

Introduction

Jesus does great deeds of power and gives his disciples authority over demons. Yet none of this power is unilateral; it all must be received by faith. Jesus asks his disciples to go out without money or supplies, so that they will be dependent on how others receive them. When we are sent from the assembly to witness and to heal, we are asked to be vulnerable, to be dependent on the reception of others. The Spirit always operates in the “between”: between Jesus and his Abba, between Jesus and us, between you and me, between us and those to whom we are sent.

Prayer of the Day

God of the covenant, in our baptism you call us to proclaim the coming of your kingdom. Give us the courage you gave the apostles, that we may faithfully witness to your love and peace in every circumstance of life, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

Already king over Judah, the southern kingdom, David here is anointed king over Israel, the northern kingdom, as well. Captured by David, Jerusalem is chosen as the political and religious center for the new combined territory. It is known ever after as “the city of David.”

¹All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, “Look, we are your bone and flesh.

²For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in.

The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be

ruler over Israel.” ³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David

made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over

Israel. ⁴David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. ⁵At

Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

⁹David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. ¹⁰And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.

Psalm 48

¹Great is the LORD, and highly | to be praised,
in the city of our God, on the LORD's | holy mountain.

²**Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, | is Mount Zion,
the summit of the north and city of | the great king.**

³God is in the citadels | of Jerusalem;
revealed to be the sure refuge | of the city.

⁴**Behold, the | kings assembled
and marched for- | ward together.**

⁵As they looked, they | were astounded;
dismayed, they | fled in terror.

⁶**Trembling | seized them there;
they writhed like a wo- | man in childbirth;**

⁷with an east wind you | shattered them
like the | ships of Tarshish.

⁸**As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city | of
our God—
may God establish | it forever!**

⁹In the midst of your tem- | ple, O God,
we meditate on your | steadfast love.

¹⁰**Your praise, like your name, O God, reaches to the ends | of the earth;
your right hand is | full of righteousness.**

¹¹Let Mount Zion be glad and the towns of Ju- | dah rejoice,
because | of your judgments.

¹²**Make the circuit of Zion; walk | round about it;
count the number of the | city's towers.**

¹³Consider well its ramparts; exam- | ine its strongholds;
that you may tell those | who come after.

¹⁴**Mark this—God is our God forev- | er and ever,
guiding us even | to the end.**

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Christians do not boast of their own accomplishments. Rather, Christian boasting focuses attention on how the power of Christ is present in our lives, especially in times of weakness and vulnerability. No matter what our circumstances in life, Christ's grace is sufficient for us.

²I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. ³And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—⁴was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. ⁵On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, ⁷even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. ⁸Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, ⁹but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Gospel Reading: Mark 6:1-13

At home and abroad, Jesus and his disciples encounter resistance as they seek to proclaim God's word and relieve affliction.

¹[Jesus] came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ²On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." ⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us come before the triune God in prayer, saying “God, in your mercy,” and responding, “hear our prayer.”

A brief silence.

God of all, through the waters of baptism you claim people of all races, ethnicities, and languages as your beloved children. Sustain the baptized and increase their faith, that your gospel may be proclaimed throughout the earth. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of the heavens, your creating Spirit animates the universe. We give you thanks for the moon and stars, for the planets and the Milky Way Galaxy, and for all of the mysteries of the cosmos that remain unknown to us. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of freedom, you have liberated us from sin and death and rescue us from all forms of spiritual, social, and political oppression. Defend us from tyrants in our midst and deliver us from all forms of slavery or corruption. Direct our freedom for works of liberation and wholeness. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of compassion, you became vulnerable in the person of Jesus Christ in solidarity with the disempowered. Strengthen those who feel faint, give courage to those who fear, and bring wholeness to those in need (*especially those who we name at this time, aloud or on our hearts...* [pause]). God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of holiness, you send us out into the world to proclaim your love. We pray for our ministries that reach beyond the walls of our church building. Equip us as we leave this place to witness and serve our neighbors. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We give you thanks that in every time and place you call forth prophets who move us towards freedom. Thank you for those who work for human rights, community organizers, and all who strive for liberty for all. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.
Amen.

A reflection for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost...

Ready to Bear Witness

Where does power come from? The usual answers—family connections, reputation, possessions—are all rejected in this reading from Mark’s gospel. Jesus’ power is not only independent of his family connection—it is hindered by it. While it isn’t entirely clear why the people of Nazareth reject Jesus, the fact that they do may sound familiar to us. How often do we find exactly what we expect when we encounter something new? How open are we, really, to the possibility that God’s power might come from an unexpected corner? The first part of today’s reading suggests that even miracles take two things: both divine power and willing witnesses.

Perhaps Jesus sends his disciples out stripped of their possession precisely so that *they* are ready to witness to God’s power in a new way. They go without any of the usual trappings of security or wealth, with no guarantee that their ministry will be received. In fact, Mark reminds us a few verses later (Mark 6:14-28) just how hostile the world can be to receiving the proclamation of the kingdom of God. John the Baptist will lose his life because of Herod’s resistance to repentance. Nevertheless, Jesus’ teaching continues to astound, and the word continues to spread.

The willingness to bear witness, even when we are not certain of answered prayer or mission success, is a theme that unites all this day’s readings. Even the Psalm, in its simple gaze of faith, invites us to let go of results in favor of relationship. Paul’s sometimes confusing logic about spiritual experiences becomes clear as he sums up God’s word to him: “My grace is sufficient for you” That is a powerful word, which can make almost any experience an opportunity to witness to Christ’s power.

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