

Whose Power Is This?

Questions from Acts: Part 2 “Whose Power Is This?”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – April 14 2024

3rd Sunday of Easter

Readings: Acts 3:12-19; 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:36-48

Reflection: Psalm 4

Greeting: God is indeed my salvation; I will trust and won't be afraid. The Lord is my strength and my shield; He has become my salvation. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of life that you have delivered to us, shown in the death of your Son. Help us to celebrate our Lord's resurrection as a sign of everlasting life. As we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ the Son, help us to share the gift of love we find in you our Heavenly Father, and guide us in the truth of your Holy Spirit. May we be one with each other as we are one in Christ Jesus. May we love you with our whole being, and may we share that love with one another. And may we be reminded of your redeeming grace and steadfast faithfulness all the days of our lives. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer. How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him. When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, “O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!” You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound. I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety. (Psalm 4 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 4, and we hear of calling out to God in our time of need. That the Lord is there to give us peace and safety. Do you listen in the silence for the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Do you find peace in the quiet of the Father's presence? How does Christ give you security in your day-to-day life? How do you share the peace that you find in our Risen Savior with others? How do you lift up those around you in prayer? How will you share the power of Christ throughout the week ahead? What are you discovering as you live out your life in Christ?

Prayer: O God, our rainbow, our dove, our promised land: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your ark. Protect us from storms, and ferry us to your welcoming shore. We thank you for all you have already done and the great love that has been shown to us. We

lift up our joys and our concerns, bringing all things before you. We share with you the worries that we have spoken aloud. We share the celebrations that we have voiced together. Help us to also share the silent pleadings from within. May we experience your grace in our laughter and our tears. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in rejoicing, knowing you are with us. And may you guide us in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 3, verse 12 through 19.

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "Fellow Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the holy and righteous one and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. "And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out. (Acts 3:12-19 NRSV)*

Our next reading is from 1 John chapter 3, verse 1 through 7.

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. (1 John 3:1-7 NRSV)*

Our final reading is from Luke chapter 24, verses 36 through 48.

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. Yet for all their joy they were still disbelieving and wondering, and he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them,

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:36-48 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week we ask ourselves the question “whose power is this?” This stems from our reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Peter is addressing a crowd after a man has been healed. The crowd begins to question how he was healed. They want to know where the power came from. Was it from the men doing the healing? Was it from somewhere else? Peter is quick to answer that it was not their power. That they may be conduits for the healing that takes place, but they are not the ones supplying that power. He says that this has all been done to glorify the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. That this was done through the power of Christ. Peter tells them that this is the same Jesus Christ that had been handed over to be crucified. That though he was handed over unjustly, God raised him from the dead. That it is faith in Christ that is responsible for this. Peter reiterates that it is faith in Christ that has healed this man. I highlight this because this is something that comes up a lot in the Gospels. That whenever somebody has been healed, one of the most common responses that Jesus gives is it was faith that made them well. He tells people that it was their faith that led to them being healed. I highlight this because we see this as a continuation of that same theme, that they have been healed by faith. Not by Peter being special, not by any of the disciples having a special power for healing. Instead, Peter says that they are following Christ's example. They're living out their faith in Christ.

Now, our other readings help us to sort of explore that idea of the love that we find in Christ that inspires that faith. That in the first letter of John, we hear about how we are God's children. That we have hope in Christ and that hope inspires us to act through Christ. That we cannot escape sin unless we are forgiven, and it is Christ that offers us forgiveness and the blessing of eternal life. That we are made whole in Christ. That as Christ offers us forgiveness for sins, it also means that there is no punishment for sins. That because of this we do not need to be afraid because we find security, hope, and peace because of Christ. This is echoed in our gospel reading from Luke. The disciples are afraid because Jesus has appeared to them. They are at first afraid because they think this is a ghost, a spirit sent to haunt them. So, he invites them to touch him. He asks for something to eat, showing them he is not in fact a ghost but that he has been raised. He then explains about his death and his resurrection to them once again, hoping that they will understand it this time. This time, Jesus gives them new instructions. That they are to now proclaim the forgiveness of sins, and they are sent to proclaim it to all the nations. That this is not just for the Israelites, this is for everyone everywhere. That all should know that they can seek forgiveness, and all should know that they can be healed. That it is by

the power of Christ that they will proclaim this message and it is by the power of Christ that others will come to know salvation. That they will offer healing just like we see in our reading from Acts.

We see Peter extend forgiveness to these crowds. He has said that they are the ones that are guilty of calling for the release of a murderer instead of Jesus to be set free. That they are the ones that sent an innocent man to his death. And yet, Peter offers forgiveness because of Christ. Peter lets them know that repentance is open to them because of the forgiveness found in Christ Jesus. Peter isn't offering anything within his own power. Peter isn't the one forgiving them. This is not his doing at all. Peter is not acting within a power that is his own. Peter is not healing anyone. Peter is not forgiving anyone. Peter is not offering anyone eternal life, at least not through Peter, because it is not his to give. It is not his own power. It is the power of Christ to forgive all of our sins. It is the power of Christ to heal. It is the power of Christ to give eternal life. He is simply offering them Christ. But when they accept Christ, that power is theirs as well. Because it is their faith that heals them. It is their faith that makes them whole. Because it is the power of our Risen Savior that does these things. It is faith in him that makes these things possible. I think this is a pretty big move by Peter. We can get caught up ourselves in believing it was the people and not the power. We sometimes associate these powers with the people and not the Savior. We will think that Peter must have been extraordinary and that he must have had special powers. That Paul must have been so incredibly unique and powerful because of what he did. But I think the incredible thing they had was not power but faith. The thing is that they are children of God just as we are children of God. Peter goes out of his way to say that he's not anything special outside of the fact that they were witnesses. But if we remember last week, we are told that those who can believe without seeing are that much more blessed. Peter is sharing what he bore witness to and that is his gift. His gift is not that he is especially empowered in healing or even speech. Peter's reminding everyone there that none of this is by his own power. Alone, he has the power to heal no one. On his own he is not going to be able to offer salvation. But he operates by the power of Christ and it's that power that he lives by that changes everything. Because Peter walks with Christ in his journey, which means that as he lives in Christ, he dies by Christ, and he is raised in Christ. The life he lives in the risen Christ is something that he can share with others. Because it is not that he has a unique power, it's that he has something that he wants to share with the world. His boldness to share that power is really his gift. His willingness to speak about that gift and to openly share it with others is the amazing thing that he has done. It is a large part of who he is because he accepts the power in Christ that is not his and he doesn't want to be given that responsibility. And I can't blame him.

What this question made me think about was how we often feel we aren't enough. Because we think everything needs to come by our own power. That everything needs to happen by our own will. That everything that we do needs to happen because of something that we have. The true gift is understanding that we don't have to have those strengths

because we have Christ. Because we have Christ, we can act boldly. Because the power of Christ moves us to be compassionate. That because Christ is in our lives, we may be generous with others and that we may help. That when our own strength fails, the power of Christ gives us the strength that we need to stand up for what is right and what is good. The power of Christ gives us the voice that we need to speak out for the truth. Because it is the power of Christ that drives us, and it is our faith in Christ that lets us walk with him every step of our journey. So, when I reflected on this question of “whose power is this?” I realized that the answer wasn’t quite as clear as I thought it would be. Because though I want to say that it is the power of Christ alone, I realized there is more to that question. I realized it wasn’t quite right because it is the power of Christ acting through the children of God. Because the thing it, is that those healings take place because the disciples are willing to be witnesses to Christ. They are willing to speak about his life, his death, and his resurrection, and to share that gift with the people around them. Though it is Christ's power and Christ alone who holds that power, part of that power is the way that it inspires us to share Christ. And it meant that the answer wasn't quite so straightforward anymore. Because though the power is Christ's alone, we are the way that that power comes to others. Our witness is the way that others experience the strength of Christ. Our actions are how others experience the compassion of Christ. Our caring is how others experience the love of Christ. The way that we share our faith is how others come to find faith in Christ.

I wanted us all to be able to take a chance to reflect on that. Because, as Peter says, the power is from Christ alone. It does not come from him. But Christ does act through him. And that is the responsibility of all who call upon the power of Christ, all who seek out that healing. Of all that seek that hope and all who want to share that hope. That it is shared because of a faith in Christ. And that it is shared because Christ gives us the strength to do so. That when we seek out that power to help others, we share the love of our Heavenly Father with a world desperately in need of love. And that when we share that love, we find that we are guided by the Holy Spirit to be where we need to be to share that give with others. And that Christ will act through all the children of God when we are willing to share that power through faith. So, I encourage each and every one of us to reflect on how we rely on Christ in our daily lives. That we think about how we may share all that Christ has been for us so that others may come to know Christ. That others may come to have faith in Christ. That they may come to know the power that Christ has to change hearts and lives. So let us always be willing to speak of the difference Christ has made in your life. Let us always be able to share the love that we have found with our Savior. And by faith let us always proclaim the good news that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ is there for everyone. Right here right now. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Questions from Acts

Our Easter series explores questions that we will take from our readings from the Acts of the Apostles. Each week we will reflect on the early church and the lessons we learn from the questions that they press us to answer.

April 7th – Who Is In Need?

April 21st – By What Name?

May 5th – Can Anyone Withhold?

May 19th – What Does This Mean?

April 14th – Whose Power Is This?

April 28th – What Is to Prevent Me?

May 12th – Who Will Witness?

Prayer List

Rev Angie Lee	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser
Corine Howard	Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester	Marsha Overton
Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Paul Cox	Taylor Waldorf
Harriet Tucker	Marlene Kincaid	Cara Dillier	Peggy Farley
Mandy Schumacher	Ann McMorris	Marci Cutts Smith	Jaydelyn Brassard
Pat Hayden Titus	Devona Dittamore	Nancy McElravy	Marie R.
Connie Brown	Thelma Ball	Stephanie Strewsbury	John Graves
Cathleen Carl	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Larry Thompson
Greg Williams	Jim & Kay Wells	Earl Sparks	

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