

10.20.24 ~ Pentecost 22
“God’s Power through Service”
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Exodus 15:1-6 ^{NIV}

¹ Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

“I will sing to the Lord,
for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea.

² “The Lord is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will praise him,
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

³ The Lord is a warrior;
the Lord is his name.

⁴ Pharaoh’s chariots and his army
he has hurled into the sea.

The best of Pharaoh’s officers
are drowned in the Red Sea.

⁵ The deep waters have covered them;
they sank to the depths like a stone.

⁶ Your right hand, Lord,
was majestic in power.

Your right hand, Lord,
shattered the enemy.

Leader: These Words Demonstrate God’s Power!

All: Thanks be to God!

Romans 8:13-30 ^{NIV}

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself

will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Leader: These are the words of God through the Apostle Paul.

All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Powerful and loving God, we thank you for reminding us that we serve because of you. We cannot give to others unless you have given to us. Create in us a humility to accept your love and power so that we may have the strength and motivation to meet the needs of others. We asked you to make us people of peace and today we ask you to make us people of action and righteous strength. You called us to be kingdom co-laborers, so we seek your guidance and power to serve in your name. Speak to us through this messenger as we refresh and refuel for the coming weeks. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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As of today, there are only 15 days until the Presidential Election, so if you haven't already voted, please plan to vote. Every vote is important, and every vote is confidential. I was reminded of that at the NorthStar Church Network Business and Breakfast Annual Meeting yesterday. I'll share more later, but there we had ballots to approve the budget and nominations for new officers and board members. We simply raised our ballots in a public way, much like we verbally vote at our church Annual and Quarterly meetings. **Our** next Membership Meeting is November 3rd right after the service; you are encouraged to participate.

We are transparent about our income and expenditures, while we vote on leadership and sincerely value your input.

That public service announcement ties in neatly with today's topic of serving. At the NorthStar meeting, we worshipped and heard testimonies of collaboration, regional pastor gathering reports, and the organization's vision for 2025. All the credit went to how God is working through people and transitions. I was a NorthStar Moderator in 2014 and served on the Board for three years, so I know that what we heard was only a portion of their work, graced and empowered through the love of Jesus.

Well, your church members and pastors also have testimonies of supernatural power. First, the heating was changed over this week, and that was just in time! Yes, there were a few items that needed attention, but they are manageable. Then this week, the printer stopped again; the copier worked fine, so we knew it was a network issue that was not properly addressed two weeks ago. Then the next day, the phones died; despite all my troubleshooting, the modem was bad and had to be replaced. Now, this was a short week too; I was hopeful but not sure how four or five of us were going to make 230 sandwiches for our twice monthly Sandwich Team, because several were out due to travel or illness. Our new Mission Center partner concert furniture was all moved and prepared for Saturday, but several of their members became ill and had to cancel! On top of that, my home computer had a security issue that took two long calls to resolve! Any one of these things can derail a plan, but have you heard the saying, "but for God?" I am not venting or being negative; it's just important to know that life and stuff happens every day

that we cannot control, but God can if we turn to him first. So, of course, this week I leaned on him more than ever! All things worked out; the heat is on, right? Personal and office equipment was repaired at no charge; God provided the Sandwich team workers (we had 10 volunteers after much prayer!) and we even had free donated bread for the sandwiches. Carol's devotional that morning was from Matthew 9:38: "38 So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields." It felt like a loaves and fishes miracle week! We are small, but through God, we are mighty. Let us not lose sight of his work through us. I'm sure you have your own personal overcoming stories as well.

The power to serve others comes from God and is completed through our efforts, but **also** through our weakness. This week was proof of that. Our church is proof of that statement! The passages today remind us of that statement. Although the Hebrews knew of God's power, they were so fearful of the Egyptians, they forgot how much God loved them and would save them. The Exodus passage is just a summary of the Red Sea (the Reed Sea) crossing; it is called the "Song of the Sea" (Ex. 15:1-21). Israel looks back to praise God for his deliverance, and praise God's power to defeat their enemies and express their gratitude and thanks for Moses' leadership and love for his people (even though they did not deeply trust him.)

This Egyptian enemy was both historic and symbolic. The beginning of the song (the part that I read) expresses joy and recommitment to the God who went before them through the sea. Moses himself led the people through the sea, so that shows **his** strong trust in God. In the words, he gives glory not to his own bravery, but to God's

power to save and deliver his people. He attributes the ancestors reminding them he is the same God as their fathers worshipped and will be the same God of their sons and daughters. He commends God for his infinite power, a divine warrior, endowed with incomparable perfection (Exodus 15:11). Beyond our passage we see Moses proclaim God's glory and holiness. When we face life's troubles, do we give God the glory? Or do we pat ourselves on the back for struggling through whatever the situation is?

We cannot serve anyone through our own power! It leads to burnout or exhaustion and misleads others about our faith. As the Apostle Paul lines out in the Romans passage, we must serve out of our weakness. God becomes the headline or the main character in our story if **we** don't try to take the credit for all he does for us! What enemies do we face other than the small inconveniences I mentioned at the beginning? Folks, we face huge systemic enemies like global hunger, disease, poverty, injustice, crime, violence, environmental challenges, hostility toward God or Jesus, etc. There are millions of people with no belief or wounds from the church, called "nones" and "dones." These people may never set foot in our building, especially on a Sunday, but they need us! More now than ever. In the Red Sea story, Egypt was the oppressor, but God's "cosmic victory" included natural elements of his original creation: the people, the water, high seas, deep, wet sand that sunk the enemy's chariot wheels, and the powerful winds that brought about the miracle escape. This was a redemptive act, as was Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

The passage in Romans 8 reminds us that as believers, we must **live** in the spirit because the **power** of the Holy Spirit is greater than

humankind's follies, or the sin, greed, and lust we treasure. Because we are adopted co-heirs with Christ, we have an untapped supernatural power to defeat Satan. ¹⁴“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God (Romans 8:14).” As his children, he loves us dearly! God sent his son to die for our sins because he created us; he loves us! And through Christ's sacrifice, we are saved from the enemy's influence. That's what being a kingdom co-laborer means! We are to co-labor with Christ and each other to save the creation! And that means service to others who do not yet know the love of Christ.

These may sound like churchy words, but the secret to serving others is serving through God's power, not our own. Yes, we are the instruments of his power, and for that we need prayer, energy, and attention to his guidance. If physical service is not possible, then you become our prayer warrior! Ruby at 102 puts us all to shame with her sandwich team commitment for more decades than we could remember! If you cannot serve with your church family, then do something on your own or in your community. As the ten (10) people on our temporary new sandwich team will attest, we had a lot of fun this week serving together! We are better together than apart. Size or budget are not hindrances to service; God will provide as he does every day! But ego, fear, human strength, pride, or distraction are hindrances. God loves us; we love others through him, even the so-called unlovable. Will you serve through God's power? There are many different opportunities. So, let's talk and definitely pray! The rewards are indescribable and eternal. Amen. ||

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we thank you today for these reminders that we serve only through your power and divine strength. Convey that strength

and insight to us. Encourage us through these Scriptures to trust you and your gifts in us for our ministries. Empower us to be evangelists through the actions of our service and stewardship. Draw others and ourselves closer to you as we serve in community together or contemplate how we may serve. And may we find renewal, commitment, and even beauty in our serving together. It is in your precious name, we pray, **Amen.**