

Sermon for 18 July 2021 @ Bethesda UMC Baltimore/21214

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Psalm 89:20-37; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

**“Power”**

Having made it to king, David wants a temple.

“Control this energy!” “Put up a sign!”

At my stage in life, this reminds me of two things: Retirement, and good health.

I’ve been mostly healthy, and I’ve pretty much always found interesting work.

So, I can identify with David. I’ve got what he wants: A little control over what happens to him, and to those he loves.

What does God say?

“Don’t push it!”

Power.

How obsessed we are with it as a nation!

I heard the other day that Biden told a group of worthies of the world somewhere recently to prepare for two wars: One with China, and one with Russia.

If that’s true, isn’t that God-awful?

We should get down on our hands and knees and pray God’s forgiveness with all our might.

Power.

The rest of today’s scriptures continue on this theme. Psalm 89 promises to keep David’s line in power. Ephesians has St. Paul reminding everyone that there are no border walls since Jesus ... no one is on top of anyone else. And Mark starts out reporting how good at teaching this and applying it the disciples were when Jesus sent them out two-by-two, and continues describing how successful Jesus was at this, village after village.

So, let’s just stay with the theme of power.

I could fall sick tomorrow. I serve at the Bishop’s pleasure, which means any time, I’m dispensable. And as far as the rest of you, as far as the world in general, power is not all that secure for you, either, according to the news.

What's reliable? What lasts?

When I really get down to it, all that counts is God's love. Knowing God loves me. Feeling God's presence.

When I was a little boy, my mother's mother lived with us. Sometimes my Mom and Dad would leave home and go to the picture show, or a party, and before they came home, I would've fallen asleep, downstairs, with my Grandmother.

It was always amazing to me that my Dad had carried me upstairs, and put me to bed, without my ever knowing it. I'd wake up next morning, and that's what they told me.

That kind of completely trusting... ..me trusting my Dad, my Dad always reliably caring for me. Like often when I'm writing my sermon ... after I get an idea, and just start writing. Like ... well, you name the feeling. You tell the rest of us what brings you to church; what allows you finally go to sleep; what gives you the strength to endure the pain, or handle the trauma or dread ... what counts, at rock bottom, no matter how sad ... or how happy ... you feel.

That's what matters. That's power.

Not a temple. Not a job, or a bank account, or even a life companion. Just a feeling of complete trust, so you don't even question it.. just settle into it, and go on.

Plenty of people don't have that, and we know it. Powerful people. People in control.

That's what the Bible's talking about, underneath all the details. People are running about, "like sheep without a shepherd..."

Don't be fooled. Don't follow somebody who claims to have power. Don't con yourself into thinking you have power. Whatever you've got; whatever you think you must have ... be assured, these are only substitutes... these are the surface ... these are just the signs of the true feeling you are made to have, you were created to have ... power that holds everything together, the love of God, that we know through Jesus Christ. Amen.