

HIGH POWER EXPRESS



Scripture:

Acts 3:12-19

¹²When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, ‘You 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?’

¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of 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.

¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you,

¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

¹⁶And 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.

¹⁷‘And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.

¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.’

Luke 24

³⁶While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

³⁸He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?’

³⁹Look 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.’

⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’

⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then 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.’

⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

⁴⁶and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,

⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.



HIGH POWER EXPRESS

Do you recognize Jesus in your midst? What does it mean to be fully human, fully alive, fully empowered by God, fully conscious of the delusions of our systems of understanding that knock each other out in search for our power by oppressing others? Ask the victims of oppression around you, those who Jesus spent his time uplifting. Who? Who would that be? Those who have nothing, not even food, clothing or shelter, or the same rights as you do and take them for granted. Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, the freedom to follow your dream, to worship as you choose, to love whom God has created you to be.

POWER FROM ON HIGH

Here you are in church on Sunday as usual, continually blessing God. What's the blessing about? Hope and promises! Power from on high.

In this scripture, Jesus tells the disciplines to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes. The Spirit will come to clothe you with power from on high. So this is about high powered clothing, or the hope of it.

Or perhaps it's about the fear of power. Some people say they are afraid of feeling inadequate or of being inadequate. But really you are afraid of being too powerful. I am. Psychologists confirm that we are more afraid of being too powerful than of being inadequate for a task.

FOR HARM OR FOR GOOD

Remember my last sermon where I told you I nearly killed my brother? My own strength scared me.

**Power can be used for harm or for good.
Sometimes it takes a dramatic event to
get us to turn toward good.
You have power to use,
so don't waste it doing harm.**

You are a child of God. You are full of light. Who are you to hide it under a bushel? Or snuff it out? Burn, baby, burn -- with holy fire. God has empowered you. Have you ever made a really bad mistake and later tried to figure out what you should have done or said? Tell about it; did you change your ways, turn around, repent?

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

In this story, an Easter story that happens on the afternoon of the day of resurrection, where Caiaphas and another disciple are walking to Emmaus, talking about all the things that have happened – the death and the resurrection of Jesus. Along the way, someone they don't recognize joins them – a stranger – who starts asking them questions about it and they say, "Are you the only one in all Jerusalem who doesn't know these things that have happened?" So they talk together, and this stranger then tells them that this is the way that the scriptures said it is supposed to happen.

When they get to Emmaus, the stranger starts going on and they say, "Oh no, it's dinner time, it's almost evening, you'd better stay here with us." So he stays with them. And as they are around the dinner table, he takes the bread and breaks it, and their eyes are opened. They see that it is Jesus there in their midst. Then he disappears from their sight.

BACK TO JERUSALEM

They are so excited about that, they hike all the way back to Jerusalem that very night and find the eleven waiting there, gathered in that room. The next thing you know, there is Jesus there with them.

They are terrified. Jesus tells that that this is the way it had to be and you need to stay here in Jerusalem and tell that the promises from God are fulfilled that you will be clothed with power from on high.

"POWER CLOTHES"

The mystery is what "clothes with power from on high" would mean. In those days, you had to spin and weave your clothing, so people didn't have extras. So getting power clothes from on high would be a big deal. Stay here until God gives you a power suit! Could that be something like a Superman suit – go in the phone booth and get on the power suit and suddenly you can leap tall buildings with a single bound. You know we have our superheroes now, and we want more.

THE WORLD NEEDS YOUR GIFTS

This power is something that you have with you all along. God creates that in you from the very beginning. You just need to recognize it. Everybody has gifts, talents, strengths, capacities – it's just that you may have been too timid or too beat down or too blind to see it. But the world needs your gifts and your knowing.

Take courage. This is something that Paul writes to the Corinthians in II Corinthian 4:8:

**We are afflicted but not crushed;
we are perplexed
but not driven to despair;
we are persecuted but not forsaken;
we are struck down but not destroyed;
always carrying in the body
the death of Jesus, so that the
life of Jesus may also
be made visible in us.**

OUR KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

We are often reticent to see our own power. But we are all endowed with kindness and compassion and can and do have positive effects on others' lives; sometimes we are totally unaware of it. The ripple effect of this kindness can have a powerful effect on the world. Can you think of someone who has had a positive influence on your life by mentoring you or being kind and listening or encouraging you in a low moment? What if this person had believed that they had nothing to offer and didn't help you that day? Your life would be poorer for it. And so the

world is poorer for it when we do not claim our power from on high.

SUPER HEROES

Superheroes are archetypal. They have been in literature ever since Gilgamesh in 2700 BC. Yet we see there are those who have special powers more than we. We are human. Fortunately we have a spark of divine in us, so we recognize the spiritual amid the heroic.

It may be the scripture writer's most important statement here: "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 like he is."

What is he like?

Our hero in the Scripture from Luke - (remember the story of Jesus at Emmaus) - appears and disappears, not because he is unseeable but because people are too intent on doing their own thing, living their own lives, until they see him in a familiar situation, like having dinner and blessing and breaking the bread. He then vanishes, but leaves with them a flash of insight. They are so moved they hike several miles back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciplines what happened. And there is Jesus with them in Jerusalem again! Then Jesus tells them: "This is what Moses and the prophets and the Psalms told you: The messiah must suffer and die, and I'm here to tell you what's really going on." And he explains everything to them. You know the stories – the scriptures are full of them. All those heroes and anti-heroes and people just like you and me. We are the people of the scripture. Everything that happens there happens to us in our lives. Sometimes we are perplexed or terrified or frightened; other times we have the courage, the insights. Somehow God has clothed us with power from on high.

YOU ARE THE WITNESSES!

So the disciples head over to Bethany in the Jerusalem area where Jesus used to stay with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Then he gives them his farewell address: God made you promises, remember that, and I'm sending those

promises to you right now. You are the witnesses! Repentance and forgiveness for all nations is to be proclaimed in his name. You are my witnesses! I'm sending you what God promised. So stay here until you get it.

SOMETHING TO EAT

Then Jesus asks for something to eat. I guess that is proof that he was a Presbyterian!

They give him broiled fish, and watch him eat it. Ghosts don't eat food, so he's not a ghost.

God's way of doing things: reminding us of miracles, sharing meals of bread and wine, and the miracle of the loaves and fishes, feeding multitudes. See what love God has for you. Open your eyes and see Jesus in your midst, and be witnesses.

BEING A WITNESS

My wife the lawyer tells me that eye witnesses are notoriously unreliable. This is not about being an expert witness, but about being a witness to what it is that you know or that has meaning to you. What is it in your life that gives you a sense of power or knowing?

Witnessing means telling what you know to be true. You don't have to be a phony and you don't have to be like someone else. You express what it is that's going on with you and how your life gets transformed by having this experience with Jesus: that is, the suffering and end of it all and a new existence, with some carryover from the old way. But still it takes an old familiar experience to help you recognize it, an old familiar friend, Jesus in your midst.

Everything that happens in scripture happens in life.

Then there is that story from Acts about Peter and John at the beautiful gate of the temple and the beggar who has been sitting there all these years, lame from birth, who asks them for alms. Peter says, "I don't have silver and gold to give you, but I'm giving you what I have. So, in the name of Jesus, stand up and walk." He takes him by the hand and the beggar's legs become strong and he stands up and walks. And he leaps, and the next thing he is praising God in the temple

and everyone is amazed at this. The authorities come down hard, saying, "Oh no, you can't be doing that. We told you not to preach in Jesus' name."

WE ARE POWERFUL PEOPLE

Peter and John say, "We cannot help but do that because this man that you crucified was the author of life and he is risen from the dead and he is here amongst us to show us that miracles happen and that love is abounding and that we are powerful people."

**This is your power suit,
so put it on and go forth and be the
people that God wants you to be.**

Let us pray. O Lord God, we thank you for your word to us. We trust, O Lord that your power is great and the power you have bestowed upon us is enough for us to be witnesses of what we know to be true. So be with us as we go forth, in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together...(The Lord's Prayer).



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