

“Real Power”
1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Sixth Sunday After Pentecost
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (NRSV)

²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters:^[a] not many of you were wise by human standards,^[b] not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no one^[c] might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in^[d] the Lord.”

True confession.

I skipped an ENTIRE week of lectionary. I don't like skipping things like that.

So, this message is an interlude to get back on track after last Sunday's middle story about the bleeding woman believing in the power of Jesus.

I'd like us to consider what REAL power is.

If we take a GOOD look at the things Jesus did, and that we're encouraged to put to work in our lives, we'll see (and *really know*) that Jesus' didn't use brute force power. (well, maybe that turning the table day)

What Jesus exemplifies is the power of humility, of compassion, and love.

And since we're STRIVING to do what Jesus did, we need to pay close attention and be transformed by the gospel of the humility of Jesus.

These days, with protests shouting unkind words LOUDLY, I'd like us to consider the impact we could have!

As a church, we're human, there's lots of us, we're known, and we're sinners. That's a dangerous mix of a batch of pride.

Humility though isn't just copying Jesus in his willingness to die for others. It's being **enabled** by Jesus **because** he died for us.

He was the humblest person ever to walk the earth, but he was crucified because he was accused of blasphemous arrogance.

So, even if you're the humblest witness for Jesus, you're probably gonna be accused of arrogance, too.

But, what we need to avoid is pride.

And to work on the humility...I'm talking about the kind of humility that God sees and that spiritually discerning people see, even if the rest of the world doesn't.

Wouldn't it be cool as the church (particularly THIS church) to be known for the way God is working to increase the power of humility in US?

And, what if it was contagious!?

Wouldn't that be a neat thing to be infected by!

Our nurse, Alice would come, not *wringing* her hands, but *raising* her hands and saying, "We've got a diagnosis. It's a condition called humility!" Amen!?

So, instead of a definition of humility, let's use Scripture passages to get a sense of what humility is.

Twink read one for us. Today's passage is one that, for me, shows us that GOD GETS THE CREDIT!

We're not wise enough...

Or powerful enough...

These verses point out that God gets all the credit for choosing and using us based on God's purposes, not our merits.

That last verse that says, "the one who boasts" might "boast in the Lord."

We should be glad that God acts and takes the focus of boasting about ourselves and puts it on Himself. That's pretty powerful, wouldn't you say?

Real power!

The Apostle Paul wrote some great verses in this letters to the Seven Churches. He pointed out to the Corinthians that we should be glad that everything we have is a free gift of God.

Put away your pride, 'cause whatever we have: talent, intelligence, good looks, possessions, or influence: all gifts from God.

To know where ALL GOOD things come and consequently how *easy it can be for us to give some of those good things away*, **that's** something we CAN boast about. And put to powerfully, good use!

Another thing to be glad about, and YES, maintain our humility, too, is that God is in charge of everything!

Every beat of your heart.

Every time the sun rises.

Every time we get safely to where we're supposed to be – God got brought us there.

And if we didn't get there, as Pastor Gene says, "The Good Lord saved us again!"

We should be glad to be under the Lord's power...so that we can be powerful, too?

Now, to be sure, there have to be some "toughies" to work on, on our humble walk.

Again, verses from Paul, from his letter to the Colossians says, "if one [of you] has a complaint against someone else, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Col.3:13)

Here's where we need to USE God's power, right?

Humbly.

Oh!

We have to "step down" into humble willingness to forgive others.

Why?

Because DOING THAT is rooted in God's forgiveness of us! We'll say the Lord's Prayer in a few minutes "Forgive us as we forgive."

Rest assured, the energy to BE ABLE TO DO THAT comes from Jesus.

And finally, and maybe even the most difficult, is that humility serves.
That's where putting the teaching and mission of Jesus to work in our lives comes in!

Humility serves.

Humility gets down low and lifts others up.

Humility sees the needs of others and gives time and effort to alleviate those needs.

Jesus took the form of a servant and humbled himself, even to the point of death. Mark wrote in his gospel: "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mk. 10:45

Couldn't we all be better at measuring things by whether it serves the good of other people?

Ask yourself, "Am I feeding **my** ego or am I feeding the faith of others?" The answer **COULD** lead to true greatness!

When **WE ALLOW** God to work this humility in us...we can be free to serve each other *even better than we already do!*

I think a church, a caring community (doesn't have to be a church) thrives by servanthood.

We've each got a Spirit gift, promised by Jesus, gifts to serve somehow!

I hope, each time I send out a "can do crew" request that **YOU** will answer because **you've** got the gifts!

Whoa! Your YES to show up...to drive...to help...to read...to lead...is power-filled!

We have ministries that could use that power...to thrive.

And, you don't even have to wait to be asked!

The most powerful tool (or gift) we have is humility.

Without it we won't serve, or we'll serve for the wrong reasons.

Now, I'm sure some of you are scoffing.

I'm sure some of you've got objections about humility.

Those objections are what the world covers us with, and **CAN CAUSE** us to be apathetic rather than empathetic.

Don't let that happen, Dear Ones!

Humility DOES NOT make a **person gloomy or unhappy.**

Truly, Jesus' power and compassion and love showed us that we can be freed from the boastful need to "play along" with concern for what others think.

No need!

So, go ahead and laugh at what's really funny. (Ever notice that a "proud" person wouldn't be caught having belly laughs; they *THINK* they need to keep their dignity.)

Be freed from those kinds of prohibitions; be happy and laugh.

Jesus did!

And **humility doesn't make you timid.**

The world thinks that.

But, we've got something better than SELF-confident courage.

We've got God-confidence!

Remember David?

He had 5 rocks AND CONFIDENCE IN THE MOST HIGH GOD!

He didn't boast. He really was quite humble.

He did his God-given job with huge success

Timid? Nah!

Lean on God for confidence.

And **humility doesn't have to make us passive OR take away our initiative.**

That's another worldly misconception 'cause the world thinks that we need achievement to feed our egos with accomplishments.

But Paul says in 1 Corinthians (15:10,) "By the grace of God I am what I am . . . I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."

You want power?

The power is in God's grace.

It's right there in the hearts of humble believers who depend on God.

And that can produce incredible energy!

We can call it a *paradox*, but HUMILITY IS biblical and historical.
Dependence on the grace of God has produced world-changing achievements.

So if you're compiling a list of objections, the answer is no.
If you're experiencing the world-in-your-face with objections, THE ANSWER IS NO!

Gospel humility, grace-based humility, Jesus-exalting humility does not make you gloomy, or timid, or passive.
It makes you joyful, and courageous and industrious.

And most importantly, it puts you in the footsteps of Christ...it enables you to be a servant like Jesus.

Only God can do it.
And he does it through Jesus in the gospel.
My prayer is that God works in us, works ON US...unleashes the real power of humility in us and a tidal wave of service from our church and into the world.

Praise God for the POWER!
Amen.