

Fil-Am Community Church

Associate Pastor David Bennett

19 August 2012

Key verse Acts 1:8

“Extraordinary Power to Share the Good News”

Good morning Fil-Am church it is so good to see so many of you here this morning. Well we have been on a journey over the past few weeks looking at Extraordinary Power and it is no different this morning we are going to look at the **Extraordinary Power to share the Gospel or Good News.**

If I only had a million dollars I would be able to... you can fill in the blanks yourselves.

If I had a million dollars I could do this or I could do that...

If we just had more money we would be able to.....

If we just had more Sunday school teachers we would be able to...

If we had more home group leaders we would be able to....

If I had 15 more minutes for **IMPACT** class we would be able to....

If we just had more adults...

More children...

More rooms...

Our won facility...

A different location ...

Our own Volleyball court...

Etc... You get the point. The “**What Ifs**” are endless.

I could do more or I could witness better if I just had a little more of this or that...

Do you know what all that sounds like? (**Excuses** why we don't)

Look back at the early church, what was it they had? Did they always have rooms for Sunday school or day care facilities to watch the kids while the adults went to class?

The answer is no most times they would find a busy intersection and stand on a box and start preaching, they would go out in the hills and find a high piece of land and preach from there.

What they had was **boldness and power**, not a lot of **excuses**.

The key verse this morning is found in Acts 1:8 from the NASB it says,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

If we look closely at the early church we will see a very unlikely group did amazing things,

How? What was there secret?

What was the source of power that they clinged too? That is what we are going to try and get into this morning.

This leads us to our first point this morning which is:

1. The Power to Witness comes from God.

The meaning of the word witness is basically three words in the Greek New Testament which are translated witness, two are nouns and one is a verb. One noun refers to a person who bears witness, the verb means the act of being a witness and the other noun means the bearing of witness. The main

meaning of witness in the New Testament is to tell about, proclaim or bear testimony for something or someone.

The power is what sets them apart. They spoke with boldness, full of authority in the face of danger or uncertainty. We can look to both the Old Testament and New Testament to see examples of boldness.

In **IMPACT** class a few months ago we talked about Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego who stood in the face of death and stared down King Nebuchadnezzar and replied in.

Daniel 3:16-18, “¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

They were men of purpose, another examples we went through just weeks ago in **IMPACT** class was the prophet Habakkuk

Habakkuk 3:17-18, “Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls,¹⁸ Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.”

We could look to examples in the New Testament of people like John the Baptist who carried the message “Repent because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! He also preached boldly in the face of imminent danger. He reprimanded King Herod in Mark 6:18, “¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”

You could look at many other examples of how the disciples who were scattered after their master was taken began to preach boldly once they received the power from the Holy Spirit. They didn’t go underground but took to the streets proclaiming the word from anywhere people would listen.

What was it that they had that we don't have today?

What makes people hesitate to share their faith?

One thing was they realized that the power they had to preach was not something they could do or learn but was something they had to **wait patiently on the Lord for**.

Pentecost gave them the New Testament saints the voice and the power they needed to preach boldly.

The gospel by its very nature, cannot be confined to a cuddly safe, insulated environment where we just huddle up and wait for Jesus to come back? No the gospel insists on **spilling out** and running into the streets where the people are dying and hurting.

The power of witness does not come from us but from **God!**

This leads to the second point this morning which is...

2. A lack of witness indicates a Lack of Power

Saints listen to me it is **next to impossible** to be filled with the spirit of God and keep that spirit to yourselves.

For a person who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and been purified of our sins, filled with the Holy Spirit full of Gods power but seem a little timid and don't seem to step up to the plate are failing to live up to their potential.

The very same is true for a **church** , meaning a church can claim to be spirit filled, but decides to sit on the corner content only to minister merely to those who come to them and also claim to be faithful to their calling.

Saints listen to me, the Church of Jesus Christ is called not to **"Sit Still"** but to **"Move Out"** not to merely **"Check Out"** but to **"Reach Out"**

Remember the song by Casting Crowns if we are the Body, why aren't your hands moving? We are supposed to be an active part of the healing not sitting by on the side lines content to watch the rest of the community burn.

If we are not careful, without even realizing it our churches can develop a kind of **fortress mentality** that not only keeps people out, but attaches **blindness** to our eyes while the world around us drastically changes.

You don't have to go back too many generations and see the change the church had on our society. I was raised in a small country town in Scottsboro Alabama in what was known as the Bible belt.

We lived in what was called a dry County, meaning the sale of any type alcohol was illegal. If you wanted any liquid refreshments you had to either cross the state line and buy your products or go to one of three or four local bootleggers and pay a ridiculous price. **(So I am told)**

All the stores were closed on Sunday except for just a few of the essential ones like gas stations and a few fast food restaurants.

The Moral Majority had a huge say so on what was allowed in our towns; it was unheard of to see strip joints or adult books stores inside city limits.

Society has changes a lot since I was a kid but even today in my same hometown there are Blue laws, where you cannot go to 7-eleven and buy alcohol on Sundays, it is still forbidden because that day is to be respected.

This leads us to our third point this morning...

3. **The Great Commission**

Matthew 28:19 says, ¹⁹Go therefore and make **disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

That is exactly what we are supposed to do, make **disciples** of all the nations.

In short the church is suppose to be an **Emergency Room**, a place that the sick and needed come to for healing. The church should be a place when you come in with all kinds of ailments and leave with solutions to fix your problems. You are not sent away with just hugs and smiles but answers to your problems.

Does that sound like the local church today? Sadly to say it doesn't...

No amount of biblical instruction by itself can make us a more effective witness. We could have theological information seeping out of our ears and still not be a vital witness for Christ.

Remember I said the last time I preached that the church in and of itself does not work. It just makes guilty people guiltier. **Without Christ** it does not work!

What it takes is the filling of the Holy Spirit and the willingness to be obedient to his calling. (Getting out of your comfort Zone)

You have heard us say again and again if you want to walk on water you have to **get out of the boat...**

We observe people just like ourselves deserving Hell, yet given eternal and abundant life thorough Christ Jesus.

It is sad to say but it seems that today the "Great Mission" of the church is seen as the "Great Misery" of the church. Someone else said the "Great Commission" mentioned in Matthew 28:19 is no referred to as the "Great Omission."

It seems that believers can spend years with unsaved friends and family and never share the gospel.

We need a little more conviction like some of the mighty men and women of the Bible that were considered "**Sold Out**" or "**All-IN.**"

They had something special and were not afraid to share it; they didn't care if they offended someone or hurt someone's feelings. They preached the word boldly regardless of the consequences.

What accounted for the differences?

They also struggled with temptations and limitations. They worshipped the **same Lord** and received the **same Holy Spirit**.

One of the things that was different was they waited in the Lord. They waited on the Holy Spirit.

When was the last time you waited on the Lord? Too often we seek the Lord's counsel after the fact but they waited until they made sure they had the proper vision from the Lord.

My son once told me that too many people use God and the holy Spirit like a **spare tire** that they only break out once they are broke down, instead of using him like the steering wheel, and allowing his to help guide your travel.

They were more **Spirit-led** and less **Man-Led**.

Could it be that we are trying to do so much on our own strength and not enough on his strength?

J Parker said, "Revival is the visitation of God which brings to life Christians who have been sleeping and restores a deep sense of God's near presence and holiness. Thence springs a vivid sense of Sin and a profound exercise of heart in repentance, praise and love, with an evangelistic outflow.

That's what we need today... (**REVIVAL**) that outflow that cannot be contained, or kept inside a building, or denomination, in short we need to stop trying to contain **God in a BOX**.

A revival is the fulfillment of evangelism through the Power of the Holy Spirit.

This brings us to our next point which is...

4. They were on One Accord.

In the Woodbridge **Home group** a few weeks ago we were studying the book of Philippians where Paul was commending them for being in one accord, being likeminded, committed together to do what was needed for the Lord. They were united together having one mind and purpose.

Philippians 2: 2, NIV, *“² Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”*

Unity was the difference for the early church.

Look at the example of a tiny very **delicate snowflake**. By itself it can do nothing, but when there is unity it can stop traffic, in fact it can cripple a complete city.

That’s the power the early church had, it was called being in one spirit and one mind.

I want to ask you a question and I do not want you to answer, I just want you to think about this one. When was the last time the church was united in **ANYTHING?**

Am I preaching to anyone here today? Touch your neighbor and say I think he’s talking to you.

Paul said in Philippians 1:27, *“²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, **striving together** as one for the faith of the gospel.”*

Think of it like this if you learned to play organized sports in high school like football, basketball, soccer, or let’s say volleyball, you would understand the value of unity the value of teamwork.

I can almost hear my high school coach say, **“There is no I in team”** it is bigger than you so get back in there.”

The bottom line is there is great value in unity, there is power in numbers.

Now I never played in the band but have always been amazed at how 100 band members could take the field at half time and create the amazing very elaborate half time shows. Now that requires hours and hours of practice (teamwork)

Now some of you were in sports or the band, some were cheerleaders or the drill team, the issue is everyone has their job to do, and if you do your job in cooperation with the other members of the team the results were good.

However if one team member didn't perform his or her role, the entire team suffered.

That's what we have to do here at Fil-Am, we need to **do our part**, figure out where we fit in the bigger system and get involved. I know me and one of my mighty brothers were talking a week or two ago and they were saying they were not sure where they were supposed to serve. They wanted to be more involved but didn't quite understand were God wanted them.

I said just by the fact that you are here, you are serving. It is kind of like being on the Volleyball court when we are playing. I may not be able to spike the ball or set anyone but by the fact that I am standing in my position I am making the other team think before they hit the ball right to me. If I were not there it would show the opposing team a gap a weakness in our side.

So all we need to do until we can fine tune our skills is to **SHOW UP...** Do your part until you have a better understanding in what you should be doing.

And we will help you with that one because in the upcoming months we are going to do a ministry fair to help you find an area of ministry that you might like to serve in

Don't miss out on your opportunity, the one that is placed in front of you. Let me tell you a true story, which is one of the greatest disasters of history that took place in 1271.

In 1271 Nicolo and Matteo Polo (the father & uncle of Marco) were visiting Kubla Khan, who at the time was a world ruler. At the time he ruled all of China, India and all of the Eastern countries. He was attracted to the story of Christianity as Nicolo & Matteo told him.

In fact he said to them, "You shall go to your high priest and tell him on my behalf to send me 100 skilled in your religion and I shall be Baptized, and when I am Baptized, all of my Barons will be Baptized, and all the great men will be Baptized, and their subjects will be Baptized, so there will be more Christians here than in your parts.

The problem was that nothing was done; nothing was done for about thirty years, and then two or three missionaries were sent. Too few too late. It absolutely boggles the mind to think what a difference the world might have been if in the 13th century China had become fully Christian, if in the 13th century India had become fully Christian, if all the countries in the East and become fully Christian.

Look at the nations in that area now, they are Buddhists, Islamic, Muslim and it all could have been Christian.

My greatest fear today is not the threat from terrorists; my biggest fear is that we will miss God's calling and opportunity. He has tasked us with spreading the Good News, (Gospel) to the people across this globe who have never heard. Let us not make the same mistake that the Italian Christians made in the 13th century.

We need to understand that God does not always tell us everything. He tells us what he wants us to know and then expects us to step out on faith and he will fill in the rest.

A perfect example that we went over a few weeks ago in **IMPACT** class was on the story of Jonah. Who was give the word from the Lord in Johan 1:1 where it says "*The word of the Lord came to Jonah saying arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come before me.*"

However, Jonah decided to run from the Lord and head to Tarshish. So the story goes that the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea so the ship was about to break up.

That is the problem too many do not understand that when we are rebellious and running from God there will be times in your life that storms arise.

You all know the next part of the story he was thrown overboard and swallowed by a whale that kept him there for 3 days and then spit him out on dry land.

He went to Nineveh and preached that God would destroy the city in forty days.

The King and the people of Nineveh heard the message and declared a fast and everyone fasted for the Lord. Not only did they fast but they made their animals fast, the entire nation fasted.

Jonah 3:7-8 says, ⁷*“This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. ⁸But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. “*

They trusted in the word of the Lord and it became the biggest revival that I am aware of in the Bible. In Nineveh all 120,000 of them were saved and turned from their wicked ways and followed God.

Now what do you think would have happened if God had told Jonah I want you to go to Nineveh and tell them in forty days I will destroy the city and they will all turn from their wicked ways and return to me and you will go down in history as one of the greatest revival preachers ever?

God didn't do that he said Go and he would take care of the rest.

This leads us to our last point this morning which is where we need to be as a church...

5. Creating Disciples.

If you look up the definition of insanity it is to do the same thing over and over and expect a different outcome.

Sadly, that in too many situations is exactly what the church does. We try and produce **disciples** and it doesn't work so what do we do? We do the same thing again, this time longer or shorter but still do not get the desired results.

What we need to do is to change our **strategy**; if we want something different then we have to do something different.

What would happen if we were to take a different approach? Instead of just preaching, or fellowshiping we were on a mission to **create disciples**?

What would happen if we were to focus on **4** out of every 10 adults and **1** out of every 3 teenagers who have already accepted Christ as their personal Lord and savior, and do everything within our power to help them grow into inspired, fully mature Disciples of Christ?

Just to show you my point, could I get one person from every table to raise their hands up high? Now just look if we could take them as an example and make them "**Sold-Out**" or "**All-IN**" Disciples for Christ, just think what they would be able to do, the people they would be able to influence. Just think of the change they would be able to make in their jobs, in their homes, in their neighborhoods.

That's what the early church did they spread the good news from the original 12 to the next group and it was contagious and swept the globe.

What would we need to do into to produce **Disciples of Christ**?

I will tell you two things that I keep emphasizing is **IMPACT** class and **Home groups**, that's a great place to start.

We would need to change our standards. We would have to **de-emphasize** our matrix for success from attendance, statistics, square footage, as well as income.

We would have to **define success** in other ways, like groups of people who worship, not just on Sundays and not just here in the sanctuary but wherever and whenever they got together.

It would require a **paradigm shift** from a program driven ministry to a people driven ministry.

It would change our emphasis from building consensus to **building character**.

De-Emphasize recalling **bible stories** and emphasize **applying biblical principles**.

The church would have to move its concern about the quantity of people, programs, square footage and dollars to a concern about the quality, **commitment**, wisdom, relationships, values and lifestyle of its Disciples.

Discipleship is not about reading books and storing up head knowledge, it is about building relationships, it is about getting excited about **Christ** and the **Word of God**.

The power that needs to grow in our church is not the power of a program or a schedule but that of the **Holy Spirit**, it's the same power that the Old and New Testaments saints plugged into. It's the same Power that our Lord and savior Jesus Christ stayed plugged into.

I go back to the song again by Casting Crowns and ask the same question, *“If we are the body, why aren't his arms reaching, why aren't his hands healing, why aren't his words teaching, and if we are the body why aren't his feet going, why is his love not showing them there is a way? There is a way.”*

Saints it is our responsibility as the **Body of Christ** to set the example, to be the light shining in this dark and cruel world. We are humanities only hope. It is time to roll our sleeves up and get in the fight.

We need to fight for your family, fight for that relationship, fight for your friends, your co-workers, and your community.

Remember we may feel as helpless as a tiny snowflake in this huge nasty world we live in but when we come together, with one mind on a mission we not only can stop traffic we can bring a city to its knees.

Let us pray...