Power from on High Peace Presbyterian Church

Luke 24:44-53 & John 17:20-26 After Ascension Sunday

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There was power in the Peace Center yesterday – the power of teamwork and persistence, and the sheer power of energy and muscle to move and organize so many items, working together. There was power in the decision of not just one, but two families each generously donating $4000 to improve the flooring in the Fellowship Hall and beyond. Earlier in the week, maybe even last week, there was power and power tools used to begin shaping a Peaceful path through the woods, so that a place of meditation might be prepared for us and our community. The power of meaningful relationship was seen Friday night in the potluck gathering of folk who joined Peace nearly a year ago as we shared stories and ideas. There is power daily in congregational care people praying for every single person at Peace by name. There is power weekly in the sharing of prayer concerns in our Bible studies, prayer groups, ministry teams and small group meetings. There is enormous power in our words, in the way we treat one another both here in worship and out there. In fact, sometimes we wish we did not have so much power – when we say something that we regret. There is power because it has been given us by Christ. Hear the story of the Ascension, a day so mysteriously powerful.

**Luke 24:44-53** (NRSV)

**44**Then he said to them, *“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”* **45**Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, **46**and he said to them, *“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,****47****and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.****48****You are witnesses of these things.****49****And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”* **50**Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. **51**While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. **52**And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; **53**and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Stay here until you are clothed with power from on high – that is Jesus last instruction before ascending. And then we read in the seventeen’s chapter of John’s Gospel his prayer for our oneness. Think for a second about the One who is One with God, who is God, praying.

**John 17:20-26** (NRSV)

**20***“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word,****21****that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17%3A20-26&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26770a)*] so that the world may believe that you have sent me.****22****The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,****23****I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.****24****Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

***25****“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me.****26****I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”*

So that the love with which You have loved me may be in them, and I in them. Christ in me, Christ in you. God’s love, the same love that was in Christ, is in us? Have we really considered the power of this? Christ prays not just for his followers but for those who will believe in him because of his followers, that they may ALL be one – one like the Trinity is One. This way the world will see and believe.

Christ says that he has given us his glory. That’s a big gift – that’s power. How different would life be, if you reminded yourself daily that you are walking around with all the glory of Jesus Christ, that the love God has for Christ is all ours too, and that we are one with all others who believe, and that the purpose of our oneness is that others may see the love of Christ.

*Our deepest*[*fear*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Fear)*is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are*[*powerful*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Powerful)*beyond*[*measure*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Measure)*. It is our*[*light*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Light)*, not our*[*darkness*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Darkness)*that most frightens us….You are a*[*child*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Child)*of*[*God*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/God)*. Your playing small does not*[*serve*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Serve)*the*[*world*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/World)*. There is nothing*[*enlightened*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Enlightened)*about shrinking so that other people will not*[*feel*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Feel)*insecure around you. We are*[*all*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/All)*meant to shine, as children do. We were*[*born*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Born)*to make manifest the*[*glory*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Glory)*of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are*[*liberated*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Liberated)*from our own fear, our*[*presence*](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Presence)*automatically liberates others.*  (Marianne Williamson)

John Philip Newell offers us a beautiful summary of 14th century Mother Julian’s visions:

She says that Christ is the one who connects us to the “great root” of our being. . . “God is our mother as truly as God is our father,” she says. We come from the Womb of the Eternal. We are not simply made by God; we are made “of God.” So we encounter the energy of God in our true depths. And we will know the One from whom we have come only to the extent that we know ourselves. God is the “ground” of life. So it is to the very essence of our being that we look for God. . . .What Julian hears is that “we are all one.”

We have come from God as one, and to God we shall return as one. And any true well-being in our lives will be found not in isolation but in relation. Julian uses the image of the knot . . . to portray the strands of time and eternity intertwined, of the human and the creaturely inseparably interrelated, of the one and the many forever married. Christ’s soul and our soul are like an everlasting knot. The deeper we move in our own being, the closer we come to Christ. And the closer we come to Christ’s soul, the nearer we move to the heart of one another. In Christ, we hear not foreign sounds but the deepest intimations of the human and the divine intertwined. And for Julian, the key to hearing what is at the heart of the human soul is to listen to our deepest longings, for “the desire of the soul,” she says, “is the desire of God.” Of course, many of our desires have become infected or overlaid by confusions and distortions, but at the root of our being is the sacred longing for union. It is to this deepest root that Christ leads us.

Our soul is made “of God,” as Julian says, so it is grounded in the desires of God. And at the heart of these holy desires is what Julian calls “love-longing.” It is the most sacred and the most natural of yearnings. The deeper we move within the human soul, the closer we come to this divine yearning. And the nearer we come to our true self, “the greater will be our longing.”

Paul the Apostle says, Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?  —1 Cor. 6:19 He says, I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me. —Gal. 2:20

Unfortunately, we’re not very well acquainted with God-within. There’s a part of us that doubts our deep connection to this divine love. Contemplative spirituality helps us overcome this disconnect. It’s one thing to have a “personal relationship” with the transcendent Christ—much like a relationship with a friend or lover. It’s quite another thing to become one with Christ, by growing familiar with his immanent power and love as described in John 17. It’s from this oneness that enduring love of God and neighbor is possible. (Richard Rohr, Center for Contemplation and its daily meditations)

Centering prayer offers a way to grow in intimacy with God, moving beyond conversation to communion. The focus of centering prayer is the deepening of our relationship with the living Christ. We are going to engage in a centering prayer now: I invite you to sit with a relaxed but upright posture, and to gently place your hands in your lap with open palms…. Close your eyes and think only of the loving power of God which dwells in you….Imagine that love and that power moving into your open hands, through your breath and through your veins, beating with your heart… Think of that love and how its immeasurable power connects you to others… As you contemplate, notice your body, notice your thoughts, notice your breath, and continue to think about the power of God’s love dwelling in you… Do not fight with distractions… Simply acknowledge them and keep gently returning to pure love, powerful love, embracing love that connects you to others… Return to Love, trust in its power to transform you and others and ascend above all that would distract. Let everything else fall away…