

*Lord, make these words Your Word, that our hearts may become Your heart. Amen.*

Here’s Round 2 in our preaching series on the four “C’verbs” in our new mission statement: **Conducting** God’s power into human life.

Our overall mission is **Carrying** God’s contagious love into the world, which we do by: **Conducting** God’s power into human life; **Cultivating** Christ-centered lives; and **Catalyzing** transformation of the world and our communities, one person at a time.

Conducting and catalyzing are not words we associate with church – they’re science words, physics and chemistry.

Yet I believe they are at the heart of our calling as Christ-followers.

As we read through the Gospels, that is what Jesus was up to, more than anything else – saying, “Look guys, the Kingdom of God, the realm of God is near you.

And look what that realm is about: it’s about power! Like you’ve never imagined.

Power to change molecules. Power to change hearts.”

We talk a lot about love and light and justice and all that, yet what Jesus demonstrated above all was power, the power of God conducted into human life.

And he gave that power to his followers, and they learned that they could

conduct it into human life – people were healed and forgiven and revived from death in the ministry of the apostles too – that’s what the book of Acts is about.

Deeds of power – *dunamis*, the Greek word from which we get our word dynamite.

That’s what we are to be about, my friends – blasting holes in the fabric of this

world, holes big enough for God’s love to get in and shake things up.

The poet Annie Dillard famously wrote in “Teaching a Stone to Talk”:

*“On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies’ straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), pp. 40-41.

Jesus wasn't about being gentle and meek and mild and speaking sweetly to people – he made people mad! And worse – he scared them. It wasn't just what he said that got him into trouble – it was the other-worldly power he demonstrated. And when that power actually raised a person dead four days – it scared leaders enough to want him dead.

We see this power at work in the gospel reading we heard today – Jesus is on his way to heal a girl who has died – quite an errand in itself – when this woman sneaks up in the crowd and tries to steal a healing. She is ritually unclean from the bleeding she suffers, and no one should touch her. But she figures there is so much power in Jesus, if she just touches the hem of his cloak, she'll get what she needs. That is faith, my friends! And she does. But here's the truly amazing thing: Jesus feels it. He feels power go out from him. We experience the Realm of God as energy, as power. It is transferable, Conductible. The prophet Elijah conducted such power too – in the case of the widow he lodged with, it was a miracle of enough-ness. Later, he also healed her young son.

That's what happens when we exercise faith in Jesus' name too. God's power is energy – and it has a discernible effect on our human bodies. Many people, when they are praying for the healing of another, find their hands, and sometimes faces or whole bodies get very hot. Or if we're having a powerful spiritual experience, we may feel tingling in our bodies or arms or legs. A powerful sense of being filled with the Holy Spirit can leave us weeping, not in sadness, but just overwhelmed by the power and love of God. God is power.

This woman would likely today be diagnosed with fibroid tumors – benign but troublesome, often causing incessant bleeding. I had a friend with that diagnosis once, big enough that surgery was scheduled to remove them. She and I were in a prayer group together, so every time we met, we laid hands on her and prayed for her healing. I would always pray, “Lord, let your power and love in her shrink these tumors so that when the doctors go in they don't find anything there.”

Well, she went for the surgery, and they did an x-ray just before – and hold up – there were no tumors showing on the x-ray. The doctors though radiology had messed up, but no – there were the original x-rays with the fibroids, and there were the ones from that day with none. I shouldn't have been surprised – but I was.

This power, my friends, is real. It's not predicable and controllable, but if we used it a lot more than we do, we'd see a lot more healing than we do.

A woman who had great influence on the healing movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Agnes Sanford, likened the power of God to the flow of electricity.

*If we try turning on an electric iron and it does not work, we look to the wiring of the iron, the cord, or the house. We do not stand in dismay before the iron and cry, "Oh, electricity, please come into my iron and make it work!" We realize that while the whole world is full of that mysterious power we call electricity, only the amount that flows through the wiring of the iron will make the iron work for us.*

*The same principle is true of the creative energy of God. The whole universe is full of it, but only the amount of it that flows through our own beings will work for us.*<sup>2</sup>

Her healing ministry began after she watched a pastor pray with her very sick baby with such joy and simple authority that it broke something open within her. She wrote, "Now I know that he had no gift except that which is open to all of us, the infinite gift of the life of God Himself. God's water of life could rush through him, for the pipeline between his spirit and God's spirit was intact. He was in harmony with God. The life of God flowed through him, and could therefore be turned on by him for the healing of a child."

Friends, are we willing to let the life of God flow through us that way?

Move our faith from just between our ears, and go all in, bring our whole selves to it?

To be such intact conduits that the current flows through us?

To be so much in harmony with God? That's the real purpose of cultivating a Christ-centered life, which Steve will preach on next week: to be so aligned with God, so filled with God's Spirit, that God can work through us.

I hope will have more active and visible healing ministry here.

Our world and community needs that. And there are other ways we conduct the power of God into human life – having faith when things look hopeless.

Yesterday was the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass, when the Nazi's destroyed shop windows and synagogues all over Germany and Austria. My father was a 13-year-old Jewish boy living in Vienna at the time; his experience has been repeated for so many decades in so many places – in our time, Syria, El Salvador, you name it. Into such utter powerlessness, the world needs us to conduct God's power and love into the human sphere.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.spiritsite.com/writing/agnsan/healing.html>

Wading in to combat oppression or corruption or injustice? Yes!  
Daring to believe in the impossible – affordable housing in Charles County? Yes!  
Hope for youth aging out of foster care, when the world tells them they're worth nothing? Yes! And as we make build relationships with these young people, let's not withhold from them the greatest resource God has given us – the power of love to transform and heal even the most traumatized heart. Our gathering evenings won't be religious meetings – but the hosts will pray together before the kids come, inviting the Holy Spirit to be there in power. And some of these young people may want us to pray with them – imagine. We are not called to be social workers or therapists – we are called to wield the power of love and conduct it into human life.

And that brings me to Isla Carroll Bankenstein – into whom we are about to conduct a whole of lot of Holy Spirit power in baptism. What happens in baptism is that Jesus takes up residence in us, through his Holy Spirit. That's what the oil of chrism signifies – the Holy Spirit. Isla will be a new creation, with a whole new family and new life, eternal life. She will have the capacity to conduct God's power into human life. In a sense, that's what her growth in faith will be about, and all of ours – increasing our capacity to conduct that power more and more. Isla becomes a transformer this morning, taking the current of heaven and transmitting it at a frequency the world can take.

That is what we are: transformers through whom God can work transformation. Amen.

Song – [More Love, More Power](#)

**Luke 8:42b-48**

As Jesus went, the crowds pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, 'Who touched me?' When all denied it, Peter said, 'Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you.'

But Jesus said, 'Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.' When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.'

**I Kings 17:8-16**

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah, saying, 'Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.' So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.' As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' But she said, 'As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.' Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth.' She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.