

Sermon of June 30, 2019

(em)Power(ment)

The Methodist Lectionary after Pentecost and Trinity Sundays references to the Inheritance of God as Christians. So, we have been sent the Holy Spirit in many voices. And, as a Christian we benefit from the different parts of the holy Trinity. These gifts make up the power of the Triune also known as the holy trinity. They include the Inheritance of Wisdom, Attentiveness, and Trust. Today, we will explore the Inheritance of Power and Empowerment.

And, how interesting we visit Power on the Sunday prior to the celebration of the birthday of the United States' Declaration of Independence on July 4th.

Sounds very powerful – not Power Power, but feel good, strutting, “I am an American” Power – Sort of the way I am dressed right now.

Now, I could change my shirt, tie, and braces with a dark blue with light window pane suit, I would have my 80's and 90's power outfit ready for a meeting. Usually it was with an Account Engineer with a roomful of property insurance brokers. All in their various power outfits.

Enough De Ja Vu. Let us get back to Power and Empowerment.

We can think of individuals in history and in the Bible that demonstrated Power that benefited nobody, even sometimes even to the person exerting the Power. Take a moment and ponder. Ok, enough bad thoughts.

Now let us focus on the positive. There are individuals that had power and empowered others:

Pres. Franklin Roosevelt – FDR – created the Works Program Administrator to get people back to work after the 1929 crash in the early-mid 1930's. The Hoover Dam and the Tri Borough bridge connecting Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan. Also, many airports like Atlantic City and Allentown. Plus, bridges and aqueducts. And many interstate highways on the older roads like Route 1, 46, 22, 206...you will find bridges with an engraved marking concrete saying like 1934 WPA.

President John Kennedy – JFK – asked the people of this country what they could do for this country. He inspired and empowered adults, especially young ones, to help the unfortunate here and overseas. Vista and The Peace Corps were created. I have a niece that is finishing her first year of a two-year term in Senegal with the Peace Corp. I thank her for her service.

Martin Luther King took his power and empowered people to stand up for black rights and civil rights for all people.

Let us not forget Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cathy Stanton who in Seneca Falls started the women's' movement and empowered a movement of woman to grant women the right to vote. A wonderful life

What about the Parent/ Child Relationship? The parent exerting the Power to limit an activity (like riding a bike beyond the immediate neighborhood). Then, empowering the child to ride the bike across town or even 40 miles on a day trip. Then, riding to Island Beach State Park from Livingston in one day with just a friend.

Maybe one of the greatest examples is of Jesus as the children to join him and empowering their innocence with Power and Grace God. A peaceful but strong power.

So, we have looked at some important people in our country with power and the gift to empower others. Other in the world I can think of Winston Churchill and the London Air Raid in World War II, Mother Theresa and care for the unfortunate, and Nelson Mandela and Apartheid.

I believe we have an idea of Power and empowerment. Sermon notes suggest to talk about one or the other. The more got into this subject the less I could separate. I just have image of a strong, powerful person or movement empowering others to buy in, to follow.

So, we are back with our two guys in Israel. Elijah, a great prophet. He had defeated the infamous Baal – the Demon God...God of the Phoenicians. He caused a drought for 3 years in Israel through prayer. You could say he was God's right man. Elijah needed a person assist in carrying out God's wishes and his word. God chose Elisha. He was a simple ploughman in a farmer's field.

Now the scripture reading opens up with Elijah knowing his time on Earth is drawing to and end. God has one more trip for him. Now, Elijah knows he has this tag along, young guy who has been his loyal apprentice and assistant. He thinks he will take Elisha to Gilgal and continue on the trip and leave Elisha in Gilgal. Not get him involved. He can go back to his normal life in the fields.

Once work was done in Gilgal, he told his apprentice, Elisha, that God wanted him for work in Bethel. Elisha, you stay here. Elijah says to him, “No Way, as YAWEH lives and as you live, I will follow. The two proceed to Bethel.

Now, scripture leaves out verses 3 thru 5. I think the writer wants the reader to take a leap of faith. I want to share with you since I believe it adds a little more filler. Now it is a story that is a sandwich with some good stuff between two slices of verse.

Vs. 3 The Sons of the Prophets, a group of about 50 people. Just following Elijah, like groupies, who were at Bethel. They came to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that YAWEH will take your master from you, today!” He said, “I know it. Keep Silent!”

Vs. 4 Elijah told Elisha to stay in Bethel for YAWEH is sending me to Jericho. Elisha said again “by the life of YAWEH and by your life , I will not leave you.” So off to Jericho, they go.

Vs. 5 Again, the Sons of Prophets (around 50) approached Elisha and said that” YAWEH will take your master from you today.” Elisha said, “I know that! Keep silent!”

Back to the scripture reading at vs. 6, Elijah tells Elisha a third time that God has called me to Jordan. I want you to stay here. And, Elisha says again “that as long as Yaweh and you live, I will not leave you.” So off to Jordan they go with 50 other guys following them in the distance.

Now Jordan is on the other side of the Jordan River. On the bank is Elijah and Elisha along with 50 other guys following them in the distance These had

their own groupies. How are the two getting across the river. Well Elijah, takes his mantle. A mantle is a piece of clothing that Elijah wore to show he was a prophet. I believe it draped over the shoulder. Well, he took the mantle, rolled it up and strikes the water hard. The water parted and their dry land to the other side. There is no mention of the group of 50 going along. Maybe God did not want the others to see what was going to happen.

Now the two crossed the river, saw the river parted and probably thanked God for what happened.

Elijah turns to Elisha and says "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." REPEAT

Elisha probably said to himself WOW! You talk'n to me!

We have a star prophet, Elijah, and "wet behind the years" apprentice prophet. The one with more social presence asking the lesser: what can I do for you.

PAUSE

I am sure all of you have been in that moment, maybe less earth shattering.

What was going through your brain with question?

What do you think was going through Elisha's brain?

What discussions were you having in your mind and ego before giving an answer. Maybe someone was sharing or showing graciousness, care, and appreciation for you. This could come from someone changing jobs, one retiring, a teacher, or person moving.

And, Elisha said” Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit!.: WOW!

REPEAT

Talking about going for the gusto. Just a few lines earlier Elisha was a clinging on telling Elijah where you go, I will go. I will not let you go. You feel the clinginess’ and the insecurity.

Elisha seems to be a little taken back. He tells Elisha that you asked for a hard thing. But, knowing God is watching and listening, Elijah states, if you see me as I am taken away, you will be granted. If you don’t see me being taken away, you will not be granted.

This is the faith and trust between Master and student and also two friends. Let me show some examples that may visualize the relationship. The finality but the passing of the “mantle: so, to speak:

Dorothy and the Good witch in Wizard of Oz

Kung Fu – Young grasshopper and Master Po

My favorite, Luke Skywalker and Yoda

These were examples of Power empowering another.

Let’s go back to the story

Elijah and Elisha continue walking and talking – like any two friends on the trail – suddenly a fiery chariot and horse separates the two. Then, the chariot takes Elijah in a whirlwind into the sky. Elisha is distraught. He tears his garments in half. He picks up his mentor’s mantle and headed for the River Jordan. He gets to the river bank and yells out “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah”. He then

slams the mantle onto the river. The river parted. The group of 50 saw what happen to the river and knew that the transfer of power and the succession of the great prophet had been completed.

1. We have a great prophet resulting of being a student with another great prophet.

2. They became a Father/Son in this relationship, but also were Friends...like equal.

3. Elijah empowers Elisha to claim more authority

4. Elijah increases Elisha presence by bringing him alongside and not having him follow him

5. Elisha grows into a bold prophet with social greatness greater than Elijah

Rev. Jeff constantly reminds us, Jesus was a Jew and a Prophet. As a great prophet, he knew how to weave the Old Testament into his teachings and lessons.

As Christians, we have been empowered to share the power of God, through Jesus Christ And, has empowered each one of us with the Power of his Grace and Love. God's Power is grace.

The Old Testament said "do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

In the New Testament, Jesus said “Love each other. Just as I love you, you should love each other. NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE. JESUS MADE THE OT VERSION RELEVANT TO HIS BELIEF OF WHAT GOD WANTED.

Keep this in mind and try to think and act accordingly during the challenges and joys of living as God’s children in this beautiful but fragile world. And, during this July 4th week, as we, as Christians, celebrate the 243rd Birthday of the United States of America, one Nation under God.

Let’s Pray

God, like Elijah and Elisha, we have or had a power/empowerment relationship with others in our everyday lives. Please help us remember, remind us, and show us through our experiences big and small, of the Love of your Son, Jesus Christ, that you have empowered us. And one more little petition, Poppy, we also say everyday should be the spirit of Christmas, help us make everyday a little like Independence Day for everyone as one nation under God. We as Christians are empowered. Amen.