

This Sunday's texts:

2 Samuel 22:2-4

Ephesians 1:17-21

Matthew 28:1-7

**Kingdom Power**

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The holy gospel for today comes to us from Matthew, the 28th chapter:

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

The gospel of the Lord. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, allow us to recognize your power at work in our world and in our midst. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So I have to start not with one thing which I had to do at the first service, but with two, because I got corrected after the first service. I'll explain that in the moment. One of the things I need to say to you as you hear this message, trying to convey the idea, the understanding of Kingdom Power is that I believe in miracles. I believe that God has the power to supernaturally and immediately change things, heal, transform, set free. I believe that God can do that. Now in my life, he's only done that a couple of times. He often works in a timing that is different than what I ask for, but as I talk about the many ways that God manifests his power in our midst in this sermon, I just want you to know. I believe in miracles. All right? Good. Thank you for the nod. I appreciate it.

So at the first service, when I got to this second slide and started reading, "He said: "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer...,""<sup>1</sup> I referenced that it was from 2 Samuel and I made a mistake. I know. I know. It happens a couple of times a decade. I attributed it to Samuel, but, in fact, the message that I was bringing from it is even more powerful knowing, as I've been corrected, that it is actually in Samuel, but it's from David. King David, near the end of his reign, is saying these words. King David went through the wringer. He messed up a few times. He had plenty of enemies. He had lots of moments of discouragement and uncertainty when he had to seek God out. And David said of the Lord, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer." The Lord is the foundation upon which my life is built. All that I do, all that I'm about is built on the foundation, the solid rock of my Lord and God. And he's the place where I can find shelter from my enemy, protection from those who would attack, even peace in the midst of the battle as I rest inside God's protective fortress. And the Lord is the one who leads me out to that deliverance, to that place of safety. God is faithful and reliable. He is powerful and he puts that power to work in service to and through his people. So as we feel the struggle in our lives, as we wonder what's happening, we can remember that God is our rock and fortress and deliverer.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel 22:2-3

Now as we move to the gospel, we see just before Jesus gives his church the Great Commission, that he says these words. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."<sup>2</sup> All right. So where did that authority that Jesus claims come from? It came from the Father. He was placed by God in this position of authority. We usually often will hear the words "at the right hand of God."<sup>3</sup> He's put in the position of authority and then he says to us I give you the authority. "Therefore you go" in my authority, in my power. I think most of us in the life of the church are pretty clear that God is almighty, that God is all-powerful. It's, sort of, our definition. We may not believe or trust that he's willing to put that power into service for us, but we believe God has the power.

Today, what I want to talk to you about is that **we** have that power. That kingdom power is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, and that power is at work in and through God's people. I can tell it's going to take a little convincing.

So Paul has some great prayers in Ephesians. This one is right from the beginning of Ephesians. He says this. "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."<sup>4</sup> Paul is praying for the church, that we will begin to understand who God is and how God chooses to act in our world, and why. Then it goes on and he says, "may the eyes of your heart be enlightened." Isn't that beautiful? "May the eyes of your heart be enlightened, so you will know what is the hope of His calling."

It's been a struggle in recent weeks to read the news, especially as we hear about violence happening both in our nation and of course the atrocities that are happening in Ukraine, with Russia, and the war. It's devastating and the truth of the matter is that often robs us of hope. I wish it were just international news, but I'll tell you I've met a few families where the wife or the husband will say of the other "He'll never change. He's always going to be this way." The devastating part of that is often what happens when you start to think that way that that person that's in your life will never change, one of the things you start to think is "And I can't stand it. If this is going to go on forever and he's never going to change, I'm out." That's often where relationships end. But we believe in an all-powerful God. We believe in a God who can transform, who can change people, and if we look around, we can see evidence that people indeed have been transformed. Their lives have been changed, maybe not into something perfect, but into something different and often something better. So we can have hope! And our hope isn't in our ability to change. It's in God's ability to change us. And then our confidence is in who God is and what God does in and through his people.

And then Paul continues. He says, "I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power."<sup>5</sup> I want you to get it. I want you to know how incredibly powerful God is. How many of you noticed that I stopped too soon? It's not just that you'll understand the incredible greatness of God's power, but that you'll understand the incredible greatness of God's power *for us* who believe in him. Again the power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that is at work in and through God's people as we believe in him. He is at work in and through us. He is accomplishing his will often through his people, through us.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 28:18

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:34, 1 Peter 3:22, Hebrews 10:12, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 1:17 (Christian Standard Bible)

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 1:19

In my family, I've told you before that I grew up in an alcoholic home and I'm the youngest of three boys, but there was a fairly simple process that I picked up on very early. If you wanted to win an argument in our house, you only had to do two things. Yell the loudest the longest. That's good because I was stubborn. Unless my brothers made me cry, then I was different. How do we discern and recognize the power of God at work in our midst? How do we allow God to use us to make that power known in our lives and our families and our communities and world? One of the problems is that we think of ourselves as individuals. We're so aware of our inabilities. While I was going to youth group four and five nights a week, my brothers were fixing things. Are you picking this up? Do you realize what I'm saying? I don't know how to fix things very well. So often, I'll call my brother and I'll say, "Hey, this is going on. I'm going to try to fix it" and his answer is "Well, you could try to fix it, but then it will cost you more for the person who has to come and fix your mistake as well as fix it. So maybe you should just call for help." "I don't need any help! Until I need help." Many of you haven't met Bill Reichard yet, but he's one of the guys I call for help. He can fix anything. Sorry for all the phone calls you are going to get - my fault.

Here's the point. We think about me and Jesus and we think about what God can do in and through us and we only think about what *I* can do and we forget about what *we* can do. We forget about the fact that the power of God is at work in the midst of community. We can do more with the support of those around us. We could do more by combining our gifts. We are so fortunate here at St Tim's. We've got a great leadership team in place. They have great heart. They have great wisdom and they empower us, to elevate our thinking to a better solution than the one that we started with, with limited understanding to now have this great influence. Brothers and sisters in Christ, when we choose to just do it ourselves, we rob people of the joy of God being able to work through them to bless us. We need you to open up our understanding and realize that a part of the power of God that is at work in our lives is happening in the people he surrounds us with, in their wisdom, in their abilities, in their gifts. When we try to do it on our own, we hurt the community and we do what we do with far less power.

Then there's the power of prayer. We ask God to get involved. We share with God our concerns and our hopes and our dreams. When I was young in my faith, I thought that that was just basically about me telling God what I wanted or me telling God what I was concerned about. But as I've grown in my faith and as I've grown in my walk, I've discovered that often what happens in prayer is God gives me a new perspective. God also in prayer, gives me a peace and elevates my thinking and, quite frankly, brings other people to mind who can weigh in, so that it's better. What I'm trying to say is sometimes God answers my prayer by changing my thinking.

Now, remember I told you I believe in miracles. Because sometimes God just does it. That's awesome. But you know what else is awesome? Being a part of the body, having friends come alongside you and got your back, and help you out, and say "no problem, happy to do it." God is at work in our midst and hopefully, in prayer, he brings to mind not only the truth of his thinking, of his priorities, of his values, but who he has surrounded us with, who can bring an answer to that request that we bring in prayer.

And then there's the power of hope. I'm the youngest of three. When my middle brother graduated from high school, the next morning we couldn't wake him up. To this day,

we are not sure whether that was an intentional overdose or an accidental one. He won't say. He did make it, but it ripped my heart out. It shattered my world. It was worse than any earthquake I've been through, and I've been through some big ones, because I realized my brother was hopeless. And hopelessness is devastating. The power of hope, the confidence that even if we can't see what is to come, God is at work is amazing.

Now I want to tell you something amazing. It's about the ability God has given me to see the future. No matter how much planning I do. No matter how hard I try to envision what's going to happen, the amount of times that's actually come into being the way I saw it in my mind's eye is nada. Not even once. Oh, I mean I've been close and I've even had the audacity sometimes to say "See? I told you so!" because it's close enough that other people don't know that I was wrong because I was. Do you know what I'm saying? I was general enough to paint the pictures and they all will say he said it. We don't know the future and not only should that not discourage us, but it should remind us that the God we serve does know the future. The future is in God's hands.

I was reading something this week that said, "not only walk by the spirit, but keep in step with the spirit." Allow God to be the one that's guiding us into the future. And sometimes, he'll make a turn on you. He's done it to me a few times. Most of the time I haven't liked it, but I've seen it. I've made the transition. I've given up my hope for this and refocused my hope for that. Because you know what's the amazing thing here is that God's future is better than our envisioned future. So we can have this power of hopeful anticipation. We can believe in what God can and will do not because we know it precisely but because we know it's imprecisely. We can live in the power of God's presence. Jesus said to his disciples, "All authority has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them."<sup>6</sup> And then he says, "And remember, that I am with you always, even to the ends of the Earth." When he's with us, it means his power is with us. It means we're not going alone. He did it for David. He did it for Joshua. He did it for the disciples. He does it for his church. Remember, the kingdom of God is wherever Jesus is the one in authority, which means anywhere you go, he goes with you. And his power, it even raised Jesus from the dead, is at work in and through us to accomplish his will.

I apologized to Marilyn at first service, sort of jokingly but nonetheless, because I just can't help but bring my favorite verse into the conclusion of this sermon. Because Paul has another prayer in Ephesians for that church in Ephesus and he says this. "Now to him who is able to do in measurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is [where?] at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever."<sup>7</sup> That's how that prayer ends.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, God's power is here. We do not need to be discouraged. We can be strong and courageous as we walk in the spirit, as we dream and imagine what God might do, and are overwhelmed by what God actually does. For God so loved the world, that he sent us to tell them about his son, so that we can live in peace and hope and in the power of God at work in our lives. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 28:18-19

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 3:20-21