

Intro: Take your Bibles and turn with me to Ephesians 1. Pg. 976. Greeting? I know we've all been pretty spoiled with the weather lately: the sun coming out, the temperatures are rising, and the winter was pretty much a breeze. I mean, we go from multiple blizzards last year to hardly having any snow this year. The only bizarre thing we can point back to over the past year was preparing for Hurricane Irene as she cruised up the eastern seaboard last August. Irene was one of the most destructive and deadly hurricanes to hit the U.S. in the past few decades.

Do you remember what it was like? People were stocking up their fridges, gassing up their vehicles, and preparing for some pretty nasty conditions. Thankfully, Irene weakened before she made it to New England but still had wind gusts in the 50-60 mph range, and with that brought power outages to almost 500,000 people, including *yours truly*. Did anyone else lose power during Tropical Storm Irene?

What happens when your power goes out? Well, we are forced to sacrifice many of the conveniences we regularly take for granted. We have to go find the flashlights, stock up on batteries, boil water, try to preserve all of the perishable items in the refrigerator, or maybe it's a good excuse for some of you try to consume all of those items! All in all, we would probably agree that it's just not that big of a deal. Inconvenient? Yes. End of the World? Hardly. When Irene hit, our power was restored in a little over 24 hours. Now, I'm not suggesting you call up National Grid or NStar and say, "Hey, why don't you cut my power for the next 48 hours?" But here's what I want you to think about this morning. It's one thing when the power goes out in your home; it's another thing when the power goes out in your life. We all love power. We all love to have the ability to effect change. And that's really what we're talking about when we talk about power: energy directed to accomplish change.

You may not realize this, but God wants you to live your life with power, an extraordinary, life-giving power. Do you live your life with power? Last week we looked at "The Scandalous Power of the Cross." This week we're going to think on...

"The Scandalous Power of the Empty Tomb" Ephesians 1:15-23

Let's read the first few verses of our passage. Here's my prayer for us this morning, that the Holy Spirit would help each person...

The Point: Live your life with the power God supplies.

Read 15-18a. You say, "hold up! I thought it was Easter Sunday. Why aren't we in the gospels reading about the resurrection of Jesus? This is a prayer. Well, I think you'll see the rationale as we roll through this passage together. Here's my first encouragement for us this morning. We must...

I. See what God has done for those who believe (1:15-18a).

Verse 15 begins by saying: "For this reason..." He's referring back to what he just wrote in Ephesians 1:3-14 where he tells these new believers they have been given "every spiritual blessing in Christ." They have been chosen, made holy and blameless, loved, predestined, adopted, given redemption and forgiveness, lavished with grace, united with Christ, obtained an inheritance, saved, and sealed all to the praise of his glory!

In light of all of the spiritual benefits they have received, Paul gives God thanks for them and begins to pray a very intentional and bold prayer.

- First, he is thankful because they possessed "faith in the Lord Jesus" and "love toward all the saints."
 - Faith: they were actively trusting in Christ for their salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9... Vertical relationship, taken care of...
 - Not only did they possess faith, they also had "love toward all the saints" Horizontal relationship, take care of... This is the beauty of the gospel.

- Paul is fired up about this. He loved these people and he loved God so much that he could say that he in v. 16 that he was constantly remembering them in prayer.
- So what does he pray for them? Here we go...
- **Verse 17** *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him”*
 - We direct our prayers to God through Jesus because he is sovereign over all things. He runs the show! We are constantly dependent upon his grace for everything in our lives.
- What does Paul want them to possess? “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” He is referring to spiritual wisdom and insight that grows as we grow in our knowledge of God.” Everything that will follow is predicated on knowing God. [Trinitarian formula:]
- Now **verse 18:** *“having the eyes of your hearts enlightened”*
- Paul says, “There is seeing and there is seeing.” We see with our physical eyes, but we also need to have spiritual sight. So think about this: You may be able to see and remain blind. You may think you see, but in reality, you don’t really see that well at all
- Paul is praying that these believers would see with the eyes of their heart... He says similarly in 2 Corinthians 5:9: **“We walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Cor. 5:9)**

Trans: So the first ingredient Paul’s request is that they would be able to see what God has done for them. He explains what he wants them to see beginning in **verse 18**, which brings us to our 2nd encouragement.

II. Know the hope and glorious riches of those who believe (1:18).

- Paul is prays they would have a threefold understanding, and he covers the first two in verse 18.
- First, he wants them to *“know what is the hope which he has called you”*
 - Hope: confident expectation in God’s ability to fulfill his promises
 - This hope is found by looking back. Called you: review calling
 - Do you have this hope? Hope of abundant life in Christ today? Hope of eternal life tomorrow? The hope of seeing the complete restoration Jesus will bring to end all evil and suffering.
 - **“The future is as bright as the promises of God.”**
- Secondly, he prays that they would *“[know] what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”*
 - So we must immediately ask: whose inheritance? A quick reading might lead us to conclude that this is our inheritance like in 13-14 (everything we just discussed and more)
 - But Paul is actually praying that we would know the riches of God’s glorious inheritance.
 - You say, what’s his inheritance? his church, his people, and God delights *in us!*
 - What a surprise! Not our inheritance, but his inheritance in us. This phrase tells us that God’s people are incredibly valuable to God.
 - You may not feel loved or valued by anyone in your life. Let me tell you that God loves you. God places an incalculable value on your life because you are made in his image.

Trans: We need to know the hope of our calling and the riches of God’s inheritance in the saints. That’s point two and that was quick... Now, we’re going to camp out on our third and final encouragement.

III. Live with the power God gives to those who believe (1:19-23).

- Paul has given three primary pieces of knowledge that he is asking God to fill them with: hope, riches, power.
- He gives the most detail and reflection on this third one, power.
- Why? Possibly because this deals with our present need more than the others.

“and what is the immeasurable greatness (some translations say “surpassing greatness) of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might”

- This is one most potent passages on the power available to Christians to live a transformed life. I don’t want to get too technical here, but I want you to see what Paul is doing in verse 19. He uses four powerful words to help us see the unlimited power of God. It’s as if he cannot stack enough terms to

describe this. Taken together they refer to the overwhelming power of God to effect change in us and through us. Look at this.

“immeasurable greatness. power according to the working of his great might.” Does that work for you? Does that get the job done?

- Paul moves quickly to show us where this power was most impressively on display. **Verse 20.**

“[this immeasurable great power toward us to who believe according to the working of his great might] (verse 20) that he worked in Christ (you ready for this?) when he raise him from the dead”

- Paul, are you kidding me? Did you catch that?
- The power that he is talking is the same power he exercised when he raised Jesus from the dead.
- The resurrection of Christ stands at the center of our faith. We believe as we cited in the creed this morning that: Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, and then on the third day, he rose again. The resurrection of Christ is a non-negotiable of our faith.
- There are so many practical implications to the resurrection of Jesus.
 - His resurrection gives us living hope. **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,” (1 Peter 1:3-4)**
 - His resurrection guarantees that everything we do for him is not in vain. **“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” (1 Cor 15:58)**
 - His resurrection guarantees our resurrection. The power of death was shattered in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What does Jesus say in John 14:19: **“Because I live, you also will live.” (John 14:9)**

• Paul goes on to say that same power did much more than raise Jesus from the dead. verse 20. It also.. *“seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:19-23)*

- A few more observations about the power of God in Christ:

- 1) After Jesus was raised from the dead, he ascended to the right hand of God where he presently reigns over all things.
- 2) Jesus dominates all other spiritual forces (maybe reword after checking commentaries). He is above all. To take that one step further...
- 3) Jesus’ name is elevated above all other names. This is true in every age. Paul says, it’s true now, and it will be true forever.

- App: Everyone wants to make a name for themselves. Athletes, artists, rappers, the intern at your workplace, it doesn’t matter, we all want to be recognized. We all crave notoriety. We all want to be on the top of the mountain, [like my Kentucky Wildcats.]. But the only one who sits on the top of the mountain is the one who made the mountain.
- Jesus is elevated over every name that is named. He has no rivals! He is the undethronable, deathproof King. Jesus is God & just to make sure he covered everything, Paul says,
- “Everything is under his feet.” Jesus is over all things.
- And this Jesus is the “head of the church.” He leads his people with all authority. This is, by the way, why we have complete confidence that our church will thrive here in Greater Boston. Why? Because Jesus leads this mission. Not Tanner, Not Jon, Not our members, Jesus.

Trans: You say, “You’re talking all of this theology... What does this have to do with me?” Remember, the power that raised Jesus and causes him to reign over all things, that power is available to us.

- This is a staggering truth. Mind-blowing. & this truth is intended to change us.
- Let’s break this down... I want to give you TWO things to consider...

1. *All of the resources of God are available to us!*

- Peter puts it like this: **“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,” (2 Peter 1:3)**
- Paul is not praying that they would receive new power. He is asking that they would know the power that already belongs to them! If you’re in Christ, this is a present possession...
- This power enables us to live life to God’s glory (our created purpose) and helps us become progressively more and more like Christ.
- Do you want to know why most of Greater Boston and our American culture is so indifferent to the gospel? So apathetic? Because they are not consistently seeing the real thing!
- This is why many people don’t see the relevance of Christ & Christianity, but Jesus and the life that he gives is as relevant as your next breath. Why?
- Because Jesus brings utter transformation. Everything is different. Life takes on a new shape. You see the world through different lenses. He changes the way we work, serve, speak, give, parent, and view others. I’d say that’s fairly relevant.

2. ***This truth leaves us without excuse.***

- But I can’t... But it’s so hard... Listen, the gospel can free us from any struggle, any temptation, any addiction. If Jesus can overcome sin & death for us, do you think he lacks the resources to help us through the greatest battles in our life? Think again.
- I talk to many people who say their spiritual life is like a roller coaster. They struggle to find a consistent devotion to God. They find it difficult to live a life that consistently glorifies God. Sure we all have ups and downs, but the power of God is available to us to consistently live in a way that is consistent with the gospel. Got it?

Conclusion:

Jim Elliot wrote a piercing challenge to live with this power about 60 years ago. He said: **“We are so utterly ordinary, so commonplace, while we profess to know a Power the Twentieth Century does not reckon with. . . . We are spiritual pacifists, non-militants, conscientious objectors in this battle-to-the-death with principalities and powers in high places. Meekness must be had for contact with men, but brass, outspoken boldness is required to take part in the comradeship of the Cross. We are “sideliners” -- coaching and criticizing the real wrestlers while content to sit by and leave the enemies of God unchallenged. The world cannot hate us; we are too much like its own. Oh that God would make us dangerous!”** – Jim Elliot

- What is he saying? Get in the game. Live a life reflective of the truths you profess. Make a difference because God has given you everything you need to live for him!
- I love how he ends, “Oh that God would make us dangerous!” Elliot is not suggesting we inflict harm against others. He is saying we should be active in pushing back the realities of darkness and live a life that displays great liberality. We should be liberal in love, liberal in kindness, liberal in mercy, liberal in forgiveness, liberal in good deeds... and the list goes on...
- What does a powerful, dangerous life look like? Not fireworks... its’ the thousands of little moments, the thousands of little decisions that demonstrate you belong to God.
- How does this become a reality? Through Christ. Through faith and belief in Jesus.
- So we end with the beginning. It’s all about “faith in our Lord Jesus”

Are you waffling on this Jesus thing? Are you not sure he’s worth it?

- Let me give you one more Eliot quote: **“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.” To gain Christ is to gain it all.**
- What better time to decide to follow Christ than today, Easter Sunday?

The question for us who know Christ is: why don’t we live with this kind of power?

- Are you in with Christ? Do you live like it? Does your life look more like the power is out or that Christ is in you?
- The challenge for all of us is to believe the gospel. Gospel... Clear Action Steps... Pray...