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The Power of Jesus Colossians 1:11-20

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled^[e] you^[f] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.^[g]

The Supremacy of Christ

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in^[h] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in^[i] him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

There's a lot to get ready this week, isn't there?

Thanksgiving is coming in just a few days,
and even if you are not cooking,
you might be getting psyched up ***to be with family***,
or psyched up to just ***survive*** the holiday,
especially if you are ***struggling*** with grief, depression, or disappointment.

Maybe you are wondering ***how to navigate a family gathering***,
in this age of division, polarization, and harsh politics.
Not to mention talking about any issues of faith or religion!

Maybe you'd rather just ***skip Thanksgiving***,
or make ***sure your mouth is always full*** ---
so you don't have to answer any uncomfortable questions?
Anybody up for that?

Holidays are hard, aren't they?

And most of us are thinking about that,
And not celebrating ***Christ the King Sunday!***

But what if we need this special Sunday?

It wasn't a Christian holiday until the 1920's,
when Pope Pius XI thought that it would help for Christians to be reminded
that Christ is our King, especially amidst rising secularism and facism.
Well, we are still facing threats like that, and more---
so maybe this is a Sunday we need!

When Pope Pius XI wrote about this day,
he said that people who recognize Christ as King
can find real liberty, peace, and harmony.
We still need that, don't we?

In fact, maybe we desperately ***need to be reminded that Christ is King!***
That no one else is on the throne.
And that nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus.
Maybe we need a reminder that it is the power of Jesus that brings us life!

Today is about ***proclaiming and celebrating how Jesus Christ is Lord.***
Jesus ALONE is Lord---of our hearts, our lives, and our world.
Despite all the ***evidence that points to the contrary,***
We believe that Jesus is Lord!

But the deal is---***Jesus is NOT the kind of leader we expect.***
He wasn't the expected type of King then,
and He isn't today either.

We think of King, and we think ***power.***
Human power.

Probably because we are surrounded by people who fight for power,
and who want to flaunt it.
Jesus has power, but doesn't fight for it, or flaunt it.

And Jesus certainly doesn't use his power to hurt or coerce anyone.
Jesus does NOT use intimidation, violence, or corruption to get his way.
He is not a bully, he is not a dictator, he is not a power broker.

Talk about being counter cultural!
 Jesus is not like leaders in our world.
 And He is not like we are, either.

We ALL have some kind of power.

And today as we think about the power of Jesus,
 It's good to ask ourselves some questions, like:

What kind of power do we have?

How do we use it?

Whose interests are we serving?

And to whom are we accountable?

I think about the responsibility I have as a Pastor,
 But also as a Mom and a Wife.

Those are positions of power, all of them.

With important *interests* to serve, and a need for *accountability*.

Friday I was at the Presbytery meeting,
 and that's where some of my pastoral accountability comes from.
 Also from my Clergy groups,
 and my own Pastor and Spiritual Director.
 And I have friends and family who hold me accountable to my other roles.

What about you?

What kind of power do you have?

How do you use it?

Whom are you serving?

To whom are you accountable?

Because we all have power, we all need to think about these things.
 Power without understanding, or accountability—
 well, we know how that ends up, right?
 Not good!

In our world, power means—
get as much as you can, and use it for personal gain.

As Christians, we live by a different standard.

We follow the *example of Jesus Christ*—our Lord, our Leader.

And Jesus has a *very UNIQUE kind of power*.

Colossians talks about how our strength comes from *Jesus' glorious power*—
So we need to know about that power, right?

So, what is Jesus' power?

Well, Jesus tells us Himself, that He came *to serve, not to be served*.

Which is pretty much the opposite of worldly power.

This is what we see when Jesus stoops down to wash his disciples' feet,
and tells them to love each other like that.

This is what we see when he touches the outcasts to heal them,
Or invites women to join him in ministry.

We see Jesus constantly displaying this kind of power—

Serving, healing, teaching, preaching, feeding, inviting, welcoming.....
not expecting others to wait on Him hand and foot!

But we see something else amazing, too.

We see almost mind-boggling displays of something
we can barely understand---
and that is, *GRACE*.

Our Luke reading from Jesus' last moments on the cross

May seem like a strange thing to hear about power ---

but if we are trying to understand Jesus' power, it makes sense.

When we think about Jesus on the cross, we might think of him
as power-less at that moment.

Because the *power He does display on the cross* is something
that many leaders would abhor—

After all, He is innocent, but he does not protest his crucifixion.

He knows this is his mission,
to show God's love in this sacrificial way.

In fact, throughout the entire Passion,

Jesus doesn't defend himself against all the false accusations!

He goes to the cross, surrounded by mockery and derision,

And hangs between two common criminals.

Is that power?

On that cross, He promises a criminal, who begs for mercy,
“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”
 One of Jesus’ last acts on earth is powerful and revolutionary:
***Because Jesus shows his power,
 by offering grace and forgiveness.***

Grace.

It’s so hard for us to understand,
 Hard for us to receive,
 Hard for us to give away.

But this is part of Jesus’ power!

And this offer of grace on the cross is pretty ***scandalous***.
 We usually want to make sure that criminals get their punishment,
 and people who are ‘bad’ end up going somewhere other than to heaven,
 with all of the ‘good’ people!
 And yet, here is Jesus---promising eternal life to a criminal!

Talk about a different kind of power----

Jesus’ power is about grace and forgiveness.
 It’s all about service,
 and humility,
 and vulnerability.

And if we look at the whole of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection,
 all of it points to a kind of power
 that we so desperately need in our lives, and in our world today.
The power of LOVE.

When Paul is writing the letter to the Colossians,

He wants to make sure they understand Jesus was real—
 a real human being, fully human AND fully divine.
 And in the midst of this lofty language about everything
 coming into being through Jesus,
 about Him being the ruler of all,
 we see that Jesus also came to bring us some ***down to earth love***.

What does that POWER OF LOVE look like?

It looks like hope, and strength.

Like salvation, healing, and forgiveness.
And it looks like **LIGHT**--in a world of darkness.

***Jesus' power brings us light----
And saves us from the darkness of this world.***

Paul says this:

*He has **rescued us from the power of darkness** and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.^[a]*

As Christians, we are people of light.
We follow Jesus---whose POWER IS LIGHT.

One of the things we have **updated in our worship service** this past year is the welcoming and taking the **light of Christ**. This is such an important part of our worship, At the beginning of the service, and the end. And it is an integral part of our Christian faith.

We believe that when we gather for worship, it is the light of Christ that comes into this place, and enables us to worship. It is the light of Christ that **opens our eyes, our ears, our hearts**.

It is the light of Christ that allows us
To experience the **presence** of God,
To understand the **Word** of God,
To **worship, and celebrate, and praise** God!

That light on the Lord's Table in those candles, is POWERFUL---
Because it is our reminder that Jesus is in this place,
and Jesus is the light of our lives.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is referred to as the Word,
But He is also referred to as the Light.
John writes: *All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life,^[a] and the life was the **light of all people**. ⁵ **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.** (John 1:3-5)*

Think about that for a minute.
 We have the light of Christ in **us**,
 in this **place**,
 in this **body of believers!**
 And that light brings LIFE.
It shines in the darkness of our world,
And nothing can overcome it.

When I think about the power of Jesus as light, that speaks to me.
 I could use His light, especially this time of year—what about you?
 On these days when it gets dark so early,
 When the leaves have fallen, and the temperatures have dropped,
 When many days seem dreary,
 I need the light of Christ, shining in my heart and life.
 Shining in this world.

Maybe this is why we need Christ the King Sunday,
 A day to remember that Jesus is Lord of all?
 Because ***we need His light, right?***
 We need to remember that no matter how dark our lives may get---
Jesus can bring us light.
Because Jesus IS the light.
 Sometimes it's just a little ray here or there,
 Other times it's like a floodlight!

But we have his light---we don't have to live in darkness,
 We have his hope--
 Of a light that can save us, and rescue us from the dark.
 Whether that darkness be outside in the world,
 or inside our own hearts.

We only need to welcome Him, and his light---
 The light of grace, forgiveness, and love.

What will you do this Thanksgiving to welcome His Light?
 What will you do to remember His love?

Can you take a moment amidst the chaos to pray and breathe deeply?
 Can you ask for a time around the table to count blessings?

Can you say in your heart—Thank you, Jesus,
For all the gifts we take for granted?

The famous hymn, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*
comes from the **Book of Lamentations** in the Bible,
which is actually a book of sorrow.
It's a book of lament, over the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of God's people.

Which is what makes it so amazing—
Because in this book that recalls so much darkness,
There is so much **light**.
In this book of sorrow,
There is so much **hope**.
Because it calls to mind the love of God,
and the truth that we all know, but we all too often forget:
That when the night is over, the sun comes up again.
Even when we experience darkness, God brings light.
Although we may walk through dark valleys,
we are not alone, and we WILL see light again!
Talk about Good News!

Listen to these words from Lamentations 3:21-24:

But this I call to mind,

and therefore I have hope:

²² *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,^[b]*

his mercies never come to an end;

²³ *they are new every morning;*

great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ *"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,*

"therefore I will hope in him."

Friends, hear the Good News of the Gospel today:

Jesus Christ is Lord of all---He is King.

And Jesus' power, is the power of

service, grace, forgiveness, love.....And LIGHT.

He is the light of the world, and the light of our lives.

He is the light that shines in the darkness.

May we all welcome his love and light this Thanksgiving!

And for that, all God's people say, Amen.