

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; Mark 6:1-13

When the power goes out...

It is an eventuality that people in this neck of the woods learn how to prepare for, or at least react to. Whether it is the prospect of a severe weather event that is predicted by the television meteorologist, or an attentive eye cast towards the weather app that is on so many phones, people are warned to get ready for the worst. There is a familiar litany of actions that households launch in order to prepare for the reality that the power may go out.

When the power goes out...**It is not a matter of if, but a matter of when.** Sooner or later, no matter what the latitude on the map of the United States, in particular, there will come the time when the weather is out of human control.

And so those who are willing to think far enough ahead, ones who know that they have to be ready for the onslaught, much like the proverbial house builder that Jesus refers to when he describes the one who built his house upon a rock, knowing that the rain and wind would beat upon that house. Therefore, some people know how to adjust to adversity and realized catastrophe.

And those who are ready, who know that there will be times without power because of nature, **if they have a heart, they will share what power they do have with those who have none.**

And so the sermon is focused on **when the power goes out in ways other than weather events.**

For in the gospel lesson for today, **Jesus had discovered a lack of power in his hometown of Nazareth.** The words are arresting for those of us who are used to hearing and reading of the One who could restore sight to the blind, rise the sick from their beds and even still the wind and the waves on the sea. Apparently, there was nothing that was too hard or impossible for the Master. He could make believers out of anyone...except his own townspeople. The text says that Jesus was amazed at their unbelief. I guess that familiarity does breed contempt, or at least apathy. Therefore, the story notes, he could do no deed of power there.

When the power went out...what did Jesus do?

The first reaction was that the Master acknowledged the temporary loss of influence, and things were not going as planned or at least expected...to the point that He was amazed, especially because he couldn't do anything about it. Nevertheless, **He made peace with the situation.** The big splash at His hometown was a no-go...and He made peace with it. A new reality, then.

One will also notice that **he didn't retreat into a world that he was comfortable with, but moved on.** There were other villages to visit, and maybe even other rejections perhaps, but He went on with the ministry. **In addition, he sent the disciples out** to preach, teach and heal with the same message that Jesus had been sending forth.

Things and people had changed but not the promise of the grace and power of the kingdom of God. He made peace with the changes. Not everyone can do that, with rejection and new realities bringing resistance and avoidance.

I have to admit, that when I watch the news, **I find that many people fear the power going out...** but not in a meteorological or public utilities sense. There are those who see the increasing diversification of our nation, and worry that the power is going out.

That is, with America becoming even more of a nation with an immigrant DNA and growth, there are those who worry that the nation is headed to disaster. For the data is there that more whites are dying than are being born...and soon will be a minority. Which is not a bad thing, inherently. It is what has made us a great nation, still developing what a government of the people, by the people and for the people looks like to the world. We still have lots of people that come to America because they see promise and hope here, in spite of that nasty strain of xenophobia that we can't shake.

And that incurable virus of suspicion of the new and different, provides ratings for the media that want to make sure that you listen to their narrative. Xenophobia can be big business.

Rather, diversity, the new, the different has always been the strength of this country, in whatever way that diversity has arrived. And that diversity is the basis of the form of government we have had for almost 250 years. Abraham Lincoln, in one of his famous debates with Stephen Douglas, a couple years before the Civil War, noted that the Declaration of Independence was that document that was still a beacon for the nations of the world. Is it any wonder that the Statue of Liberty was set in New York harbor, the first sight in America that immigrants like my ancestors saw and still see. The power that illuminates that lamp on the top of Lady Liberty, symbolically, is never allowed to go out. Of course, because that's who we are. We adapt, we change, we welcome, and we say let's get to work, sometimes in ways take time to understand and others that are received with open arms.

But sometimes, yes, **we may have a sense of losing power within ourselves**, that has little to do with the weather or the inevitable complexity of the world around us. There are times when there is barely enough power to keep and the lights on in our lives. There are times when our prayers don't seem to get above the ceiling. There are thorns in the flesh, flies in the ointment, insoluble challenges, inexplicable resistance from ones that we thought knew us. And we just can't fix things with faith as we thought...**and even we may be amazed at our own unbelief...**

And so Paul remembers the words of the Lord who tells Him that our weakness becomes the arena for His witness and glory. For Paul, he found that he could live with that, and find even better life. He took power outages in stride.

**Power as we perceive it will go out from time to time. For us and for others.
Be ready to share the power that you do have when it does...letting others use
that power as they see fit for their own journeys.**

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.