

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 31 Oct 2021

Sermon Title : Power

Speaker : Rev John Foo

Text : Luke 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION

Different people view power differently. Some see it in physical strength while others see it in perceived power derived from a certain authority based on a position or appointment. Still others may look at power as the ability to influence others or accumulate knowledge because to them, knowledge is power, and of course there are many more other views. As we study the scripture text on Power today, we will look at our relationship with God bearing this question in mind, "How do I turn around from my own sense of power to the power of God?", and look for two hindrances and one help that may help turn us back to God and His power.

Context (Luke 5:1-11)

Of the 4 gospel accounts, only Luke recorded this incident. Luke 4:42 highlights that the crowds followed Jesus and even intended to hold Him back so that they could continue to listen to Jesus speak and perform miracles. So, here in chapter 5, the crowd must have also been jostling to get near to Jesus and that is why in verse 3, Jesus got into a boat to get away from the crowd in order to teach them. It was a vantage point for the crowd to be able to see Jesus in the boat and for Jesus to teach them without any disturbance. But an added reason for Jesus getting Simon to bring Him out in the boat was for Him to instruct Simon to fish again by casting his net in the deep water right after His teaching (v.4), and this was the trip that gave Simon and his fishing partners such a huge catch of fish that their boats nearly sank.

First Hindrance: Inconvenience

When Jesus first came to Simon and the rest of the fishermen they were already washing their nets, having possibly spent the entire night fishing. They were done with work and were likely to be tired. Jesus stepped in and interrupted their rest by asking them to go out to the deep waters to fish again, essentially asking them to go back to work. This would have been a great inconvenience for them. Simon had a choice to follow Jesus or not because of the inconvenience. Besides, he could justify himself as he was the expert and he would know better how things work.

Had Simon not listened to Jesus, he would have missed out on the biggest catch of his entire life.

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

How is this hindrance preventing us from turning to the power of God in our lives?

In our society, we like everything to be convenient for ourselves and sometimes this creeps into our faith; that we will believe and respond in our faith only as long as it is convenient and favourable to us. However, that is not how Jesus works:

- It is often during those times when Jesus calls us out of our comfort zone, when He puts us to do things that are highly inconvenient, that we see the power of God at work in our lives.

As long as we choose to live our faith according to our convenience, we will never turn to His power.

Second Hindrance: Human Wisdom

We all have human wisdom to different extent. Some bible commentators noted that human wisdom from the collective knowledge, gathered experience and familiarity with the lake and the fishing conditions of fishermen would go against fishing in the deep waters during the daytime in Jesus' time. This would be deemed irrational from Simon's professional viewpoint as they will not catch any fish in broad daylight. Hence, Simon emphasized in verse 5 that they had spent all night fishing. Surely Simon should know better as he and the other fishermen had been fishing almost their entire lives – it made no sense for Jesus, a carpenter, to tell Simon, a professional fisherman, how and where to fish.

Sometimes this is the way we behave when we relate to God. We think we know better what is good for ourselves and for others and it shows in the way we pray when we tell God what to do by accessing the situation with our human wisdom and our own understanding of what is going on. Today's story reminds us that:

- "...God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom..." (1 Corinthians 1:25)
Unfortunately, we will still choose human wisdom over God's wisdom.
- It is in God's wisdom that the power of God resides.

If we do not lean on His wisdom for our living, we will not get God's power in our living.

Why do we resist going to the wisdom of God?

We tend to engage our faith on a rational level by reasoning out what God wants us to do in His word. In the interaction between Simon and Jesus, Simon was engaging Jesus on a professional level based on his knowledge. Likewise, we may find ourselves spending time to rationalize what God is saying in His Word rather than believing and acting on it. This may lead us to dismiss God's Word if it is not aligned with the limited understanding of our human reasoning.

But Jesus was engaging Simon on a faith level. A level that will demand faith and obedience from Simon and the rest of the fishermen, almost like Jesus was posing

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

this question to Simon, “Do you Simon believe in what I am telling you to do, that despite all your professional knowledge and expertise, all your practice in your fishing trade that there is something more that I know and I can do?”

- Most of the time when Jesus tells us to do something it is always on the faith level
- The challenge is not if we understand but whether we will believe and act what He tells us to do.
- We do not tell God we do not understand therefore we do not do.

This hindrance can stop us from turning around to lean on God’s wisdom and power.

One Help: A Sense Of Own Sinfulness

We do not wish to talk about how sinful or how big a failure we are. But when Simon saw the big haul of fish in the net and the boat sinking, he fell at Jesus' knees saying, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” Simon saw himself as a complete sinner unworthy of being associated with Jesus. Isaiah similarly expressed in Isaiah 6:5 that "... I am a sinful man...". Simon's reaction shows that he probably had a glimpse of who Jesus was by the immense power that Jesus displayed over the catch of fish. As a result, Simon could not stand in the presence of Jesus and asked Him to go away from him.

On the contrary, we come into the presence of the Almighty without sensing our own unworthiness, sinfulness and desperate need for God's grace, mercy and forgiveness. Though we are not to humiliate ourselves and be reminded that we are infinitely valued and treasured by God, and that was the reason why God sent His Son to die for our sins when we were yet sinners, so we can come into His presence,

- Yet, being aware of our own sinfulness helps us to appreciate and cherish His love and forgiveness even more.
- Jesus saw in Simon a posture of humility, a conviction of his own sinfulness and the need for restoration of his being and asked Simon to follow Him. (v.10b) Similarly, when we see our own sinfulness, Jesus will tell us to come to Him for the grace, forgiveness, cleansing and redemption from our sins.

How to see the power of God in the community of faith

This posture of Simon and the sense of His own sinfulness is so critical for us as a Christian community:

- When we are aware of our own sinfulness, it gives us the freedom to admit that we are sinners. We no longer have to hide behind a mask in pretense to one another. We can live a life where we know that we are all sinners saved by God's grace.

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

- Knowing our own sinfulness makes us crave for God's presence even more; that we want to go back to God and depend on Him even more.
- We can come to God as we are rather than using our works or sacrifice to justify being in the presence of God.
- We would be able to receive any person into our midst without judging them when we recognize our own sinfulness, that we are not better than a seeker or anybody else. We can then welcome and embrace anyone who comes into our midst.

When everyone of us recognizes who we truly are, then our community will become a more gracious, welcoming, accepting and forgiving community, in doing so our community will become more Christ-like.

CONCLUSION

Let us as individuals and a faith community, adopt a posture of humility by recognizing our own sinfulness. Let us also not seek our own convenience or rely on our human wisdom, but seek God's wisdom through His word and obey in faith, even when it is inconvenient or seems irrational, so we may get His power in our living to become more like Christ.

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Luke 5:1-11 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?
- b. As God's word was read, what is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "Power"?
- c. How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. How has the following hindered you from turning to God?
 - (i) Inconvenience
 - (ii) Human wisdom
- 2b. How can recognizing your sinfulness help you overcome the hindrances of inconvenience and human wisdom, and turn back to God?
- 2c. Discuss what recognizing your sinful nature despite being a chosen people whose sin has been washed clean by the blood of Christ mean to you. How should this change the way you pray and treat one another?
- 3a. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the least and 10 the most, how much do you experience God's power in your living?
- 3b. What is one thing you can do, or turnaround from, to allow God's power to work more in your life?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b above for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how the Holy Spirit led you to obey God's instruction by faith even when it was inconvenient or irrational to you, and it resulted in your witnessing God's immense power.

OR

Give thanks to Jesus for washing away our sins so we can enter into His presence despite our sinful nature, and get a glimpse of His power.

5. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 3b and 3c to God asking for the Holy Spirit to reveal the hindrances that are preventing you from turning to God's power and commit to turnaround with His help.

As a group, pray for our church that we may as individuals and a community, recognize our sinfulness so that we may turn to God and experience His full presence and power in our midst and living.

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