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Dunn's Corners Community Church, Presbyterian

Power from God

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There are a lot of power issues these days: some people feeling completely helpless and powerless, some who have had power snatched away from them, some who are afraid to claim their power, and some who are grabbing all the power they can get. And in our own country, some of us are asking whatever happened to "all people created equal"?

It's not always about physical strength, or political clout, or great riches, or superiority in the workplace. In the gospel lesson this morning, we read of the disciples wondering if they had enough faith to ever make a difference. Jesus used one of the tiniest seeds they knew, in comparison with a tree known for its great size. The question is, he told them, not how much faith you have, but whether faith is present at all.

I remember one day years ago praying for a friend's husband who was quite ill. I was praying intently, but felt a blackness descend. I later learned that he had died that day. I had known his illness would most likely be fatal; but still, I felt my prayers were not strong or powerful enough. That's not the point, Jesus would have told me. Power lies in faith, and faith is what aligns us with God's will, God's wisdom, and God's love.

Paul wrote to Timothy, whom he regarded almost as a son, sharing words of wisdom which he wanted to make sure Timothy understood as he was inheriting the mantle of Paul's mission. You need to share the message about Jesus, and share the message Jesus taught.

Jesus and his teachings were all about faith, about relationship with God and with each other, and about love. The power of faith was not to be found in

cleanliness laws, in judging those you felt superior to, or even in the grand Temple, where the symbolic presence of God was contained in a locked room.

Jesus showed us that God is not locked up away from us; nor is God's love for us dependent upon how well we obey ancient laws. God is present, here with us—in Paul's time and in our own time. And God is waiting for us to accept the gifts God has to offer. All we have to do is reach out in faith.

Paul wrote about some of the gifts God gives to us: power, love, and self-discipline.

Self-discipline was part of the Hellenistic philosophy, which Paul knew very well—be sure your motivation is for good; keep focused on your goals.

Everything in moderation.

Love is all about relationships. The love God has for us is not transactional or earned; it goes beyond logic. Christians often declare that Jesus came to take away our sins. I think the best definition of sin, is that sin is whatever separates us from the love of God; and I believe that what Jesus came to do was to re-establish that relationship, so we can accept God's love.

And power. What is the gift of power we get from God?

We are given the power to know God and to know that God knows us. We are given the insight to look at ourselves—our strengths, our abilities, our motivations, our life experiences; and then we are given the power to use them for good. We are not meant to be timid in claiming or using our power as God calls us to do.

Some of you may have had a similar experience to what I had as a young lay woman, when people in a Bible study group told me that women were not meant to be Bible study leaders, and should not serve on a church governing board, let alone become ordained ministers. I spent many months

challenging this belief, because my faith told me that God intends us to use the gifts we have been given.

Faith gives us power. And with that power we are called to follow the model of Jesus. We are to focus on loving relationships—being affirming of others and reaching out with kindness wherever we go. We are called to stand up to injustice and cruelty. We have the power to overcome adversity and to work together for the common good, each one of us bringing what we have to offer. We may not quite be able to uproot large trees or move mountains (as Matthew and Mark told the story); but God can take what we offer and make something great out of it. And that is more powerful than we can ever imagine! Amen

10:00: In keeping with our theme that much good can come out of small beginnings when we share our gifts, our children will now share handchime accompaniment as Kathy sings “Come to the table of grace.”