

Sermon Title: "Power from Another Place" 11/15/20

Biblical Passage: Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:6-8

Passage Background and Summary

In the passage in Luke, Jesus appears to his disciples following his death and resurrection. He wanted to remind them of what he told them about his death and resurrection. In Jesus' death and resurrection, the law, the prophets, and the psalms were fulfilled, and with it, "repentance and forgiveness of sins" would be "proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." They are "witnesses" to all of this. Furthermore, while Jesus will no longer be with them, he is sending them "power from on high" in the form of the Holy Spirit. The scriptures in Acts continue in this narrative. Prior to his ascension, they continue to speak with Jesus. They ask him about the time when the Kingdom of Israel will be restored as they understand Jesus's life, death, and resurrection as political as well as spiritual. Jesus responds, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Again, there is the theme of the disciples being called to be witnesses in all the earth and of them receiving power with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Sermon Points

At times in our life, we encounter situations that make us feel powerless. That is likely how the disciples felt following Jesus' death. They had left their livelihoods and loved ones to follow Jesus, and Jesus was lynched on a tree. They may have felt like God had forsaken them and abandoned them. In some ways, the one they had faith in seemed powerless. The truth is that all of us need power - economic, political, personal, emotional, and spiritual. We need power to make it through this world as well as a gospel and savior who knows something about power. When Jesus came on the scene, he showed up with power. He is not a mild and meek Jesus. He came in the Spirit and in power. The most common Greek work for power is *dunamis*. It is where we get our word dynamite. Jesus exploded on the scene. As his followers, we should be blowing up the scene in a good way. Jesus had power, and he knew how to negotiate power. Yet, in the moment, it felt like evil had triumphed over good. The disciples wonder how long they will have to deal with suffering and injustices – we may be wondering the same thing today. How long will we have to contend with police brutality, deal with oppression, be lonely, watch the rich get richer and poor get poorer, walk through depression, go without food, etc. We feel powerless in an evil world, but Jesus says to them and to us, "That's not for you to know. No one knows the time or the seasons that the Father has set for his authority." In other words, God shows up when you least expect and moves through those you've overlooked to do things you never imagined. Jesus says, I'm leaving, but I leave you power.

YOU WILL HAVE POWER:

- **Power in the Church**
- **Power in the Community**
- **Power in the World**

You have power in the church. God is trying to do a new thing in the church, but sometimes the folk in the church are so caught up in power games that they miss the move of God. Maybe God has ushered us into this virtual space to confront the ways we've made things into idols. We felt that in order for it to be

church we have to do this or that. This moment has reminded us that the only thing that really matters is the Spirit of the living God. You can have a beautiful building but no power.

If there is power in the church, those in the community should know it. For example, those with addiction should be introduced to a spirit that can break addiction. They will know that we are Christians by our love and the generosity of our giving.

If there's power in the church, the world ought to know it. He says "you will be my witnesses until the end of the earth." God has not left us alone. There is so much being thrown at us that we may feel like we have been forgotten. We have a global pandemic, economic turndown, chaos in government. There is so much swirling all around us.

It's like double-dutch or Muhammad Ali's rope-a-dope. As it relates to double-dutch, sometimes we have to stand in place and sway, calling on the one who can help us once we get in the fray, God. It's all about timing, and we will discover there is a space of grace in between the ropes. In between our weakness and God's call. If we wait on the Lord, the Lord will show us when and how to get in the fray. We'll avoid the rope and discover we have more power than we realized we had. To address it another way, it's like Muhammad Ali's rope-a-dope. In the move, one would take on the fire of the adversary and take a defensive posture. One would lean back on the rope, and the adversary would think they were about to be defeated, but much of the energy from the punch was being absorbed by the elasticity of the ropes upon which Muhammad Ali was leaning. Muhammad Ali was leaning on something stronger than him. If you feel like life is sending you blows and hits you can't see through, lean on the elasticity of the eternal. Lean back into something stronger than yourself. In due time, you will come back swinging. "Not by power, not by might, but by my Spirit says the Lord." When there is power in the Church, you'll see it in the world, even to the ends of the earth.

Reflection Questions

1. Share a time when you felt like God had abandoned or forsaken you.
2. When have you ever felt that you were powerless? What did you do to get through it?
3. Can you recall a time where God showed up in an unexpected way or through an unexpected person? If so, what did that feel like, what did you do?
4. What does it look like for the church to have power in this time?
5. What are some of the ways you have seen the church at work in the community during this pandemic?
6. What can we allow this pandemic to teach us about God and power?