

“Giving Control”

John 10:11-18
Acts 4:1-22

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Knock, knock

(who’s there?)

Control freak

Now’s when you say control freak who!!

Now, certainly I would not call any of you control freaks. I prefer the phrase dictatorially exuberant. On some level we all struggle with control. None of us want to be out of control. We don’t want to live in a world of chaos. We don’t want to be as Bob Dylan sings, “dust in the wind.”, being tossed about by the random powers of the universe. We realize that we cannot control the world, but maybe we can control part of the world. Or at the very least we want to be able to control our selves.

Behind our power to control is fear. We fear that if we don’t get our way that our needs will not be taken care of. We fear that something will be taken from us: money, job, house, our way of life, our value system, our identity. And so anytime change comes we begin to defend our selves by attempting to control things or people. We’re afraid.

The Council in Jerusalem was afraid. They were face to face with a power that they did not have and could not control. Peter healed a lame man and was preaching about resurrection power, both the same power, what Calvin called the “essential power of God” the Holy Spirit.

The Priests had the power of the Temple. They stood between God and the people. If you wanted forgiveness from God you must go through the priests. They were the gatekeepers of God. That gave them power, control.

But here we have the apostles, Peter and John, wielding power that they did not have. And they had over 5000 followers. They were taking power, control away from the priests. They weren’t doing anything illegal, but they must be stopped. So in attempt to control them they used their power to arrest them. They thought that if they threatened them and commanded them not to preach about Jesus or heal in his name they could keep things under control.

But they were up against a power that they could not control, the Holy Spirit, real, authentic power, the genuine article. In the movie Leap of Faith, fraudulent faith healer Jonas Nightingale manipulates people by the hundred. He goes from town to town, putting on a religious Broadway-like show. The feature of every show is healing. But it’s all phony. He plants people in the audience with wheelchairs and supposed maladies.

They coming up at the orchestrated time, he bops 'em on the forehead and they are healed. He controls it all.

However, in one town there is a boy whose legs were lame from birth. During one of the shows, he comes forward unplanned by Jonas, out of his control. He wheels himself up to the big, statue of Jesus at the back of the stage, pushes himself onto the ground at his plaster of Paris feet and kisses them. He's healed, he walks. The crowd is stunned, Jonas is furious. He says to the boy after the show, "If there's one thing I know, it's how to spot the genuine article. Because that's what you have to watch out for. Not the cops. You can always get around the cops. But one thing you can never get around is the genuine article. And you, kid, are the genuine article." He packs his bag, hitches a ride with the first trucker that will pick him up. His lack of faith, his crooked way of life, his control...all lost. And something new was being born in his heart: faith.

Peter had the genuine article. Or maybe better said, the genuine article had Peter. He was not controlling the Holy Spirit. He was not manipulating anyone or anything. He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps this idea of the Holy Spirit filling us, is scary. Maybe we are afraid we will lose control. We are afraid we will lose our identity, we will lose what it is that makes us us. But that is not how the Spirit operates. God's Spirit does not work by control or manipulation. It is a different kind of power than the world's power. It's not a fearful power. It is not a power that takes from us, it's a power that gives to us. It's not a power that takes away who we are, it's a power that makes us who we are.

It's like being plugged in to a power source. It's like if you never plugged in the TV. It would just be a strange piece of furniture. But if you plug it in, it begins to function as it was created to function. Peter was plugged into the power source. He was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and Peter became Peter. He became the Rock of the church as Jesus had said. He was just a fisherman and here he was standing before the 71 most influential and educated men of the land.

He was being Peter, by the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming that the only true source of power in the world, the only one that really matters, the only one that saves is in Jesus Christ. The power wasn't in the temple. It wasn't even in the law. It was in education. It wasn't in money. It wasn't in family name. The power to save is only in Christ.

And yet here we humans are 2000 years later still looking for some other way. Some way that we can control. Some way we can get our hands on. But if that is our life. If life is just what we can get our hands on, then that really is all. The more elusive things will escape us: love, forgiveness, faith, salvation, and ultimately eternal life. These are all things we can never control.

But all we need is to call upon his name and he gives us all the power we need. And his power is a power that is given. It is shared. When we call on the name of Christ,

he gives us his very Spirit. If we just ask. If we just lay down our controlling ways and ask. Like Peter we will be given the power to become our true selves. We will be hooked to the power source and able to function as we were created to function without fear.

Let us all give up being control freaks- uh-rather dictatorially exuberant. Lay it down. Let us open our selves up to the power that gives, not takes.

Knock, knock.

(who's there?)

It's your true self. Fully functioning and fearless. Open up.