

## Victory of the Lamb – April 15, 2018 – Pastor Bill Limmer

### Ephesians 1:13-23 Act II – Emboldened –

More than a few people in the Los Angeles organization were saying, “I didn’t think he had it in him.” Andre Ingram was called up from the Lakers NBA Development League team this past week to play in the last two games of the NBA’s regular season. When Andre entered Tuesday’s game against the Rockets, he entered as a 32 year old rookie. Thirty-two is ancient for the NBA, let alone for a rookie. In his first game, this 32 year old ancient scored 19 points, going 6-8 from the field and hitting a number of free throws. When he was at the free throw line near the end of the game, the crowd in the Staples Center was shouting to him, MVP! MVP! “I didn’t think he had it in him.”

Many people, including those closest to him were saying of the disciple of Jesus named Peter: “I didn’t think he had it in him.” Remember Peter, in his Act I, cowardly, yet boldly, denied to a small group of people that he even knew Jesus at all on three different Good Friday occasions, even though Peter had eaten with him, traveled with him, saw him perform one miracle after another. And on the third occasion he used a blue streaked tirade, saying all the words you know and maybe some you don’t, that he wasn’t even an acquaintance of this guy, Jesus. But his Act II was filled with a courageous sermon before thousands that launched the church into the first century. Peter stood up in front of thousands of people in his Act II and proclaimed in Acts 2:23,24 and 36 **You, with the help of wicked men, had Jesus killed by nailing him to a cross. <sup>24</sup>God raised him up! God freed him from death’s dreadful grip, since it was impossible for death to hang on to him. . . <sup>36</sup>“Therefore, let all Israel know beyond question that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”** This is a metamorphic change, the difference between living as a caterpillar and living as a butterfly. What made the difference in Peter’s life? The power source he was relying on - the difference between his own power and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Whose power are you relying on for your life? It is in our human nature to rely on ourselves and what we can do. We have will power and determination. Power plays aren’t just in hockey. In our lives power plays are played out in the work place, in organizations, institutions, relationships even in church. These are all because we try to get ahead or stay ahead but there is a power that is far greater than our human power, will and intellect. There is a power that is ours to use that so many times we just set off to the side or aren’t even aware of. So along with Paul, this is my prayer for you and me - Ephesians 1:18,19 **I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power.** You see we have this power that we don’t often see. We have this power that we don’t often feel. And that power is the power of God. This power of God is incomparably great power to live our lives that we often put off to the side.

As I have been running over the last two or three weeks, God and I keep talking about how much you and I don’t get how devastating and deadly sin and Satan are. And that is one of the reasons why we don’t perceive the greatness of God in our life. We, so often, minimize sin, normalize sin, or even justify sin. We will say things like that accident at Kilbourn and Water was horrible, that the house fire was horrible, that the shooting was horrible, the use of chemical weapons is horrible, tomahawk and cruise missiles and war is horrible, but we won’t put it together that without sin that accident, the fire, the shooting, those wars, wouldn’t have happened. We think we can play with the devil and turn him off like the water faucet or that we can keep our enemy Satan out of our lives if we just shut lock the door.

Satan is a prowling around looking to get us our loved ones and everyone else at our weak spots. Here is how I know you and I do this: because if we understood the deadliness of sin and Satan, and how God has rescued us from sin and how he is actively keeping Satan away from us, we would be a buzz, about more than the bacon wrapped wienies at the victory Café or the buzz that finally we have dates for the soccer camp.

So again, this is my prayer for you and for me: Ephesians 1:17-19 **I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.** <sup>18</sup> **I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,** <sup>19</sup> **and his incomparably great power.** The word for know here means more than just knowledge, it means to know by experience, to know intimately. Raise your hand if you are a coffee lover. A lot of us can't leave the house before we have a cup, or two. How many of us coffee lovers would be content to know that there is a cup for coffee in the cupboard and leaving it there and going about our day as if we had a cup of coffee? How many of us coffee lovers would be content to pour a cup of coffee and just let it sit there and say we had a cup of coffee to start our day. No way right. We are getting the cup, we are pouring the coffee and we are tasting it, drinking it, enjoying it. Inking it, and maybe more. This is to know by experience.

There is a difference between knowing that God is all powerful, that God's power is at work in our life and actually experiencing his power in our life. And friends God's power is in our life. And God's power is here in his word and sacrament. Friends, God's word is living and active and powerful. And sometimes we just keep the bible at arms distance, some days we look at it and some days we don't even do that. Some days we look at it and doubt there is anything in it for us. Some days we read it, just black on white without experiencing it. Open it up and pray, "open the eyes of my heart Lord. I want to see you." Like I mentioned in the blog this week, don't just read the promises of God, claim the promises of God for your life. For those of you wondering how to read your bible here is a simple four step process. A church reformer gives you and me this instruction when it comes to how to connect with God's powerful Word: First, read a book carefully; then study it chapter by chapter; then verse by verse; and then word by word. For it is like a person shaking a fruit tree – first shaking the tree and gathering the fruit which falls to the ground, then shaking each branch, then twig, and last of all looking carefully under each leaf to see that no fruit remains. And then once we have the fruit, we eat it. Eat up and enjoy God's Word. Friends it is good for us to power up not with our own power but with God's. Remember your baptism. Baptism is God's commitment to you not your commitment to him. In your baptism you were connected to Christ: Romans 6:4 **We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.** Baptism, as far as the application of water in the name of God is one and done, but it is a daily blessing and daily source of God's power for new life.

This is how Scripture describes God's power, the power that is in our lives for us to experience and live by: Ephesians 1:20-23 **That power is the same as the mighty strength** <sup>20</sup> **he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,** <sup>21</sup> **far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.** <sup>22</sup> **And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,** <sup>23</sup> **which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.** The power that is yours for the using is the same power that rose Jesus from the dead, the same power

that defeated death. That's incomparable power. Death is over eternal life is in. Feel, own, live, and enjoy that power that you are already living eternally. The power that seated Christ at the right hand of God is the same power that is at work inside of you and me now. The power that has Jesus far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, that power is available to you now. Without that power working in your life and mine right now we would have less than a snowball chance in hell of surviving. Friends God is making you survive, all day, all night, even when we sin, or you and I would be in hell. All things are under the feet of Christ – disease, disaster, sickness, fights, wars, medicine, government, knowledge, millions of things we don't even know about are under Jesus control and you have that same power. Are you claiming that power?

When things are going well, and life is good, it's like driving a four-cylinder on a level road. But you know as well as I do that there is more to life than a smooth level road. Sooner or later, there are some tough hills to climb. Strained relationships, illness, losing a loved one, financial problems, confusion, lack of direction, guilt of yesterday and the fear of tomorrow. Does your life ever resemble going up steep mountain side in 20 year-old four cylinder car? Are you weak? Tired? Struggling? Insecure? Not sure where to turn? Are you oblivious? Where do you need God's power in your life?

God's power is for you and me to not only be in awe of but to enjoy. I have seen and experienced this power in my own life: I have seen the sick healed; marriages restored; the bitter become sweet; the greedy become generous; I have seen selfish people become servants; I have seen the jaded become forgiving; I have seen the angry become joyful. I have seen people who felt absolutely worthless become productive members of the society, I have seen people have fried their brain through addiction be an amazing example of God's love in the community. The list could go on. And people would say, "I didn't think they had it in them."

Do you know what the key in each of those things? It is the power of God, not the power of the person. We are victorious in power not when we stop sinning (that's impossible this side of heaven) but when we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus for forgiveness. We are victorious in power not when we grow up and stop needing to rely on Jesus so much but when we rely on him more every day. We are victorious in power not when our faith is the marvel of others, but when we who are weak in faith take refuge in our Savior, who gives and strengthens faith through his power. God lead us to live according to his incomparable great power! It is in you by grace through faith!

