



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

May 24, 2015

"His Great Power" (WORTHY Sermon Series)

The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

Eph. 1:15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason

Eph. 1:16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

Eph. 1:17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know Him,

Eph. 1:18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance among the saints,

Eph. 1:19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power for us who believe, according to the working of His great power.

Eph. 1:20 God put this power to work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Eph. 1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

Eph. 1:22 And He has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the church,

Eph. 1:23 which is His body, the

fullness of Him who fills all in all.

We continue on our new sermon series called WORTHY, which is a study through the book of Ephesians. Through this sermon series, we will learn how we are to live a life worthy of our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

In our Bible passage today, the Apostle Paul is writing to a new church plant in the city of Ephesus. Think of this. What would you want a new church to know? In our text today, Paul wanted them to know of God's GREAT power. And this is what I want to talk about today—how you and I can have God's great power. Not just power, not just God's power, but God's GREAT power.

We all need power in our lives. We may be here today physically tired or spiritually tired. We may be relationally tired or tired from working with colleagues or a boss, tired relating with relatives or a neighbor, tired fighting an illness or caring for a loved one. Tired from helping others, or tired from thinking about people we need to forgive.

And maybe some of us today are depleted, feeling down, in despair, and we need power, not just any power but God's great power. Power to do the right thing. Power to forgive, to serve, or to survive.

Our Scripture passage for today starts off with a very pastoral note from the apostle Paul. He cares

about these people he's writing to. Notice Paul says in verses 17-19 that he wants God to give them wisdom, understanding, to have their eyes enlightened, to have hope, and to access the RICHES of what it means to follow Christ.

And when we read that, we might say, "I want that! I want, I need wisdom and understanding of life. I want my eyes enlightened to grab hold of the riches of what God wants me to have."

So how do we access all of that? Paul's says the answer is God's power! His great power. Paul uses the word power in our text four times. Know that when he wrote this passage in Greek, he used the word "dunamis," which translates to the word "power," which is also the root of the English word "dynamite." So you see, Paul is not talking about a little firecracker. He's referring to God's power that's as powerful as a stick of dynamite.

Let's go back to our Scripture, particularly over what Paul wrote in verse 17-21:

Eph. 1:17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know Him,

Eph. 1:18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance among the saints,

Eph. 1:19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of His POWER for us who believe, according to the working of His GREAT POWER.

Eph. 1:20 God put this POWER to work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Eph. 1:21 far above all rule and authority and POWER and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

If you are taking notes, watching this on TV or on the web, or maybe on our church app, know that there are four points of power I want to talk about today:

- 1) The Power of God's Word
- 2) The Power of Christ
- 3) The Power of the Holy Spirit
- 4) The Power of Prayer

Each of these can make a dramatic dynamite difference in our daily lives, if we but access them. First of all,

1) The Power of God's Word

An elderly woman had just returned to her home after attending a church evening service. When she opened her door and walked in, she was shocked to see an intruder. She had caught a man in the act of robbing her home! So she started to scream at the top of lungs, "Stop! Acts 2:38! Acts 2:38!"

She had yelled out a scripture reference to Acts 2:38 which says, "Repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins may be forgiven."

The burglar stopped in his tracks. He just froze. The woman then calmly called the police and explained what she had done. Within minutes,

the police arrived. An officer who handcuffed the burglar asked him, "Why did you just stand there? All the old lady did was yell a Scripture verse to you—Acts 2:38."

"Scripture?" replied the burglar. "What Scripture? Though she said she had an ax and two 38's!"

This joke was brought to you by the N-R-A. A First Prez member sent me that joke, but I promised Sonny Vivas I wouldn't share his name, or did I?

Anyway, in that crazy joke, we see the power of the Word of God. When we decide to make the hard disciplined choice to read the Bible regularly, there is tremendous power in God's word. God's truths seep into our lives, our souls. His perspective on life and relationships start soaking in, and we feel empowered to make changes in our lives. We know the why and the what.

We should read the entire Bible. Yes, seriously. There are many read-the-entire-Bible-in-a-year programs that you can do. You can buy devotionals, or you can use apps. Like the YouVersion app. The YouVersion app has numerous Bible-In-A-Year reading programs, some chronological, others thematic, but all of them get you through the entire Bible by the end of a year.

Hear this: You are going to be living for another year anyway, so why not be able to say a year from now, "I've read the whole Bible!"

But don't just read it like a book, read the Bible prayerfully. Ask God to show you what He wants you to learn. When you do that, you'll be able to say, "Now I get it. Now I understand Jesus more. I understand life better, and I see the power of God more in my life!"

There's a Bible in A Year

program on our own First Prez church app. Even the Alpha Course, which the majority of us have taken, has an app with a daily reading of the Bible, and short devotionals written by Nicky Gumbel, the pastor of Holy Trinity Brompton, and his wife, Pippa. Holy Trinity Brompton is in London where the Alpha Course started. Their Bible reading app is called: B-I-O-Y. Clever name for an app, isn't it? B-I-O-Y, Bible In One Year.

I highly recommend it for your phone, or iPad. You can have it with you at work, on the bus, at home, school, wherever! In fact, I am reading and using it now. It has a passage from the Psalms, and a passage from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament.

For today, it is on Psalm 66, the Old Testament passage is in 1 Samuel leading up to David the Shepherd boy, while the New Testament passage is from the Gospel of John.

The way it works is you read a passage and then read the devotional that the Gumbels wrote and then there is a little written prayer to say at the end. "It's Brilliant," as the Brits would say! The rhythm is: You read the Psalm, then a devotional, read from the Old Testament, then a devotional, then read from the New Testament, then a devotional. In one year you will have read the entire Bible! That's amazing, fantastic, phenomenal!

But just the information or the Bible knowledge is not enough. So first, is the power of God's Word. Now let's talk about the second point:

2. The Power of Christ

What did our text say? "*God put this power to work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.*" (Eph 1:20)

If God's power can raise Christ from the dead, surely this power is amazing! There is a resurrection power that surges through from Christ. God's power put Jesus at God's right hand, the most honored and the most powerful position in terms of a King. So Christ now has authority over all things and kings, all things in heaven and on earth, in the spiritual realm and the physical realm.

With the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in us, we can do amazing things, where even the demons leave. With the power of Christ, we have seen the authority of Christ be made known in people's homes where dark spirits have harassed families.

People have come to the pastoral staff and asked for help against demons that are supernaturally bothering their homes and offices – where beds shake at night, where bedrooms are freezing cold, where doors slam when there is no wind, where footsteps are heard at night even when no one visible is walking, where figures with evil faces, show up in their homes, where women feel oppressed by an invisible figure on top of them at night, where people see or sense ghosts.

And in 100% of the cases, when we have prayed with the authority of Jesus Christ, the disturbances end—100% of the time! If you pray in the name of Jesus, the spirits leave. You can do that on your own. It's a lot more powerful than just yelling Acts 2:38!

For all of the cases where the family really wanted the evil spirits to leave and had asked Jesus for help, the evil spirits left. Why? Because Jesus has the power over evil spirits. It is also the power of Jesus that heals people in our church – miraculously.

Now you may be thinking, "What is this? A Pentecostal church? I

thought it was Presbyterian?"

No, we are Presbycostal! I coined that word several years ago! We take the Bible seriously, therefore, we literally believe in the Holy Spirit, the Father, the Son, in spiritual gifts AND the supernatural, miraculous POWER of God. We are not a fuddy-duddy traditional church. We are one that sees God on the move and doing miraculous healings.

And yes, we believe that Satan and demons are real, but we believe Jesus' power and authority is greater than they are. Greater is He, Jesus, who is in you, than he, Satan, who is in the world says a book in the Bible called 1 John 4.

Today is Pentecost Sunday, which, in church tradition, is 50 days after Easter. It is the day that churches all over the world remember the day that the Holy Spirit came powerfully upon the original apostles and filled them with God's Spirit.

So to recap, my first point was the Power of the Word. Then we talked about the Power of Christ. Now let's talk about the 3rd point—The Power of the Holy Spirit.

3) The Power of the Holy Spirit

With knowledge of the God's word coupled with the Holy Spirit, there is great power.

The Holy Spirit is too often the anonymous or the overlooked one of the Trinity. Many get the Father God and Jesus the Son, but the Holy Spirit is a mystery to many people.

When something is a mystery to people, they will most likely not access it. But by not accessing the Holy Spirit, we miss out on supernatural power – the power of loving the unlovable, the power of forgiving those difficult to forgive, the power to do the right thing, the power to shun temptation, or the

power to not give up.

In today's BIOY – Alpha's Bible-in-One-Year, it speaks of how Bishop Festo Kivengere fled Uganda in fear for his life in 1977 when Idi Amin killed the Archbishop Janani Luwum who, with Kivengere, delivered a letter of protest to Amin. Later, Kivengere wrote a book called *I Love Idi Amin*. In the book he explained the unusual title, writing:

"The Holy Spirit showed me that I was getting hard in my spirit...so I had to ask for forgiveness from the Lord, and for grace to LOVE President Amin more...this was fresh air for my tired soul. I knew I had seen the Lord and been released: love filled my heart."

That is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes in his letter to another church plant – the church of Rome— that we can either live by our own power or in the flesh, meaning the way of the world, or we can choose to live in the Spirit. Here is what he said to the Romans:

Rom. 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Rom. 8:6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

There you have it – death and life – that's our choice. We can and must choose to set our minds on the Spirit and obey God to have true life. Many of us at times have chosen the ways of the world, and we have felt like dead because of our bad choices. But Paul says we can choose to live by the Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that amazing, supernatural things happen. When we pray we have power to withstand temptation.

We have power to overcome addictions. We have power to heal. We have power to endure in the midst of suffering and difficulty that maybe even God has asked us to walk through.

Many, many Christians live life on their own human power and not through the Holy Spirit. Many feel blah and think – is this all there is to being a Christian? No pizzazz, no excitement in life or in ministry, no surge, no power to be motivated to do anything. Those are possible signs that we are not living in the Spirit. We feel that something is missing.

So you ask, “Dan, how DO WE live in the Holy Spirit?” Good question. Glad you asked. First of all, know that the Holy Spirit is personal and loving. The Bible refers to the Spirit as He, not it. This doesn’t mean He is more male than female, but it does mean He is personal.... the entire Trinity is personal and relational. It’s not a cosmic energy force. And it’s not a ghost, as an old translation of the Bible would call Him that.

The fact that God is a Trinity shows that God is always in community: Father, Son, Spirit, relational, three in one. We all need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. To start a life in the Spirit is simple – **Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.**

Be open to His Spirit. If you want power, ask God to fill you up with His Holy Spirit. Ask the Spirit to fill you. “Why should I?” you ask. Simply because we leak. We leak all the time. Our sin or inattentiveness or apathy towards God, makes us leak.

Ask often to be filled with the Holy Spirit as we need to continually be filled. Just as a balloon loses air, we lose the power of the Holy Spirit over time as we sin and yield to temptations. We should aim for

having bigger faith and more filling of the Spirit.

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit entered into you. You could not have accepted Christ without the Holy Spirit enabling you to do so. But for many, the Spirit is treated like a pilot light. It’s always there, yet always small. Now and then the light might get big but then it goes back to being small, sometimes barely a flicker. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to make sure that the flame is not a pilot light but something that is always burning and raging inside of us like a roaring log fire.

It is the Holy Spirit that gives us spiritual gifts and empowers our gifts whether it is teaching or giving or caring or leading or serving or evangelizing. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it is not just for our benefit, it is for service to help do God’s will.

It is the Spirit that gives us the language of tongues—a supernatural language that comes in handy for prayer. It is the Spirit that allows us to fight back Satan and his demons. It is the Spirit who works through us to miraculously heal people. It is the Spirit who sometimes allows us to foresee something that can help another person.

Now you may be sitting here thinking, “I kinda get it, Dan, but give me another way to look at it.”

Okay, I hear you. How’s this? Being open to the Holy Spirit is to be more consciously aware of His presence. If we walk through a grassy park with our shoes off, I can tell you to walk in the grass, or I can say, walk in the grass but this time be more present. Be aware of how the grass feels. Is it soft, damp, does it tickle, does it feel refreshing? How does it feel between your toes and on the balls of your feet? Look at how the grass blows in the wind.

You can just walk, like just walk in the flesh, like normal, or you can walk in the Spirit and be HIGHLY attentive to God’s presence. We appreciate it more if we think about it more. Think of the Spirit, dwell on it, and you will see Him more. You can just eat food and wolf it down OR appreciate eating the food, savor it slowly, and be truly present.

So being open to the Holy Spirit makes you appreciate Him more. We have to be present, in tune with Him. You can walk into a room filled with people, but unless you are present, you will not appreciate the people and the event won’t mean anything to you.

Supernaturally when we ask the Spirit to fill us, we become attuned to God’s goodness. We are more attentive to His presence, which is really good for those of us who are always rushing around, with our heads down in our smart phones or being engulfed in stress. Why do we need to pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit? Because as I said, we leak. Spiritually, we leak. We need refilling.

I have been reading about Ignatian Prayer. There are five steps to it, steps designed by a man named Ignatius Loyola, the man after whom universities are named all over the world, the man under whom the Jesuits were founded. Here are the Five Steps of the Daily Examen or curriculum of Ignatius Loyola who was eventually made a saint by the Catholic Church.

- Become aware of God’s presence.
- Review the day with gratitude.
- Pay attention to your emotions.
- Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
- Look toward tomorrow.

Begin a powerful life by just been alert, attentive. Be aware of God's presence. Look for God in every day life. And number two, one of the best ways to see God at work in your life is to daily, daily make a list of all of the good things have happened this week. Number three, be aware of your emotions. Why are you angry, fearful mad, peaceful, stressful or joyful now.

4) The Power of Prayer

We cannot have power in this life if we don't pray. It is by prayer—communicating with God on a continual basis—that our relationship with Him grows and that actually the Holy Spirit becomes more active in us.

Prayer is like gasoline in a car or the oil in a machine. It empowers us and maintains and lubricates our lives. Prayer asks God to be more involved in our lives. Prayer asks God to help us see the need in this world where it might need our service and then we ask for God to empower us.

Prayer continually says, "Come Holy Spirit" which is one of the most ancient of prayers in Latin – Veni Sancte Spiritus = Come Holy Spirit.

When we pray, we hear God's voice. If we don't pray, then why do we complain that we don't feel God? If we don't communicate, there is no relationship with God and there is no power.

The people in the Bible who had power were always talking to God – Moses, Daniel, King David, Peter, Paul, Mary, and that's not the 1960's singing group.

We must pray and pray often for the Spirit. And sometimes, it is helpful like when we are sick to have others pray for us to be filled more with the Spirit. When Paul was in

Ephesus, the city of which this text is based, we know that this episode happened as mentioned in a chronicle of Paul's life called the Book of Acts. Here is what it says in the 19th chapter of that book:

Acts 19:1 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples.

Acts 19:2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

Acts 19:3 Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism."

Acts 19:4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus."

Acts 19:5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:6 When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—

Acts 19:7 altogether there were about twelve of them.

And so as I end this sermon, why don't we have a season of prayer. First I am going to encourage you to pray silently that you be open to be filled with the Holy Spirit and ask for the Spirit to fill you. With your hands extended out, and palms up, I'll have you pray on your own a time of silence for you to pray. And then, I am going to do a mass prayer for the filling of the Holy Spirit for all of you on this special day of Pentecost.

And during the last song, I

am going to ask those who want prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit to come forward. We will pray for you to be filled. It is the community praying for its own.

Some of us might be feeling a little empty, like our pilot light is low. Then come, come forward at the end of my prayer, and our prayer team will pray for you individually with our hands laid on you to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have more strength to live in ways WORTHY of our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

Whenever I travel, and a church says come forward for prayer – I ALWAYS GO FORWARD, as I recently did in London when asked if I wanted to be more filled with the Spirit. So I encourage you to do so today, but first let me lead you in prayer for you all.

Let's pray.