to do - often just the things we do want to do!

Having life to the full - the members of the church in Ephesus of the 1st were to know that they did not have this apart from God. But it was about more

than simply being part of the church set-up. That is why Paul points out in chapter 2 what we have been given by God: In Christ we have been built into the Church of God. In Christ you have become - as a full citizen - part of the people of God. In Christ you are a member of the family of God. This offer applies for all people.

What a wonderful gift from a God - a gift by which our entire lives have been changed. Through this a gift we once more have the life God **the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth** intended us to have. Everything we have comes from his gracious hand, and he truly wishes us to have life to the fullest extent.

That may have been an idea the new 1st generation Christians struggled with in Ephesus. It seems that the Christians of Jewish background gave them the idea that they were not on the same level - that they needed to do more to have it all.

The idea of having to do more so that we will be 'better Christians' may show itself in our lives also. But it is not up to us and what we achieve. Having life to the full - what Paul prayed for in the 1st century is to be our prayer also: **I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources ... [God] will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.**

In our time there is a great emphasis on strengthening the 'outer person'. Due to our mostly sedentary life-style, we may be subjected to a number of ills. So many people have begun exercising in gyms, others may cycle or run long distances to strengthen their bodies.

There is a lot to be said in favour of strengthening our bodies - the 'outer person'. But to have life in full, we have to receive **inner strength**. This is not a strength we achieve through a strict exercise regime, it is not something we get by learning some form of meditation - rather it is what God gives us **from his glorious, unlimited resources**.

Real life can only be had from him, who designed life. It is by making room for his Holy Spirit to work in our lives that he empowers us with **inner strength**. A strength which will prevent us from falling prey to the pressures of our time

- also to feeling pressured to do what 'everybody' else is doing. Remember that not doing what everybody else does is not a sign of weakness, but of **inner strength**.

Where the Holy Spirit gives our lives the real balance we need, **Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong**. To have the life God intends us to have it is not just about showing up here at the services - and then, when we've got that behind us, doing the things we think give our life meaning - going to the beach, spending time with your family, having time for your hobby.

If you really want to live, you can't be satisfied with hearing about Christ now and then - he needs to be **at home in your hearts**. The idea that he wants to do that should 'blow our minds'! Just think of it: He who has everything, wants to set up home with you and me. He comes to bind himself to us, so that the love of God will flood through us. That is how our lives find real stability.

We are to be rooted in God's love, so that we are able to soak it up into our being. This love is so great that everybody is included by it - nobody is left out, no matter what may have happened in their lives. This love which is so long that it accompanies us every minute of every day - we may know that God's love is not on strike just when we need him most. This love which is with us in the highs and lows of our lives. Wherever you are right now, God is with you - even when I find it difficult to love myself.

Who can ever grasp the love of God, a love **so great you will never fully understand it?** Yet, as you open yourself for God's love, **you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God**.

God wants you to truly experience the fullness of life - you will never be able to use up what he has given you. Whatever is happening in your life right now, God truly has the answer to your need. His power to give us what we need knows no boundaries. What may seem impossible to us - whether that is healing in times of sickness, or the restoration of a broken-down relationship, or the worries you have concerning a child - **God, ... is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think**.

How will people judge whether you have lived a fulfilled life? The measure is not to be found by how many things you put in it, but in him who filled it from his **unlimited resources**. We have lived a full life by continually receiving what God from his limitless resources pours into our lives.

There is only one fitting response to the fullness God gives us: **all glory to God ... Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen**. Glory to him in the songs we sing, and in the lives we lead. Glory to him who fills us with all we are and have.