

Baptism and Power

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon emphasizes the importance of intimacy with God and the need for Christians to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to go out and meet with others in the darkness.

Duration: 26:25

Scripture: Genesis 3:8-10, Exodus 2:1, Matthew 6:33, Luke 19:10, John 3:19-20, Acts 2:37, Romans 3:23

Topics: "Power"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the fear and confusion that many people feel in the world today. He shares a personal encounter with a woman who expressed her fear about the current state of the world. The preacher emphasizes the need to surrender to God for help rather than trying to fix everything ourselves. He highlights the power and presence of God, who sees and knows everything, and calls on the listeners to cry out to God and ask, 'What shall we do?' The preacher also emphasizes the importance of living out our faith and sharing the message of God's love with others.

Transcript

Thank you for listening to this audio recording from the pastoral team at Church of the Redeemer, an Anglican church in Greensboro, North Carolina. If you'd like to know more about Church of the Redeemer, its ministry, or its mission, then visit us online at redeemergso.org. Bishop Thad, we welcome you and are delighted that you're here, and I'd like to pray for you. Heavenly Father, we are grateful for this servant, for sweet Erlin, and that they have been a blessing to so many.

But we pray now that you would use them, use Thad's words to be your words to us, that we, cut to the heart, would know what to do. And we pray your anointing on him, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. There's a series at Redeemer on baptism, and we're continuing that by actually today having that opportunity to renew our baptismal covenant. And so, I'd like to keep in that vein with you and ask you to turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 2, or your apps, I don't know what everybody has today, to Acts chapter 2, and this passage from verse 37 in particular that I'd like to look at.

And I do this in the context of what we've just heard, that this event has taken place. On Pentecost Day, the Holy Spirit came down in power upon the church. And you'll find in Acts 2 and verse 6 that upon this event, all that was happening in that moment, people came rushing in.

And you see in verse 6 that a multitude came together. They didn't get it. They don't know what was going on.

And so, Peter is going to stand up as they ask the question in verse 12, what does this mean? What is happening here? And so, Peter delivers the sermon and the message that he gives. And this is the moment that I want to call your attention to, because what happens after he declares that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, seated at the right hand of his Father, immediately the hearers, as you'll find in verse 37, are cut to the heart. And in being cut to the heart, they cry out, what shall we do? Now, this to me, frankly, is the most terrifying question that can come out of our mouth.

What shall we do? It's that moment when we've lost control, when there are no other options, when we can't figure the story out, and we don't know what to do. Here in the presence of the Lord, here cut to the heart, they're making that cry. How is it? How is it we will know what to do? I can only tell you this, that back in June of this past year, we were doing a renewal conference out in New Mexico.

They took us to the mountains to a conference center about 7,000 feet in the air. And during the Saturday afternoon, we had a break, and I just went on a hike. I went up to the mountain, up to 9,000 feet, and just did the trail.

And as I was doing it, I was in the midst of that wherever, that hike, and suddenly I lost the trail. I couldn't go back, I couldn't find it, I couldn't go forward, I couldn't find it, and I was alone. 9,000 feet, a man at my age, you can't breathe.

And when you don't know where you are, and you don't know what's going on, have you ever had that sense, that panic attack inside? I think this is exactly what's happening in our culture today. I think there's an epidemic of anxiety. I think everybody feels at the edge, they don't know what's going on.

Erin and I were checking out of the grocery store the other day. I turned to the woman behind me, and I just asked how her day was going. And she looked at me, and she said, you know, I've got four children, and I'm scared to death.

My husband and I are Christians. We go to a church, but to be honest, to be honest, it's the rocket man. This whole idea of a nuclear, of world war, it's what's happening in Las Vegas, it's what's happening in the world today, the country today.

This confusion that's come upon our children, we don't, they're growing up in a culture where immorality of the past has become morality in the present. It's anxiety. It's inside us.

We don't know what to do. And in the world, you medicate. In the world, you do substance.

In the world, if you're, I guess, proper, you run to eastern meditation, which they've repackaged into a thing called mindfulness, or forgetfulness, or something, where you, I guess you get to breathe the air and feel better. I don't know the whole story behind it. It's utterly eastern meditation, repackaged, a billion-dollar industry to calm the anxieties of our people.

Why? Because we don't want to go here, to a place where we're not in control, to a place that we do not have the ability to figure out our life. And yet, most of us know where that place is, don't we? We've had family and friends who've had the courage to speak truth in our life, who sit us down and look us straight in the eyes and say, I know what's going on. Has that ever happened to you? In the AA, or addicted world,

it's called an intervention.

In my world, it's a come-to-Jesus moment, where you had that moment where the defenses go down, and the guards go down, and the mask comes off, and the image comes off, and you are seen, and you are exposed, and you can feel that inside. You don't want to admit that your life, you thought, or whatever it's in your life, the idols, the stories, the addictions, whatever they are, you've always thought you're in control of it, and now they're looking at you saying, no, no, it's in control of you, and we know it. And that paralyzed feeling comes over you, where you cry out, what shall we do? That moment in life, we have to ask the question, do I race to fix it, or do I surrender for help? And yet, my dear friends, what did we do just now? Alan led us in a prayer that's an old, historic ancient prayer.

Listen to the nature of it, though. Do we really mean it when we say it? Listen to it. Almighty God, unto you all hearts are open, all desires known, from you no secret are hid.

Are you kidding me? That's the last thing we want. We want to keep everybody, anyone, that can come close at a distance. And yet, what we did is we just came here and asked, Lord, you're not at a distance.

It comes actually out of Hebrews chapter 4, verse 13. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. All things are uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

He sees us. He knows us. We pretend he can't.

We pretend he doesn't know these things. And so we put up the mask. We buy into the mask and not realize he sees through it.

And in fact, I would say, he wants us actually to be in that place, because this is the place that's everything. Going back just quickly to the passage from Exodus in chapter 33. This is a moment in the life of Israel.

I call your attention to it. It's a moment where sin had come into the camp. Immorality had come.

Idolatry had come. They had set up the golden calf while Moses was on the mountain receiving the commands. And in this moment, when Moses came down, when they realized what they had done, Moses set up a new pattern.

He would take from in the center of the camp, and he would go outside. He would go outside, breaking from the idolatry. He would move outside.

And the way it's read here is he would take the tent, and he would pitch it outside the camp, 33 seven. And he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.

And whenever Moses went to the tent, all the people would rise up. Each would stand at his tent door and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. And when Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud descended upon the tent.

And there the Lord would speak to Moses. And all the people would see it, and they would worship. What happened? It was called the tent of meeting.

A place where they went out to meet with the Lord who meets with us. And this is the centerpiece of exactly what the Scriptures are about. It isn't just simply going out to the tent and be able to do ritual.

It's not about ritual. It's about the Lord descending. Exactly what happened at Pentecost.

Is it not true? The Spirit of God came upon the church. It's a place of meeting. The Lord wants to meet with you, meet with us when we gather together in the name of the Lord.

He wants to speak to us. He wants us to know that kind of moment when he's meeting. What worship is all about when we're in his presence.

The fellowship we have with him and with each other. And this, dear friends, is exactly what Pentecost is all about. The Lord comes.

The Lord comes to be with us. And this has been his heart from the very beginning. Is it not true? Isn't this what the Bible is from the start to the end? The very beginning of time.

God, the infinite, creating all that is seen and unseen, visible and invisible. And yet in all his infinities he comes in the intimacies of incarnation and walks with them in the cool of the day, in the garden of Eden. He made us in his image.

He breathed his life in us that we might have fellowship with the Lord, communion with him. He's walking in the cool of the day. That, my friend, is purpose and meaning in life.

Your purpose and meaning is not your vocation. Your purpose and meaning, you were created for him. He was created for you.

That's the whole point of it. So when the car hits you and you can't do what you used to do, you aren't what you do, you are because he created you to be for him and him for you and us together. And that's been the story.

So consequently when he comes walking in the garden in Genesis 3, when Romans 5, 12, sin entered into the world and through one man and death through sin, when we fell at the very beginning of time, he walked in the cool of the day. And what happened? He was hiding, she was hiding behind a tree. The fellowship broken.

The meeting place broken. And that's the story. It's been the story like that from the beginning.

That's the impact of sin. We divide from the Lord. We divide from each other.

We divide within. We become broken souls, broken people, because the fundamentals aren't there. When we're not right with the Lord, we're not right anywhere.

That's called the impact of sin. Hiding behind the tree. What is the power of sin? The power of the sin is actually, we're scared of this moment.

We're scared of the, what shall we do? We want to hide behind that tree. How do I know that? Again, the Bible teaches, Jesus teaches us, John 3, 19 and 20, this is the judgment. Light, the light has come into the world, but we, the people, love the darkness.

Why do we love the darkness? Why do we hate the light? Because we're afraid we'll be seen. We're afraid that what we've done will be exposed. We'll be known.

And so what we do is we set up religion, which is doing God without Him around. We don't want the meeting place. We don't want to meet Him.

We'll do the things, but not welcome Him there. We'll keep Him at a distance. What does He do? He pursues.

He persists and pursues. What's the Bible about? Let me give it to, in simple language, His pursuit of us. Read down to the stories.

Go to Noah. Go to Abraham. Read through the stories.

Read as He sends His prophets, as the light of the kingdom of God comes toward us. He's calling us out from behind the tree, but we can't come out from behind the tree, because if we come out, what shall we do? What shall we do? If we come out from the tree, what shall we do? We'll not be in control, and if I'm not in control, what shall I do? Give me religion, but don't get me to meet Him, because if I meet Him, I'll be seen. And so the prophets come, and we persecute them.

It's our story. What does He do? The unthinkable, born in Bethlehem. Why? Because meeting is everything.

Meeting, meeting is everything. What did we do with Him? Thanks be to God, in chapter 2 of Exodus. Thanks be to God, the way it's written here for us in Peter's sermon.

This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, that the cross wasn't a mistake. It was God's plan to rescue us, to redeem us, to restore us, to cleanse us, so that when we come out from behind the tree, He will rescue us. He will save us, which is why Peter says in all his kindness, Peter, the fisherman, Peter, who had met with Jesus, and Jesus had caused him to be born again by water and the Spirit, Peter, on Pentecost Day, filled with the power of the Spirit, Peter, who has the ability in his sermon to break open the Scriptures, and in breaking open the Scriptures, points us to Jesus, who has come to rescue, come to save, come to deliver us, so that we might have the power to repent.

What do I mean by the power to repent? I mean this. Have you tried to repent? How's it going for you? Really? You come to New Year's Day. You put your resolution out.

I'm going to be a different man. I'm going to be a different woman. Well done you.

Here we are. It's October. It's November 12.

How are you doing with that resolution? How many times have you tried to change yourself? How many times have you heard from the prophet Jeremiah, a leopard can't change his spots. An Ethiopian can't change the color of the skin. Neither can we change who are accustomed to doing evil.

We can't do it. Repentance comes from above. It gives us the power to say no to sin.

That's power our children need. When they go to school at the age of 12, are tempted to do what should never happen. They need power from above to say no.

Our college kids need power from above. Power that comes because we've met with the Lord and he's met with us. It's a story.

And when that happens and he gives us the ability to break from the addiction, break from the power of sin, break from the sinful nature within us, he causes us to be regenerate, born again in Christ, made new creatures in Christ. How? By baptism. Just as we've been learning all these weeks.

Down into the waters, down into the blood of the lamb, rescuing us, cleansing us, saving us, and bringing us up. So Peter says in Acts 2:38, repent, let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The person of the comforter, the Paracletus will come upon you.

First to save you and then in Pentecost power to give you everything you need in this life to serve him in the power of God the Holy Spirit, in the person of God the Holy Spirit. To many of us though, that's too close. That's too close.

That's too intimate. Here's my deal with you. Receive Jesus, meet with him, and then walk it out in my own.

So I'm still in control. Because I promise you, everything we want to do in this life is to stay in control. And I promise you, everything he wants from us is for actually him to be in control.

When our gripping on because of our fear and our anxiety, so real inside of us, is released by the gift of the Lord, I'm not in control. I give myself to you. Oh Savior, wash me.

Oh Savior, cleanse me. Oh Savior, make me new. I don't know how that event happens for us from gripping and to letting go.

I know this, that what Peter did in Acts chapter 2, he broke open the scriptures and he presented Jesus. But you know, we can't do any more than that. Something has to happen in your heart where you're actually willing for the Lord to stir.

Some transaction has to happen inside of you. Stephen does this in Acts chapter 7, but rather than the people turning to the Lord, these people resisted the Holy Spirit. Do you know what that's like? Do you know what it's like to resist? Do you know what it's like when somebody, and especially even those who love you most, try to speak to you, but you push them away? Can you feel yourself doing it? Can you see yourself? Can you feel it when it's done to you? Out of love you come to somebody, but you can just feel.

It's literally, you can feel there's a block, there's a resistance. I asked a man not long ago, a Christian man, a Christian leader, I asked him, I have one question for you, just answer me honestly. Do you pray with your wife? Do you know what it requires to pray together? It requires the Lord to be in the center of your life.

It's an intimacy here and we're scared of it. We're scared of it because everything the Lord wants from us is this kind of, this kind of relationship with Him. And so Jesus said, I'm going to my Father, the right hand of my Father, but you shall not be orphaned.

I will send the Spirit of God. I will send the Holy Spirit to be in you, to be with you, and to be the power to be witnesses elsewhere, so that you'll know, you'll know what this meeting is like always. This is why

Jesus says the words in John 3 20, and I love this passage so much, I stand at the door and knock.

If you can hear my voice, open the door, I will come into you and dine with you and you dine with me. Friends, this is what church is, this is what Redeemer is about, isn't it? When you came to church today, did you come, it's just so good to be with everybody, did you, did you come, did you come because actually this is a place we meet the Lord. This is a place where we meet the Lord.

We come into worship, we come into His word, we come to meet the Lord. That's why I'm here, and I'm here when I look at you and I share the peace of the Lord. I'm actually sharing it with joy and with delight because it's real.

It is our, it is our African brothers and sisters who taught us in the East African revival that the way we live together in the body of Christ is we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light. Then we have fellowship with one another. It doesn't say we hide behind my tree, you hide behind your tree, and we'll text and tweet.

No, no, no, no social media behind the trees. It's not what He does. No, no, no, no.

So and I've got to tell you, my African brother John that we know so well, I cannot tell you how irritating it is to walk in the light. We, I remember one morning he was staying in our house and and he said, I was getting breakfast ready, have time together, fellowship together. He said, no food, no eating.

I said, what? He said, he said, last night you said something, you offended me. You offended me. We've got to be right in Jesus before we sit down and eat because we walk in the light.

They're kind of intimacies. That kind of, that kind of, that kind of thing. We meet together, we care about each other, we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light.

Then we have fellowship with one another. Then the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. My friends, this is, this is why our community groups are so important.

We're coming to meet each other. We're coming to meet the Lord. That's the Acts 242.

Apostles teaching, breaking your bread, fellowship and prayer. The Lord stands in the midst of us. That's why we're here.

The Lord stands in the midst of us. That's called fellowship. Are you with me? Let me take it the next step.

This is the whole point of what's needed in the world today. Empowering Christians by the Holy Spirit to go out and meet the people in the darkness who are clutching onto fears, clutching onto anxieties, who don't know what's going on, who are terrorized by this world of lust that has come upon our country, our world, our people, and they're scared. You and I get to go meet with them.

We don't come to do them, to get them to be a Christian. We get to have compassion. We get to look in their eyes and say, what's going on with you today? How can I be with you today? Because if they can meet us and we can meet them, it'll give us the platform to let them meet the Lord.

That's the whole point of life, is it not? To meet with the Lord. Now that's mission, and that's all of us, and that's why the Spirit of God doesn't come upon the special and the elite, but upon the ordinary and the common. He comes upon all of us, does he not? Why? Because we've all been given the gift to go out

from the youngest to the least of us, all of us.

We've been given the gift to go out in the power of the Spirit and meet with people as he's met with us and tell them, it's time. This is the whole point of life, because one day the clouds are going to part and the Lord will descend from heaven, and there we will be welcomed to be with the Lord forever. That, my friends, is life.

It's mission. It's community. It's church.

It's who we are. It's what we do, and that's why the celebration of being baptized in Jesus is so rich and so deep, being confirmed the power of the Spirit of God to come upon us to do what he's called us to do, that we might know this fellowship and set our hearts on the purpose and plan that God has for us in our time, in our day. The church needs to arise today.

I am tired of the consumer church trying to please us with their worship, trying to manipulate us with their word, not giving us the full counsel of God. It's time for the Christians to embrace that which God has given us, that we might be strong for our children coming up. We have been met by him, and he's empowered us to go meet with those who don't know him.

Dear friends, what an honor, and that is the symbol of it all. Come, dine with me. I beg of you, examine your heart.

Are you pushing others away to protect yourself? Are you demanding control of your life? Even those who love you most, who are scared to speak into your life because they feel that resistance, how long, dear friend, do you keep it up? Don't you know you are seen, you are known, you are loved? No trees, no trees. Come, Lord, for you have answered the deepest cry of my heart. What shall I do? Amen.

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