**Ephesians 5:18-21**

**God Fills the Church**

**Sermon**

The title of my message this morning is "God Fills the Church". What does a "Spirit filled" church look like in Ephesians? The NT is a beautiful mosaic of colorful metaphors presenting the gospel in different ways – each text is unique. One of the ways to understand each author's design is to look for frequently used metaphors. In Ephesians, one of those metaphors is "filling". The church is filled by God to spill out onto the world. In previous sermons I likened this to those massive buckets at a kids waterpark. The bucket is filled and filled with water…and it teeters and totters…until finally it dumps over onto everything underneath. Another image would be a watershed. God fills the church, and then we spill over onto everything else. Paul uses "filling" language throughout the letter of Ephesians to describe the relationship between Christ and His body, the church.…we've highlighted it as we've gone through. In **1:20-23** we saw a vision of Jesus our Lord risen, ascended, and seated at the right hand of God from where He "fills the church" His body. The church is described in **1:23** as "the fullness of Him who fills all things". Jesus means to fill the church so that the church can then spill over onto the world! God filling the church looks like Jesus filling the church with all it needs to go on mission to fill all things for Jesus. Then in **3:16-19** Paul prays that the church would be able to comprehend, to be rooted and grounded in, to know ***the love of Christ*** that surpasses knowledge – *"so that we would be filled with all the fullness of God*" (**3:19**). God filling the church with "*all the fullness of God*" looks like God filling us with His love - that we would trust it, know it, be rooted and grounded in it, and then extend His love to others. Do you really believe that God loves you? You cannot pour out what you have not first been filled with! Pray for God to help you to receive and know more and more of His love – He has an endless source! A God filled church is a church that is loved by God and loves others. Then in **4:7-16** Paul gave another vision of Jesus as an ascended conquering King who now fills the church ***with gifts*** – so that He might *"fill all things" (4:10)*. God filling all things looks like God filling the church with spiritual gifts and each body member is using their gifts to promote unity, stability, and growth within the church body so that the church would be effectively equipped for mission into the world. Now in our passage this morning, we get the last of 4 "filling" passages in Ephesians. God fills the church…with His Spirit:

> **And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)**

Now in every case it is the Spirit that applies all that the Father has planned and the Son has accomplished. But what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Paul is not talking about the new birth here. We were told in 1:13-14 that we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not fill us at conversion and leave us and fill us again. Nor is Paul talking here about some sort of "secondary blessing" that we do not yet possess. Notice Paul is making a contrast here between being filled with wine and being filled with the Spirit. "do not get drunk with wine…RATHER…BUT…INSTEAD…be filled with the Spirit. He is talking about a life that is controlled by the Holy Spirit. You have the Holy Spirit, but is your life *controlled* by the Holy Spirit? It could be that Paul alludes to wine here because in Ephesian culture, as in our culture today, there was an abuse of wine. It also could be that he mentions wine because it serves as a great contrast…when someone is drunk we say they are "under the influence". When they drive they have no control of the car…the wine is controlling the car. There are other things that can control our lives as well. The Holy Spirit wants to be in the drivers seat. The Holy Spirit wants to control your life! So the contrast is a life controlled by _____, (what are you filling your life with?) - or a life controlled by the Spirit of God – take your pick! Paul commands the Ephesians, "be filled with the Spirit".

Now notice that Paul gives the fruit or result of a life filled with wine – "for that is debauchery". A life controlled by wine results in debauchery. Another word would be "dissipation" (NKJV; NASB). What is the sound that a balloon makes when the air is slowly emptied. Dsssssss. It loses air. God wants to fill you and make you useful. When you are under the control of wine or any other substance your "usefulness" is dssssssssipated….emptied. The word speaks of an emptying, or an abandonment of your control. You have abandoned the driver's seat, and wine has taken over. This is why if you've ever been drunk before you feel far away from God. He hasn't abandoned YOU…but your usefulness and intimacy with Him has dissipated. Dsssssssss.

In Galatians 5 Paul makes the same kind of comparison/contrast, but between *the flesh and the Spirit*. Either be controlled by the flesh, with its results (Gal. 5:19-21), or be controlled by the Spirit. A life controlled by the flesh… dsssssssss. It's NOT your true self! You are a child of God with the Spirit of the living God within you! Paul tells us to walk in, be led by, live in, keep in step with the Spirit – be controlled by the Spirit…and you will bear the fruit of the Spirit. "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23)

Now as Paul gives the result of a life filled with wine which is dissssssipation, debauchery….He also gives 3 results of a life filled by the Spirit. In v.19 the filling of the Spirit results in Spirit filled worship. In v.20 the filling of the Spirit results in Spirit filled thanksgiving. And in v.21 the filling of the Spirit results in Spirit filled submission. We're going to look at each

of these together now. Worship, thanksgiving, and submission are the fruits (results) of the Spirit in Ephesians.

1. **Spirit filled worship (v.19)**

**addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart (Ephesians 5:19)**

Now in the original language, the command "be filled with the Spirit" is further explained by the results in vv.19-21 (worship, thanksgiving, submission). So you might read this, "Be filled with the Spirit….resulting in "addressing one another in psalms and hymns…etc." So the worship described in v.19 is the result of a Spirit controlled life.

**Spirit Filled worship speaks to one another.** "addressing" one another… or some translations say, "speaking" to one another. The words "one another" shows he is talking about corporate worship. When you gather with "one another", worship is to God…but it's also *speaking with* one another. Worship is a type of "musical speech" (Frank Thielman). There is a sense that when we worship corporately, we are "speaking" or "addressing" or "sharing" truth with one another. Our worship ministers to one another. One commentator speaking about this verse put it like this – "*believers are to use their voices to communicate to one another*!" (Harold Hoehner). This means…you have to sing! "But I have an awful voice!" That doesn't matter… in fact, your bad voice just might encourage or inspire the person next to you to sing with their bad voice. "But my worship is between me and God". Paul clearly teaches us right here that worship is not *solo*; it is a *communal* activity. When we worship God we magnify and exalt Jesus and that ministers to everyone around us. ***Is Christ hanging on a cross worthy of your voice? Then sing!***

**Spirit filled worship has variety** – **"psalms, hymns, spiritual songs".** Now remember the cultural context. Ephesus would have been filled with Jews and Gentiles. God is filling the church with a mixed multitude, so it would make sense that the worship would have variety. "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" shows the variety of a multi-cultural setting. The word "Psalms" here is used to speak of the book of Psalms and this type of worship would have a particular Jewish flavor. However, "hymns" was a word used primarily among the Gentiles for songs with religious content. "songs" is a general term used to speak of a dirge or a song one might sing with your buddies at the bar…but here they are "spiritual" songs. The point is…there is variety! "I like hymns. I like contemporary. I like country worship….I like Hillsong, I like gospel music." Worship is a corporate event within a mixed multitude, and that means variety. "I don't like this song." We're not playing it for you! It's addressing one another, and it's too the Lord. Can you get on board with the lyrics? Then SING for your God is worthy of your worship.

**Spirit filled worship is genuine** – "**with your heart".** In order for worship to honor God, worship must be "with your heart" for the Lord commands that we worship Him with the heart. The heart is used to speak of our inner person – our intellect, our emotions, our desires, our affections. It isn't singing the lyrics while thinking about lunchtime. Your mind is focused on the Lord. Worship can be a time of joy, it can be a time of sadness and weeping, it can be a time of longing and reaching out…but it's "with your heart". I often close my eyes if I know the lyrics well enough, because I want to really think about what I am singing. I want my affections to be stirred by the lyrics. Worship is a time where I find my desires met IN GOD. When I worship God with my heart it glorifies God… I am saying to Him you are so good, you are who I'm truly longing for, and He is glorified when I am satisfied in Him. Now sometimes we just aren't there… we're distracted, our heart feels far away from what we're singing…we can still honor God by singing IN FAITH…because faith honors God. "God my heart is far away right now, but I BELIEVE that you are still worthy of every lyric I sing…so BY FAITH I am going to worship you because you are worthy of every single word."

**Spirit filled worship makes much of God** – Notice Paul says it is "***to the Lord***". Even though our worship addresses one another…it is ultimately to the Lord. God is the object of our worship. Spirit filled worship makes GOD the center of attention. You and I were created for this…you and I were created to worship. ***God's creatures are never more who we are created to be than when we worship our Creator.*** If your heart, your affections aren't stirred in a time of worship…worship by faith, but ask God to change your heart and to make worship a time where you can find your satisfaction fulfilled in Him. God is the giver and the giver gets the glory and worship is an opportunity to feast on Him and to give glory to Him as we think about who He is, what He has done, our future hope with Him…our affections are stirred, our hearts find satisfaction, our faith is emboldened, our depression is lifted, and God is glorified.

***Worship is communal, instructive, dynamic/varietal, it is with your heart, and it makes much of God…therefore worship requires EVERYTHING. Does God deserve anything less?***

Let's move on now to the second result of God filling the church with His Spirit…

2. **Spirit filled thanksgiving (v.20)**

> **giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20)**

As Spirit filled worship is the result of being filled by the Spirit. So too thanksgiving is the result of being filled by the Spirit. So you connect the verses in this way: "Be filled by the Spirit (v.18)…resulting in….(v.20) giving thanks always and for everything…"

**Thanksgiving is the result of being filled with the Spirit.** "Giving thanks always" is not our default. Our fleshly tendency is to see the glass as half empty. Paul wrote in **1 Thess. 5:18** that

we are to give thanks in *all circumstances for this is the will of God*. How can we give thanks always in every circumstance when around me there is so much evil in the world?! The Holy Spirit fills our minds and hearts with faith and hope in the message of a crucified Lord who died for my sins on Calvary, has risen and conquered death, and is now seated and reigning over everything – He has defeated every enemy, and uses everything that comes my way (even evil) for good. And the Spirit reminds me that Jesus is coming again…and that one day we will live forever and ever with new bodies, with Him, and there will be no more evil, sin, sickness, pain, or sorrow. The gospel makes us "more than conquerors".

**In Romans 8:37 Paul tells us that we are "MORE than conquerors".** Have you ever asked, "how are we "more" than conquerors"? To conquer is to conquer. We are MORE than conquerors ***because*** conquerors rejoice and give thanks once the war is over and victory is secure. ***We GIVE THANKS and REJOICE BEFORE the war is over***…because we know that the victory is secure. Let me illustrate…

**When the Seahawks won the Super Bowl…**I'll never forget right after half-time, we were up 22-0…and the Seahawks would get the ball at the opening kick off to start the second half. Things looked very good. Then…Percy Harvin, receives the kick off for us and runs it all the way back for a touchdown to make the score 29-0. I remember at that moment thinking to myself, "they're going to win!" The Seahawks had never won the Super Bowl and all my life I was waiting for this…the whole rest of the game I was rejoicing and celebrating as the Seahawks trounced Peyton Manning and the Broncos to finish with the final score of 43-8. I will be riding on that victory, probably for the rest of my life. Why was I rejoicing before the victory was secure…there was no way the Broncos were going to come back from that…now obviously it was possible. How much more should I rejoice and give thanks when evil comes my way BECAUSE of the final and decisive victory of Jesus who has already won the war.

**The devil and every evil have already been decisively defeated.** Remember the picture in Ephesians. Jesus, the name above every name, is seated in victory in 1:21:

> **far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion [those are names used for spiritual forces of evil] and *above every name that is to be named*, not only in this age but also in the one to come. (Ephesians 1:21)**

Now it is the Father who raised and seated Him there…and the Father is the source of every blessing and victory…The Father has put all things under the Son…so we give thanks "to the Father" but it's "*in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*". Jesus is the name seated over every name…He is in absolute control of all things…and we know the outcome of the war…so in everything, even in evil, we can give thanks**. The Holy Spirit brings these things to mind in the**

**midst of trials and dark times…and instead of remaining defeated in a state of depression, we are able to actually "give thanks in everything" that comes our way.**

**I know that many of you are hurting this morning…and it's not easy to give thanks when you're hurting.** If you ever want to fill your heart with thanksgiving…read Romans 8. Romans 8:28 tells us that "God works together all things for good" and the context is evil and suffering, and the good is "to be conformed into the image of Jesus".

***If God this year answered none of your prayers to be delivered from evil and hardship, but every single day answered your prayer – "make me more like Jesus" - wouldn't that be reason to give thanks?!***

**One more result of God filling the church with His Spirit…**

**3. Spirit filled submission (v.21)**

**submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:21)**

Again, "*submitting to one another*" is the result of "*being filled with the Spirit*". When God fills the church with His Spirit, the result is submission. The word "to submit" is the same word that was used in 1:22:

**And he [the Father] *put all things under [same word]* his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church. (Ephesians 1:22)**

Jesus is the authority over all things that are "*put under Him*" or "*in submission to Him*". Now we're going to see that this word "submission" extends into the household code that Paul gives starting in v.22. There are several passages in the NT that scholars call "household codes" where the writer talks about the relationships within the home and how they are to relate to one another "*out of reverence for Christ*". It is ALWAYS motivated by our submission to God. So in 5:22-33 Paul talks about husbands and wives. The wives are to submit (same word) to their husbands, but the husbands we'll see get greater attention by Paul – they are the Head as Christ is the Head…but they are to lead as sacrificial servants…willing to lay down their lives for their wives. As God has restored order within the cosmos with Jesus the Head over all…God is seeking to restore order within the home with the husband as the Head over the household but NOW AS A SACRIFICIAL SERVANT…because JESUS is his model. Headship, as we'll see, is not a "you do as I say" type of leadership… Jesus led by washing feet. Jesus led by praying for Peter when he would betray Him. Jesus served His disciples. Jesus bore the cross for those He leads. Husbands…we'll see that the standard for us is set much much higher than for the wife…as it should be. Today is Mothers Day…brothers you need to be a servant to your wife, or your Mother/grandmother. Jesus didn't have a wife for us to learn from…but He listened attentively

to his Mother's request to turn water into wine, to live in submission to His parents…and He was God in the flesh!

Then in 6:1-4 Paul talks about parents and children. Children are to be in submission to their parents, and Fathers are to be sure they don't provoke their children to anger needlessly. Then in 6:5-9 Paul talks about servants and masters. In many households there were the servants and the master of the servants…the servants are to submit to their masters. The Masters are to do good to them and not threaten them. So the Spirit fills us and we are to "submit to one another"…. "wives to their husbands"… "children to their parents"… "servants to their masters". That is how Spirit filled submission flows into the household in Ephesians. Brothers are you sacrificially loving, serving, and leading your household? Wives are you respecting and submitting to your husband?

When God fills His Church…the result is Spirit filled worship, Spirit filled thanksgiving, and Spirit filled submission. May each of us be controlled by, walk in, be filled with, keep in step with, live in the Spirit and may the fruit of the Spirit abound in us. This is what church growth really looks like…it's not primarily about numbers…it's about God's people walking in the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit abounding in our lives as we are filled and then spill out onto each other and the world around us. The world needs to see Spirit filled worship…to draw them to their Creator. The world needs to see us give thanks when everyone else would be complaining and murmuring…to draw them to our source of strength. The world needs to see Spirit filled submission resulting in Spirit filled harmony within the household.

We're going to take a break from Ephesians and our next series is titled, "Rest for the Restless". We're going to look at what God means by "rest" and the "Sabbath". I'm really excited about this series. Then after that we'll be back in Ephesians and the title of my next series in Ephesians will be "The Spirit Filled Household". It is the Spirit that fills us, and the result is love, harmony, and order within the household to the glory of God.

Let's pray

**<u>Connection Group Questions</u>**

1. What is something you got out of the message on Sunday?
2. Read the following passages with your group: Ephesians 1:10; 1:22-23; 3:16-19; 4:7-12; 5:18. The church is *being filled* by Jesus in Ephesians. How do these passages relate to the larger thesis of Ephesians in Ephesians 1:10? Is salvation only to be saved "from sin" or is there a larger context of salvation for all of God's creation in Ephesians?
3. Read 5:18 – what does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit"?

4. Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Do you think obedience to the fruits of the Spirit causes us to be filled with the Spirit, or are we filled with the Spirit resulting in obedience and fruit? Or is the answer…YES?
5. What are the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23? What are the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21?
6. What are the three results of the Spirit filled church in Ephesians 5:19-21?
7. Read 5:19 - How would you describe “Spirit filled worship”?
8. Read 5:20 - What does “Spirit filled thanksgiving” look like?
9. Read 5:21 - What does “Spirit filled submission” look like?
10. How does the subject of “Spirit filled submission” then work within the household code in 5:22-6:9?