

Power: Church and Spiritual Authority

Matthew 18

Children's Message

One of the greatest miracles is the feeding of the 5000.

Who showed extraordinary power that day of course was Jesus, but there was one other person.

It was the boy who gave away his lunch.

He didn't ask for recognition.

He just saw what needed to be done and did it.

Humility is about doing good without needing to look good.

Some people are more interested in looking good than being good.

Power: Church and Spiritual Authority

Matthew 18

I am going to say something terrible but something true about the church.

The Visible Church has done things that are damnable in the eyes of God
and brought misery, oppression and terror to millions of people throughout time.

The church in its multiple forms whether by sect, denomination or aberrant cult
has grossly misrepresented Christ and will sit under his judgment.

Individuals that have laid claim to representing Christ on earth have done anything but
and at times have been a better representation of the devil than of our Lord.

HOWEVER - and this is very important "however"

God has always seen to it that there is a remnant of his people who in their character represent him well
enough

for the message of his kingdom and the invitation of heaven to be heard throughout all the ages.

AND - and this is a very important "and"

We want to be found among the true remnant rather than among the pretenders to the kingdom.

But it is not something we should ever assume, lest we be consumed by hubris.

Hubris is spiritual pride that blinds us to our own faults and see only the faults of others.

How then do we counteract this insidious darkness over our souls?

Last week Pastor Diana spoke of how David was the underdog.

How God's power is revealed in weakness.

But what happens when we become the strong, the accomplished, the powerful?

David began as a shepherd but in time, by the grace of God, became king.

Rags to riches, the triumph of the underdog.

The humble becomes exalted.

But what happens when we rise?
David becomes King and lazy.
He covets and takes what he wants for his own greed and lust.
He commits adultery and murder.
He has become Goliath.
He has become the ruler and the maker of rules.

And so this also has been the way of the church in history.
Founded on the teaching of Jesus and the Power of the Holy Spirit.
Secret, humble, persecuted it became influential, powerful, wealthy.
It became an empire and that empire ruled the very souls of every person in the western world.
We became a Giant.
And we must return to the ways of a shepherd.
But How?
Where does the true authority of the church lie?
What is the wellspring of spiritual power?
For if we emulate the way of the world, we corrupt ourselves.
What is the way of Jesus?
The way of the remnant?

The Foundational Power of Humility

Do not lord it over others
The first will be last
You do not understand now what I am doing

Mark 10:35-45

³⁵ *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."*

³⁶ *"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.*

³⁷ *They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*

³⁸ *"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"*

³⁹ *"We can," they answered.*

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

⁴¹ *When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.⁴² Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

The Power of Confession

The purpose of our lives is not to gain power so we can become great in the eyes of others.

Our purpose, before God and people is not greatness, but goodness.

This is not to say we eschew excellence or the power that we garner
by nature of the gifts and accomplishments God allows.

But it is what we do with our influence, knowledge, position and expertise that matters.

In other words, competency is great but goodness is greater.

I know there is a book named from good to great, but there is nothing greater than goodness in the Kingdom.

The power of bearing witness, being a living testament of the goodness and reality of God.

Eg. Pope Francis - Red papal shoes, gone. Excommunication of the mafia. Love for the poor and downtrodden.

In his years in and out of Rome, he became friends with the pastor of a Pentecostal church in Rome. In time, he came to learn that the church and pastor felt the power and presence of the Catholic Church . . . obstructing their desire to grow and be a witness. "So," he said, "this July I will preach in his church on a Sunday and offer an apology from my church for the hurt it has brought to their congregation." (Brian Stiller, "My Lunch with the Pope" July 10, 2014 - churchforvancouver.ca)

But this is true not only of the pope but of you.

And you know what the power of your testimony is?

That you are imperfect, that you are a sinner and that you are loved.

And that love, the love of God is changing you from what you were to what you are becoming.

It is always a confession of our need for God.

It is a testimony not of your own goodness, but the goodness and the power of God.

This is why in every relationship at some point in your life you speak his name.

I know we stray.

But do we come back?

What areas of power do you inhabit?

What can you do with what powers you have?

As a sibling, as a craftsman, as a teacher, as a sister, as a student, as a grandparent, as a friend, as a manager?

These are positions you have been given.

Who can you love and bear witness to?

The Empowering Power of Invitation

Moses (in Deuteronomy): "Today I lay the choice before you to serve God or not."

Jesus: "Come follow me," and "Come and see," and

"Go make disciples of all nations and I will be with you to the end of the age."

Jesus has told us that what we have loosed on Heaven and earth

The power of invitation vs the power of coercion

To make disciples, to love others, not control them.

To invite someone is to place your trust in them.

Not to lay a trap because the person you trap is yourself.

A true invitation has hope but no fear or anxiety.

It has the humility and strength to let the other remain other.

Whatever happened to the Shepherd boy who became a adulterous and murderous King?

A friend and prophet named Nathan told him a story.

And when David passed judgment on the antagonist, Nathan revealed that the antagonist was David.

And in that moment, David was faced with a choice.

Ignore or kill Nathan, or confess and come clean.

This wasn't David's last sin nor was this his last confession.

But he was indeed loved by God who kept inviting him back.

So what are some ways we can lay an invitation before others?

Invitation to friendship.

Invitation to holiness.

Invitation to confession.

Invitation to forgiveness.

What words can you use to encourage and to bless?

Who are you to lay an invitation before?

Communion

What is your confession?