

Seeing God's Power 7-3-16

Lord, God, forgive us for being fearful. Help us to know Your perfect love that casts out fear. Help us to gear up for whatever it is You have for us. Your will is perfect; Your timing on time, Your love beyond measure. Help us to walk in Your ways – unafraid – confident of Your blessing. Amen.

It feels wrong to take delight in God's power. It feels wrong to be so glad the servants of God will see His power & His enemies will see His anger! Isaiah's words: "The hand of the Lord shall be known to His servants, And His indignation to His enemies." The Psalmist's: "Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You." Or, "Because Your power is great, Your enemies fall before You." It's good to know that evil will be punished; however, at this point, shouldn't our desire be to see God's enemies come to know Him? Maybe what's really wrong is the lack of faith we have in God's power. Maybe we've been tempered by the folks who want a gentle Jesus; the ones who want to get rid of any reference to a mighty, no-nonsense God. Maybe what's wrong is we don't tell others God is almighty! All powerful! Do we tell them there is a day of reckoning coming! There is! Yes, Praise God we can delight in His power. We can be VERY glad our God is powerful! We cross the line into the wrong when we are glad His enemies will face His anger. When they do, it won't be a pretty picture! God's anger is not something you want to mess with. If God's enemies knew the truth, would they repent?

Jesus sent the 70 out to the cities where He was about to go. They had no money, no backpack, no extra shoes. Wouldn't you assume they were to preach the Gospel as well as heal the sick? Anyway, Jesus told them to heal the sick & say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." These 70 people were sent out by Jesus. Whoever heard them, heard Jesus. Whoever wouldn't listen, rejected Jesus and the One who sent Him – they rejected God.

It seems the purpose of the 70 being sent out was to bring those they met to repentance. These were cities in Israel. Jesus said if Tyre & Sidon (cities outside Israel) had seen the mighty works done in Bethsaida (a city in Israel), they'd be in sack cloth & ashes repenting of their sin. Why would seeing God's power in action, bring people to repentance? Well, it's because seeing God's power is a statement: "God is God & we are not." There's a power greater, much greater than we are! We have no control over it – it can be frightening!

Once I did a wedding at the Double Diamond Ranch. The wind was blowing like crazy – until the service started. When the service was over, it picked right up again. I hadn't paid much attention – I was too into the service to notice. It was the wedding where the couple's Rottweiler was the ring-bearer. At the point in the service when we needed the rings, they turned, whistled, & the dog came up the aisle. After the service was over, a couple people, w/somewhat strange looks on their faces said, "You

stopped the wind.” I can assure you, I had nothing to do w/it, but I do believe God wanted to bless that gathering!

The 70 came back to Jesus elated! Besides healings, they saw the demons were subject to them in Jesus’ Name! It’s no surprise to Jesus – He saw Satan fall from heaven. He went on to say He has given them “authority to trample on serpents & scorpions, & over all the power of the enemy, & nothing shall by any means hurt you.” In spite of the wonder of all of that, He says, “Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” It must have brought tremendous pleasure to see people healed & set free from the demons that harassed them. It must have been exhilarating to be used in such a mighty way by God. Yet, your names written in heaven is better.

Heaven, a place where we no longer contend w/sin! The unhealthy passions of our flesh are silenced. We are at peace – no battles, no pain, no worries. We learn a new song. We are in the presence of the Lord; worship flows naturally. We serve the Lord; we do His bidding. We’re satisfied, fulfilled, full of joy! Yes, it’s a good thing that by God’s grace our names are written in heaven.

If it’s all so good, why do we who know the truth get snared by temptation? The flesh is weak, but do we not believe God’s power is strong enough to lead us out of temptation? Are we convinced going to heaven is a long way off, so we don’t have to

get serious about the sins that snag us? What if we did the things we want to do – read our Bible, bask in God’s love – what if we did & found God’s love just pouring out on those around us?

I am convinced that God wants to show Himself to us in big ways & small ways. But God is not mocked. There are benefits to sowing to the Spirit – benefits to listening to God in His Word. It’s not about obeying the law – Paul says neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything. It’s about being the people God has called us to be – new creations. Trusting the Holy Spirit!

Do you get scared off by people who get big – they assure us that they don’t need God & people who do need Him are weak, backward, uneducated. Why do those people get so angry? It’s because they know – in their heart of hearts they know that God is. They listen to logical sounding arguments – “we all worship the same god. There are many paths up the mountain, but we all get to the same place.” They think it is awfully narrow of Jesus to say He is the Way, the Truth, & the Life, and no one gets to the Father except through Him. There’s logic to that kind of thinking, but it’s not Christian. Jesus took our sins to the cross. In doing so, He made us righteous! We don’t have to set up a set of rules to try to make ourselves righteous – we already are clean in Jesus. He has given us the Holy Spirit. He lives in us – Christ in us our hope of glory!

But Christ in us scares some people. When I officiate at a wedding where the bride & groom do want to go God's way, but many of their guests are not on the same path, it's interesting to watch the reactions of some people. They are afraid to make eye-contact. There's a woman who likes me – she's given me a few books on universalism – “Velvet Jesus” is one. It turned my stomach as I read it. When I came to the place where the author who had been berating those who take scripture out of context to prove their point, was himself doing the very same thing, I quit reading. I figured I had a good reason to show her why I couldn't finish reading the book. But this woman is such a good person – smart, generous, - but she is so conflicted – she likes me, but does not like what I preach. It is humorous to watch her when her granddaughter will say something positive about the sermon. Christians are scary!

But that's not new. When the Israelites were entering the Promised Land, people in the neighboring countries had heard how God fights on their behalf. They were terrified. David asks the Lord to put an unrighteous nation in fear. He says, “Put them in fear, o Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.” Later he says, “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, & do not call upon the Lord? There they are in great fear! For God is with the generation of the righteous.”

Our God is powerful! He can wipe out nations! Dry up the Red Sea! Heal the sick! Cast out demons! And Raise the dead!. Jesus did all those things – so did the disciples.

The 70 did it. The day is coming when we will do those things as well. Today, He meets us at our point of need. He holds marriages together. He calms our fears. He restores our joy. He meets us in our fear, disappointment, shame. He is with us. Our God is all powerful. He is just; He is kind, loving, and full of mercy & grace. Let Him love you just the way you are this day. Amen.