That Same Power

Title message in the series, That Same Power for Easter, 2017

# Scripture: Eph. 1:15-23

# Key thought: Resurrection power will transform our lives!

# Intro:

Story: Adventures of a Clay Pot p. 29

Evie’s life was transformed by the power of the resurrection. The love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit at work brought a sense of being loved and through it new life to her. The possibilities and power that were generated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead are available today to be drawn upon by Jesus’ followers in so many different ways. What happened on that first Easter morning that created such a reservoir of potential that it is still overflowing into peoples’ lives today?

# What God's resurrection power did for Jesus

Let’s begin by drawing the stark contrast in our minds between Jesus on Good Friday and Jesus after his resurrection. Let’s take an in-depth look at the transformation in Jesus wrought by the resurrection.

## Seemingly defeated - complete victory

On Good Friday, it appeared that death had won the day. Jesus in his last moments had handed the care of his mother over to his disciple John, a tender last act, of a dying man. The powers that be had checked to certify that he was indeed dead by jabbing a spear in his side to make sure, as John records.

Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. John 19:31-34

The situation seemed desperate and bleak indeed for the disciples. But God had other plans! In God’s world, things are possible that are not possible in the small minds of people.

The Messianic Psalm 118 gives the shout of victory ahead of time!

Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous:  
“The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!  
The Lord’s right hand is lifted high; the Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!”  
I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.  
The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.  
Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord…  
The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.  
The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. Ps 118:15-24 NIV

The disciples were left to discover what God had done for themselves by seeing the empty tomb. Where Jesus’ body should have been they saw only grave clothes in an empty heap with the napkin folded by itself.

But then Jesus began to appear -- first to Mary Magdalene who went to the stunned disciples with the startling announcement, “I have seen the Lord”(John 20:18). They did not believe her.

Soon he appeared to Cleopas and another disciple who apparently had given up hope and were returning home, walking along the road to Emmaus. Jesus appeared to them, at first unrecognized, and explained what had happened.

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24:25-27 NIV

He was recognized by them as he broke bread for them. Then he disappeared. They returned quickly to Jerusalem to tell the good news. When they arrived and shared their good news, they found that Jesus had also appeared to Simon Peter (Luke 24:34).

Then Jesus appeared to the disciples as a group in the upper room.

He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. Luke 24:38-43 NIV

There was no doubt. He was alive. Death itself had been conquered.

On Easter we praise God that Jesus has been victorious over death. We rejoice with the words of Paul.

“Where, O death, is your victory?  
Where, O death, is your sting?” …

Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.   
1 Cor. 15:55-57 NIV

The obvious difference between Good Friday and Easter morning is that Jesus is alive again. But that is only the beginning. How can we describe the living Christ?

## Crucified in weakness - raised in power

The risen Christ is described with words of power. In his ministry Jesus displayed the power of God, yet by comparison, the Bible describes his former days as “weakness” because he had submitted himself to our limitations. Saint Paul wrote about this stark contrast in his second letter to the Corinthians.

He was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God’s power. 2 Cor 13:4

Certainly, the weakness of Jesus as he faced his accusers was voluntary, but it had real consequences leading up to his crucifixion. As Paul put it in Philippians, Jesus had emptied himself of some prerogatives in order to enter our world as a baby. He had fully identified with our human frailties. But after his resurrection, he was no longer limited. His earthly journey was completed. The Bible says he how wields “incomparably great power for us who believe” (Eph. 1:19).

Paul uses this word translated “incomparable” only five times, all in reference to Jesus. The first time he refers to the surpassing glory of the New Covenant in Jesus and its ministry under the Holy Spirit. Then he speaks of Jesus’ surpassing grace for us. Next of his incomparably great power toward us who believe. These are only part of the incomparable riches of his grace. Notable by itself is the Love of God which enfolds us in Jesus, a love which surpasses knowledge. What a summary of the surpassing greatness of who the Risen Christ is and what we have received in Him!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Paul’s usage of the term “huperballo” – exceeding, excelling, surpassing | |
| 2 Cor. 3:10  **Surpassing glory** | 2 Cor 3:8-11  will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? 9 If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! 10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. |
| 2 Cor. 9:14  **Surpassing grace** | 2 Cor 9:14-15  in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. |
| Eph. 1:19 **Incomparably great power** | Eph 1:18-19  that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. |
| Eph. 2:7  **Incomparable riches of his grace** | Eph 2:6-8  And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. |
| Eph. 3:19  **Love that surpasses knowledge** | Eph 3:18-19  may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. |

## Humbled in death - exalted above the heavens

There is a further contrast for us to note. Jesus had humbled himself to come down from heaven and be born as a human being in a country that was under the rule of Rome. He was not born among the privileged but among the poor and oppressed of our world. This humbling continued, Paul tells us, all the way to the cross.

But there his humbling ends!

At Easter the Scripture describes a new dynamic in the journey of Jesus—Exaltation. Listen as Paul describes it.

He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,   
being made in human likeness.   
And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!  
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place   
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,   
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:7-11 NIV

Paul describes more details about the exaltation of Christ in our text from Ephesians.

He raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Eph 1:20-23 NIV

Not only is the resurrected Christ no longer humbled, he is now exalted to the right hand of God. He said himself as he gave his great commission to his church,

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Matt. 28:18

It can’t get clearer than that.

In our Ephesians text there is a huge piece of good news for us as Jesus’ followers. Paul is saying that one reason that God has exalted Jesus and given him such power and authority in earth and heaven is for our sake, that Jesus might make available to us his power for the transformation of our lives and the performance of the ministries that he has given us!

That’s why we can sing the words of the chorus JoAnne has written, “That same power is available to you and me.”

# What that same power will do for Christ's followers

**What is crystal clear here is that God expects the same power that was at work in Christ’s resurrection to be at work in our lives today.**

In this passage, “The hope to which he has called you” (Eph. 1:18) is that God’s “incomparably great power” (Eph. 1:19) which he demonstrated in raising Jesus from the dead, might be in evidence repeatedly in our lives in many ways.

What are some practical differences the resurrection of Jesus makes in our lives today? We always want to know what the bottom line is. We want to know how the truth of Scripture affects us. That is a good thing.

What are some ways we can see resurrection power in evidence in our daily lives?

## In bondage we are set free

First of all, the Bible is clear that sin and sinful ways are a bondage to us (Rom. 7:14, 23). But when we allow the Spirit of God to come into our lives, we are set free from our bondage to sinfulness. Paul says, “Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom. 7:25) Jesus said,

“Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:34-36

Adventures of a Clay Pot p. 54 story of Pat

## In weakness we find strength

So that we could identify all the more with Jesus, Paul described the burial of Christ as a body “sown in weakness.” But then he immediately reminds us of the Easter contrast, Christ was “raised in power” (1Cor 15:43).

What was the personal experience of Paul as a result of the resurrection of Jesus. Here is his testimony,

“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:9-10 NIV

Paul assures of God’s help in our weakness too. Referring to our prayers and our inability to find hope, Paul wrote,

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. Rom 8:26 NIV

Many times as a pastor I have come to the end of the week spiritually and physically drained, running on empty. That’s not a good feeling when you have to get up in the morning and preach and people are depending on you to be lively and inspiring. But it’s not just people who are depending on you, God is asking you to lead the people into worship and into his word. That privilege is hard to manage well when one feels frazzled. My practice at such times is to throw myself on the mercy of God and ask to draw upon his strength. I plead that people will see Him in the Word of God preached, that people will feel His Spirit in the service. I pray for his strength to make me adequate. Paul tells us as ministers that our “competence is from God.” I claim that by faith. Often I find that those Sundays are the best ones. I am often amazed how illustrations come to me as I preach and how a holy hush falls upon the congregation as God moves in. Probably the surprising results are because on those days my faith is most where it always should be.

## In temptation we find a power for victory

When we are feeling vulnerable to temptation, we can rely on God’s strength.

So Paul writes, “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Eph. 6:10).

And James says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Since we have resurrection power to resist the enemy and his schemes against us, then we have great assurance in facing temptation.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. 1 Cor 10:13 NIV

## In challenges we find divine possibilities

But the strength that is ours because of the resurrection not only help us to rise up amid difficulties, it also helps us in discovering new positive potential.

A young man who frequently attended my previous church when he was not away in the military service. He and his family now live in Delaware. During the recent political season, he reacted differently. He decided to get going and do something about the increasing educational rift between black and white races in our land. He started an organization called Cyberstreets. The organization takes in donated computer equipment and uses it to teach inner city children about computers, both the operation of and the technical under-the-hood things. Donations have poured in. His organization has received recognition from a Del. state senator. Recently he got a call from a former US Secretary of Education who is now working in Chicago and was interested in learning about the program. Rob has an amazing positive outlook and Rob freely says that what is happening with the success of the program is not his doing. There is a higher power at work. It is God’s plan. That is resurrection power at work, bringing about new possibilities in Dover, Delaware through a follower of Christ.

It is the kind of thing Paul wrote about.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Eph 3:20-21 NIV

## In death we are raised to life

Finally, and most awesomely of all, because Jesus has been raised from the dead, we can also expect to live again. For sure, we live again first spiritually as we who were dead in transgressions come alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:4). Then, since we are now spiritually alive, we are heirs of Jesus’ resurrection. So when the day arrives and our earthly body has died, we have God’s promise that we will live again.

As a congregation, we celebrated this truth just one week ago at the funeral for Jan Prevost. As Paul put it;

We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. 2 Cor 4:14

Listen to Jesus himself teaching on the same subject,

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. … “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. John 5:24, 25, 28, 29 NIV

# Conclusion

Story from Grace Givers – “Hospital Maneuvers” p. 29

It that story, more than one person received a new lease on life, so to speak, by the power of God. Resurrection power was at work.

How is God’s resurrections power at work in your life today? What could be accomplished if you allowed his grace to be more fully expressed through your life?