

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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The Words, Works, and Person of Christ

The Gospel of Luke

God's Power is Perfected in
Weakness

December 11, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 6:22-23

Scripture Reading:

Judges 7:1-25

We will plan to return to our series (after Christmas), which we have titled "The Barren Fig Tree," based upon Jesus' parable of the fruitless fig tree ultimately cut down by order of the vineyard owner. That parable is a challenge to each of us to examine our lives and hearts to see if the fruit required by the Lord is being borne in us. Whether the

Holy Spirit is in us or not – whether we are born again or not.

But this morning I want to put another major theme of the Bible in front of you that is vitally important for us to get hold of. And the birth of the infant child in that manger is the perfect example right before us in this Christmas season:

God's Power is perfected in weakness. When we are weak, then we are strong. It is the foolish things of the world, the despised, the poor, whom God chooses to demonstrate His power through. This is a fundamental truth about God and if we do not get a firm hold upon it, we are going to be defeated and deceived by the enemy.

Look around this room right now. Look at yourself. Look at others who are here. What do you see? Paul put the same challenge to the Corinthians:

1Co 1:25-29 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (26) For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; (28) God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, (29) so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

NOTE: If you see yourself as someone other than a fool in the judgment of this world, if you still see yourself as strong and noble in the eyes of the world, then you particularly need to sit up at full

attention to what we are about to find further in God's Word.

One thing that you saw when you took that "look," is that we are very, very few in number. Thankfully we are joined by our faithful online members as well who are a tremendous encouragement to us. But even adding that number in, we are very small. We don't have a full choir loft, nor do we have full pews. There is no orchestra. A number of us have been or are weak and sick and over these past 3 decades we have grown older. We are not famous here. We are, as the Bible puts it, *weak*.

Now, we must have no doubt about this:

The devil, who is a liar from the very beginning, is going to launch missiles of lies at us. He is going to tell us that we are failures, that we may as well just fold it all up and quit, that if the Lord was with us and blessing us we would have a much larger number of people here, we would enjoy more popularity, and that unless we

experience those things, we will never accomplish anything important.

And, I say, *we will fall for these deceptions and lies – for that is exactly what they are – unless we understand who God is, how He works, and how His power is really operative in this world and in His church.* We will feel like quitting unless we have a firm, sure hold on the truth set before us over and over again in the Bible.

So, this morning, let's go on a kind of tour through the Bible and consider this absolute truth – *God's power is PERFECTED in weakness.*

Weakness – salvation in an infant

Psa 8:2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

This truth jumps right out at us when we think of Christmas – the birth of the Son of God into this world. The means by which God

chose to conquer sin, death, the devil – to reverse the curse and redeem His people from bondage – was by His Son *emptying Himself of glory*, and entering this world as a baby. Who would have thought?

And even when Jesus grew into a man, He still remained *weak*.

Isa 53:1-3 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (2) For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. (3) He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

God's power is perfected *in weakness*. He *chooses* to work in our weakness.

The lesson is quite clear in the account of Gideon and how the

Lord whittled down that army to only 300 to defeat a huge enemy. And they really didn't even need to fight some pitched battle. The sword of the Lord did the work.

Jdg 7:7 And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home."

A Boy and a Sling

This same theme is very obvious in another OT account – that of David and Goliath.

1Sa 17:4-7 And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. (5) He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. (6) And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. (7) The shaft of his spear was like a

weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him.

1Sa 17:44-50 The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." (45) Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. (46) This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, (47) and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand." (48) When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to

meet the Philistine. (49) And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. (50) So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David.

Trace this truth right down through the Bible. Consider these words to Israel -

Deu 7:7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

And again –

Isa 51:2 Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.

And to His Church –

Luk 12:32 “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

And to Smyrna –

Rev 2:9 “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Are you getting this? Or are you still thinking things like – “well, our church is going to dry up to nothing. There is hardly anyone left.” The Bible is clear – these are lies. *When we are weak, then we are strong.* But the lie comes to us this way – *when we are strong, when we are many, when we can touch and feel what the Lord is doing, THEN we are strong.* That, the Lord says, is a lie.

Jer 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, (24) but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me,

that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

What Was Jesus' Experience?

Mat 8:18-20 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. (19) And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” (20) And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Did Jesus have a big bank account? Did he have his own house? Did He have a comfortable building to gather his disciples in? Anyone who wanted to follow Him and yet expected these things was not worthy – He rejected them.

Many people today who claim to be Christians are really just like this scribe that claimed “I will follow you wherever you go.” But in fact in their minds they have a

very distorted concept of what following Christ will require.

What was Jesus' experience? He had no home of His own. His real followers were very few and at times they deserted Him.

Why do we expect it to be different for us?

What did Jesus Say?

Luk 6:20-23 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. (21) “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. (22) “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! (23) Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

Jesus' said this. Do we believe it? His real people are as He describes

here. Who are those whom the Lord blesses? What kind of people are HIS people?

- Poor
- Hungry
- Weeping
- Hated
- Excluded

There is no doubt at all that we must battle against the denial of these things. Think on it carefully-

Who do you consider to be the true people of Christ? Are you ready to identify with Christians who are poor, hungry, weeping, hated and excluded? Or are you looking for some "church" where the people are rich, well-fed, quite happy, popular, and included? Is that God's way? Is that His measure of His presence? We know what answer the Bible gives – the question is, do we believe it?

What was Paul's Experience?

2Ti 1:15 You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and

Hermogenes.

And again:

2Ti 4:14-18 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. (15) Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.

(16) At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!

(17) But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. (18) The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

So often, Paul was all alone and when he did have companions, they were few. And this is the Apostle Paul!!!

Here he is again:

2Co 4:7-10 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, **to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.** (8) We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

See it? *To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* If we insist that we must be fine valuable vases, not some lowly jar made out of dirt, then we can just forget about God's power working through us. The power and life of Jesus is not going to be active and evident in people who refuse to travel that same narrow way He did.

What is the Experience of the Saints in this world?

Heb 11:36-40 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even

chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— (38) of whom the world was not worthy— wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (39) And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, (40) since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

In light of this plain passage of God's Word, why in the world do we tend to select a church or some ministry that is just the opposite of this description?

Recently we were watching a program on you tube in which the people were in Rome and touring the Vatican. They showed all these huge, gold plated images and buildings, fantastic cathedrals and artwork that strike you as amazing. Billions of dollars worth. Centuries old. And yet what is the truth? *It is*

all nothing. It is repugnant to God. It is a synagogue of Satan, built by the devil's servants. The Lord is nowhere present in it.

Power perfected in Weakness

This Scripture really nails it all down for us:

2Co 12:7-10 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

(8) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. (9) But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, **for my power is made perfect in weakness.**” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of **my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.** (10) For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

These truths are our defense against the enemy's bullets fired at us. We must always bring our minds right back to God's Word whenever we look at our smallness and weakness and start feeling hopeless. Is God's Word true or isn't it?

Think carefully. When we find ourselves longing for a full sanctuary and all the trappings that go with such things, *what exactly are we thinking?* Why do we think that God needs our numbers and our cathedrals and lots of money in order to accomplish His purposes here? To think in that manner is to sinfully rewrite the beatitudes: *blessed are the rich, blessed are the famous and popular, blessed are the powerful, blessed are churches buzzing with activities and programs. Blessed are those who obscure the gospel and trust in their own doings.*

No, these are not the things of Christ's kingdom. They are the beatitudes of that counterfeit kingdom whose king is the god of this world.