

Pastor's Message – 10/30/22  
Ephesians 1:11-23

I know that we haven't used this dialogue at the Waupun United Methodist Church since I've been here, maybe you have in the past where the worship leader says, "God is good" and the Congregation responds, "**All the time.**" "All the time" and people respond, "**God is good.**" Perhaps it's the state of the world we live in; maybe that's harder to believe and to say these days.

The Confirmation class and I talked about that at our meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> how, as we read the Bible, we can see God's grace all the way through, from Genesis to Revelation. I've recently rediscovered a favorite musical of mine, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolored Dreamcoat, which tells the story of how, even in the midst of certain despair and hopelessness, God still creates good how of what humanity might intend for evil. In fact, if I could only choose a favorite book, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, they might be Genesis, wherein we hear the story of Joseph, and our book that contains our Bible reading for today: Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

The Letter to the Ephesians is one of the most optimistic books in the Bible. Listen again to verses 11 and 12 in chapter 1, "It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

In addition, the Ephesians are encouraged to have confidence in their calling because it is based on God's divine power and might. So great is this inheritance, so overwhelming the divine power making it possible, that the response of the faithful is to do nothing less than "live for the praise" of Christ's glory.

This passage from Ephesians is one of the Bible readings for All Saints' Day, November 1- this coming Tuesday, but I heard something else – something more. I heard that the saints are those who put their hope and trust in the God who has prepared in us a good work and will be faithful to complete it. This God, who was put to death on a cross, is raised up again on the third day. This God,

who places angels at the head and foot of the body that had lain on the slab in a darkened tomb but is not raised and reminds us that this slab is the "mercy seat" of a God who offers forgiveness and salvation in and through Jesus Christ. This is the God who encourages us to believe that the worst we will face in life is not the last and death will not be the final word and in and through Jesus, God is victorious! This is the God who, Paul writes, offers us the same power that is in Jesus: endless energy, boundless strength!

Have you considered how much power you have available to you? In Christ, the potential is almost unfathomable. It's yours to use in the proper manner. But it's also almost never tapped. And what power is that? It's the force Paul mentions in Ephesians 1:19 and 20 - - "His power for who trust Him ... All this energy issues from Christ: God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule."

In order to use this power, our hope must be in Christ and that glorious inheritance he promised us. Is that what you are hoping today? Most of the people seem to trust in their feelings, in their intelligence, in some politician, or in some philosophical concept.

But feelings change. Genius fades. Politicians tell people what they think people want to hear. Philosophies come and go faster than the latest Tik-Tok or YouTube video. But God raised Jesus from the dead and that fact won't change. If you believe in that truth and commit your life to Christ, that great power is yours, too.

I think it's appropriate to paraphrase Paul's Letter to the Ephesians in chapter 3 as we remember the saints of this Church who have gone on before us where he writes about our God "who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or even [imagine]." That verse resonates with me, helps me to persevere in my spiritual journey even when I falter, fall and sin, and gives me hope.

We are here, this Church is here because of their efforts and their faithfulness. It is good to remember those who have died in the past year since the last All Saints' Day: Miriam Gerrits, Louise Miescke, Viola McRobert, Joe Dorgan, and Jean Bartlett. It is good to remember their contributions and how they can encourage us

and help us remember that “God is good – **All the time.**” “All the time – **God is good!**”

Paul’s goal in his Letter to the Ephesians is neither to educate nor to simply inform. On the contrary, he seeks to transform the saints at Ephesus so that they may be encouraged to persevere and to remember God’s gift of a power within them. Paul’s words describing God’s power are extreme as he heaps up adjective upon adjective. For example, it is not just “energy,” but “endless energy.” In addition, it is not just “strength,” but “boundless strength.”

“This power” is at work within all believers, not just the Ephesians. It is the same power that “raised [Christ] raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything.” (vv. 20-21).

At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ’s body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.” (vv. 22-23).

Does this church that you claim as your church have a sense of its own power and responsibility? Is it using and how is it using that power to serve the community and world around it? Do we live differently and speak differently because we have God’s power within us?

God’s power is at work in us when we show our love for someone in little ways, when the way we are with others gives the message that we care about their well-being.

God’s power is at work in us when we help to carry another’s load,

God’s power is at work when we notice that we are all on a noble, though sometimes lonely, journey.

The “endless energy and boundless strength,” given to believers can make it possible for us to cure the sick, raise the dead, heal the broken-hearted, bring hope to those who are in despair, shine light to those who are in darkness, forgive wrongs and mend fences. And here’s the connection with All Saints’ Day, saint-power,

given to believers, can enable us to help bring sinners to God and break down barriers among those who are divided.

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. That knowledge is about what we receive and what we leave. It is a gift to us and a gift to others. It is a certainty for those who believe: sealed by the Holy Spirit through the welcome into God's family we receive at our baptisms and the nourishment we receive at the Lord's Table and the wisdom we hear in the words of Scripture.

That word, the word of victory and power in Jesus, brings hope to the hopeless and promise to the despairing and light to those who walk in darkness. That is the gift: the gift of God's desire for His world, His church, and His people.