

THE POWER OF ONE February 4, 2007

Think back: Is there one teacher who stands out as the best you ever had? Who awakened your love of learning, reading, or sending you in a good direction?

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O.W.L. training, asked that question and “have you ever acknowledged?”

Have You? Your assignment—if that person is still living: write a note!

If not a teacher, has there been a friend, relative, stranger, a doctor, or minister who entered your life at just the right time and made a significant difference at a crucial period in your life?

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From time to time a magazine will come up with the 100 most significant persons in history. In each instance it is the power, the influence that they had that changed the course of history—for good or evil.

Edison and electric power or Gutenberg the power of the printing press;

Hitler’s power that persuaded a nation; Stalin’s power

Mother Teresa or _____ Sullivan & her prodigy, Helen Keller.

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For most of us in the church our minds might go to Jesus—how his life & death has affected generations around the world. And not only to new life; also to new purpose. Think of the imagination and talent that has produced the art, the music, the architecture, the books over the centuries! And for many it would be personal: meeting Jesus changed their lives, because he gave direction to their living.

In the Gospel accounts, we read of Jesus power to heal, to speak with authority, to attract followers. Have you ever wondered how many he had to ask before 12 left everything to be a part of that inner core? Or was it the first 12 he asked?

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Some would say that almost as powerful as Jesus was the power that rubbed off on those first disciples as they scattered and continued to influence and attract and grow “Jesus Communities” wherever they went.

This morning I ask “Are we always aware of the power that **we** have?”

Psychologists tell us that the most powerful model for children is their same sex parent:

Fathers for sons—Mothers for daughters. And this is not to deny the strong influence that mothers have on sons and fathers have on daughters. What saved many of us was a strong “father” figure or “mother” figure outside the home. For me, I had a father who worked 60-80 hours a week—he had 6 kids! I found my models in the church: chief justice of the Indiana Supreme Court, the wife of the college president, a doctor. Listen to this poem: **“When You Thought I Wasn’t Looking.”**

What gets in the way of our “power?” As often as Jesus said, “Fear not,” do you think that it might be fear? Last week we had a lesson from **Jeremiah** who said “I am just a boy” when confronted by God. “I am too young.” Centuries earlier we have **Moses** telling God of all his inadequacies: “I’m not a good speaker. Who am I that you would ask?” In our lessons today, **Isaiah** felt unworthy to be in the presence of the holy and **Simon Peter** became aware of his sinfulness in the presence of Jesus.

Do you find it interesting who Jesus asked to follow? As many as 8 were fishermen, a despised tax collector, as far as we can tell they were illiterate of the peasant class, several had to be in their 20’s, and none were religious professionals!

Let’s look at this lesson from Luke: Captain Simon Peter and his crew had been fishing all night with no luck. Jesus tells him to try again. Now the nets used in the day time were different than the one used at night. So Jesus asked him to use the wrong nets at the wrong time—Jesus a carpenter or stone cutter telling professional fishermen what to do! No wonder the skepticism! **BUT THEY DARED TAKE A RISK.**

In each of these examples—from Moses & Isaiah & Jeremiah to Simon Peter—God may take a “NO” but will not accept an excuse! God knows us, what’s inside us, our potential, and our possibilities. In one congregation I kept asking a young man to be liturgist and he kept refusing. Finally as a college student he said that he would try it once. He wanted to do it all the time after that! Since we passed the position around he started a Sunday school class for young adults that is still going! HE DARED RISK HIS FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY and fear.

This lesson from Luke is considered a challenge to all Christians: reach out to others with the good news. Do you know what an exciting time it can be with the arrival of a new minister? How easy it might be for you to say to a neighbor: We have a new pastor coming to our congregation. We’re expecting great things! Would you be my guest? Or, do have a church home? (If not) We have a new minister coming and I would be glad to have you as my guest. I would love to hear from several of you in April: “You know, I tried that invitation thing, and they said “YES”!”

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Do you have any idea how many people have never been invited to church?

We read in scripture and sing in hymns of the Holy Spirit. Some would say that the simplest definition of H.S. is “the power of God at work.” What Jesus and Scripture writers tell us is that this power is available to anybody and everybody. When we are willing to go beyond our comfort zone, when we are willing to reach out with integrity and compassion, the power of God is at work in us and thru us.

When we read Scripture carefully and alertly, we see how this spirit worked thru all kinds of people: women and children, illiterate fishermen and unreligious, imperfect and irreligious, pagans and deeply religious. Is there any reason that we can think of that we are any different and that the Spirit could not work thru us?!

Tim the Tool Man always wanted “more power.” God would answer: With my power, you have enough! You might even be able to say with my servant the apostle Paul: “I can do all things through Jesus the Christ who strengthens me.”

Read with me this quotation from Mandela found in your worship folder: