

July 7, 2019
New Song Episcopal Church
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(All lectionary passages are included below the sermon text.)

Power

Power. Authority. These are things people crave. People like politicians, for example. We recently had a debate on one side of the political aisle with so many vying to be their party's nominee that the debate had to be split into two sessions, and even then each candidate spoke only for a small fraction of the time. On the other side, we had an Independence Day where a much-hyped parade and speech heavy with military vehicles that had issues...because of rain. Even the "most powerful" are subservient to something.

Power. Humans crave it. We desire power over our lives, the power to make decisions about things that affect us. Is this not reasonable? Sure it is. What about the power over the decisions others make? What about when those decisions may impact me or someone I care about? Do I then have a responsibility to try to lessen their power for the sake of those who are weaker?

Power.

Jesus turns our ideas of power on their head when he tells the disciples not to rejoice that the spirits submit to them, but to instead rejoice that their names are written down in heaven.

Power. Bear one another's burdens.

Power. Take care that you are not tempted.

Power. All must carry their own loads.

Power. You reap whatever you sow.

Power. I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.

Power. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals.

Power. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

Power. Cure the sick.

Power. Wipe the dust off of your feet when you leave a town that rejects you.

Power. Whoever rejects you rejects me.

The thing is, I've heard every part of today's readings used to justify all sorts of things that don't hold up to scrutiny. The Kingdom of God is not interested in seeking power, it is about realizing what true power is.

True power is not cowed by the boisterous bluffing cacophony of buffoons.

True power does not fear rejection. Neither is it enamored with acceptance.

True power seeks to love and to serve, to stand up for the weak and the

powerless, to proclaim absurd hope in a world where silence screams of hopelessness and despair.

True power does not grow weary of doing what is right, even when all looks bleak and meaningless.

True power is trusting that through you God can do something useful, something meaningful, something trans-formative, even if you don't see the results.

True power is the calmness that comes from faith. Believing in what you do not see. Trusting in the ridiculous notion that you are valuable enough to be seen and to be entrusted with things greater than what you can see. Demons submit to you? Big deal...on a larger scale. Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning out of heaven. He says he has given you authority beyond what you think you have. First, know this, the Kingdom of God is here. That peace is for you. That assurance is for you.

Life is not about the storm. Life is about the one who was walking on the water in the middle of the storm, the one who invited Peter to walk on the water with him. It is a small thing for one that powerful to look at the wind and the waves and say, "Peace, be still." It is a far greater thing for one to believe while the storm abides that we need not fear the storm because there is something and someone greater guiding our steps.

Yeah, well "something greater" won't feed my neighbor or protect my LGBTQ friend or rescue children from cages and their families from concentration camps. True.

That is why *you* are here. To face down storms like these with bold tranquility, to stand up in love undeterred by the trappings of power or the ostentatious displays of fleeting riches.

Power says calmly, “This is wrong and it must be changed. I will work to change it.” In spite of the odds. In spite of what you see. Without regard for the naysayers. We walk calmly forward with faces like flint and dogged persistence.

The Kingdom of God is at hand. Peace be upon you.

Amen.

The Old Testament: Isaiah 66:10-14

Thus says the Lord:

"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,
all you who love her;
rejoice with her in joy,
all you who mourn over her--
that you may nurse and be satisfied
from her consoling breast;
that you may drink deeply with delight
from her glorious bosom.

For thus says the Lord:

I will extend prosperity to her like a river,
and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream;
and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm,
and dandled on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child,
so I will comfort you;
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;
your bodies shall flourish like the grass;

and it shall be known that the hand of the Lord is with his servants,
and his indignation is against his enemies."

The Epistle: Galatians 6:1-16

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised-- only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule-- peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

The Gospel: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."