

In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What do we come here for? Comfort? Connection with friends?

Connection with God? All good reasons – and not enough.

I hope we also come to be re-empowered, for a power transfer.

A transfer of the power that made the whole universe into the here and now,
into this frail realm of ours.

Power is transferred when we pray, when we invite healing,

when we invoke the Spirit of the living Christ, as we will at communion.

Power to restore life in one who has died – that's the business our God is in.

The writer Annie Dillard has famously said,

"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."

There's a lot of power in our gospel reading this morning.

What happened when that woman crept forward and touched Jesus' robe?

Jesus felt power go out of him the very same moment as the woman experienced healing. It was a transfer of power in the most wonderful sense.

Something happened in that woman that day, in the crowd around Jesus.

Her faith was released. She knew she couldn't go right up to him –

her condition made her ritually unclean; according to the Mosaic law,

she would defile someone just by touching them. But she knew Jesus had

power in himself; she thought, "Even his clothes will be charged with that power."

It was her faith that invited God's healing to be released in her.

Which Jesus confirmed: "Your faith has made you well."

And when he went on to revive that little girl who had died, he was releasing

that same power into her. *"For God created all things so that they might live."*

I do not have a science brain, and do not pretend to understand physics. But I gather that most physicists today believe that everything is energy – all matter is really energy operating at different frequencies.

Light, sound, electricity, microwaves...

those are just some of the frequencies at which we experience energy.

So it makes sense to me that God is energy in its purest form, pure power.

That power that created all worlds, all universes,

was present in a tiny baby born in Bethlehem.

That power that set the planets on their courses was present in a carpenter from Nazareth preaching and healing, stilling storms and walking on water.

That power that made mountains and glaciers and mammoths and gazelles was present in a man at Golgotha, unjustly condemned and executed in the most cruel and humiliating way possible, where it seemed he had no power at all...

And that power that created flowers and fish and birds in every color of the rainbow – that power was most fully manifest in that man standing in a garden of graves, three days dead and buried and now gloriously alive, risen.

And that power, my friends, flows through us as we are united with that man, that Jesus, in baptism. A song refrain I like says,

“Same power that conquered the grave lives in me, lives in me.”

That power is what heals and transforms.

We are called to be conductors of that power to a world in need of transformation.

But do we have the capacity to conduct power like that? Can the world take it?

Until I was 14, my family lived mostly in Europe and Africa.

In most places we required transformers to run our American appliances on a current other than what they were made for.

Transformers take in a current at one frequency and convert them to another.

What a wonderful image for our ministry as conductors of God’s power.

The current flowing through Jesus was undiluted – his miracles seem impossible to us, but are just how things are in the life of God.

Jesus was the Transformer par excellence –

taking the power of the universe and rendering it safe for the earthly realm.

He gave that authority and power to his apostles, and so it has come down to us,

Through the laying on of hands, bishop to confirmand, all the way to us.

When I pray with people, or alone, I ask God to release that healing power, and let it restore wholeness.

When I burn a finger or stub a toe, I react – and then stop, and thank my body for reacting, and invite it to subside and allow God’s healing to flow in me.

When we pray for healing with faith – as much as we can muster, which is often very little – we don’t ask for a favor.

We activate; we simply invite God to release in us that Kingdom energy that is already ours by faith and baptism.

We invite ourselves, or others, to receive that energy and life.

As the Gospels tell it, Jesus demonstrated over and over in his life and teaching and actions, that healing is the norm in that realm of God he called the “Kingdom,” what I like to call “the energy field of God.”

Jesus said that life is already here. So he showed it.

Everywhere he went, he did amazing things – stilling storms, casting out demons, multiplying bread and fish, and healing, healing, healing – all things that the Gospel writers called “deeds of power” – the Greek word is *dunamys*, from the same root that we get the word dynamite.

What we call miracles are simply the way the life of God works.

When we accept the way God works, we often see more of these deeds of power. And when we don’t accept that, we often seem to see them less.

It’s a easier, especially if we’ve been disappointed in life, or in prayer, to say, “Oh, that’s just a bunch of fairy tales in this old book. Doesn’t happen in real life.” Many of us have stories of praying in faith and not seeing healing. I know I do. That’s enough to stop many Christians from even believing that God heals today. But think about it – we will willingly go along with invasive medical procedures, even if they have less than a 50 percent chance of success.

Why would we brush off prayer because its “success rate” in our eyes isn’t 100%? Those disappointments in prayer are real – and we hold them in tension with all the times we do see God’s healing power in play, often in ways we call miraculous. And the more we exercise that power of God, the more comfortable we become conducting it, the more we see the outcomes we crave.

Healing and transformation are the norm in the life of God.

God made us for life, and to show forth God’s life in the world.

We can assume that wholeness and life is God’s will for us – here and now and then and later, when we enter what some call “the larger life.”

We learn to pray and live expecting blessing, and we see blessing.

Here's a prayer you can pray:

“God, please give me what I ask, or something better.”

Here's another:

“Lord, give that person/situation as much blessing as they can stand.”

Growing in faith means building our capacity to carry more and more power

To tolerate more and more blessing,

I preached last week about the fear that has gripped me and so many in our times.

Fear is borne of feeling powerless – and of course we feel powerless over
pandemics, poverty, racism, political chasms, climate change.

Yet we have been given the power that made mountains – and moves mountains.

God's healing power is as present today as it was when

Jesus was in a human body.

We are now Christ's body in the world, carrying out his “deeds of power”

in our lives, in our broken world, in our divided country.

Everywhere we look there is a need for healing – and God has made us

transformers able to conduct healing power into every person and situation
where wholeness needs to be restored.

I want us to expect God's power to transform all the things we think cannot

be transformed, or need to run their course – our bodies, minds, spirits;
our communities, government, political processes, healthcare, education.

I want us to become churches known for the healing, transforming power

we conduct into this world.

What person or situation comes to you that you would like to conduct healing life

and power into? Why don't we pray right now for those situations,

imagine ourselves conducting God's life and love into that person or situation.

That's a transfer of power that brings life.

That's us being transformers in the best sense of the word.

Amen.

Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." He went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.