

Fil-Am Community Church

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July 8th 2012

“THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF GOD’S PRESENCE”

Good morning! Last week we didn’t meet because of a power outage. In Sterling where we live, we didn’t have power, just like Tita Annie and Kevin and Tita Tina. And, of course, here in Springfield as well and Alexandria. I believe there was no power either in certain parts of Maryland. It was a few days later when power came back.

Many of you didn’t know that my family and I traveled to Chicago starting Saturday afternoon last week to attend the wake and funeral of a close relative. In a way, we didn’t suffer as much as you did because there was power in Chicago and we felt cool inside the mini-van for about 12 hours. It’s good that power was back on when we came back last Wednesday night but we found out that the house had too much power because we left all the lights on.

In the world today, we need power to function, electrical power, that is. Without it, our lives would be disrupted. No cell phones, no TV’s, no internet, no microwave, no ref, no gas even. But, there is a power that is even

more critical for our survival. And that is, the power to live or exist in this world so that we live lives that are meaningful. Some derive this power from their relationships. Some from money. Some from their career. Some from their achievements. And some from their religion. But all these power are unreliable. They're not permanent. They fail you at the most critical times in your life.

This morning and for several weeks, I'd like us to look at a kind of power that supernatural, out-of-this-world, and is extraordinary. It is always on, will never fail, will not go out even in the midst of storms in your life. In fact, it is the kind of power that will sustain you through and through all your life.

I'm talking about the extraordinary power of God. So, I have come up with a series called "Extraordinary Power for Ordinary People."

How many of you need God's extraordinary power? You know what, I need God's extraordinary power to help me get through this message this morning. The past week was just a bit exhausting for me as we traveled to and from Chicago and had little sleep only throughout that time. And you, you need God's extraordinary power to help you remain awake as you listen to me this morning. Anyway, this morning, I'd like to talk about the extraordinary power of God's presence.

How many of you have seen the movie World Trade Center? There's a scene in the movie where one of the two survivors, who are both cops, was lying helplessly on the ground with a big slab of concrete over his body. He was virtually immobile. Before this tragedy occurred, he was thinking of a bright future. He had great plans for his family. He was excited because his wife was going to give birth to their second child. In fact, they were teasing each other what name to give to the child, Olivia or Eliza. Because of his situation, however, he was beginning to lose hope. He had been underground for hours and there was no rescue worker in sight. Now, he was feeling tired, thirsty, and sleepy. All the while his friend who was also crushed underneath a big pile of concrete not far from him, kept shouting, "Don't close your eyes, don't sleep, don't sleep!" Apparently, if he slept, he'd never wake up again.

This guy obviously needed a miracle in his life. He needed God's extraordinary power to help him come through. Perhaps you're in a similar situation. Your problem may not be as life-threatening as this one but just as heavy and crushing. You need a miracle in your life.

You may be in a marriage that has turned sour and you've been trying your best to save it. But it seems like you're in a dead end and the possibility of divorce looms large each passing day.

Or maybe you have a job that you really like. A job that you're good at. But one day, the boss says, "Joe, we need to make some changes. We're going to have to let you go." And you go home and say, "Lord, what is happening? I thought I was where you wanted me to be! I thought I was doing what you wanted me to do! What is going on?" You need a miracle in your life.

Or maybe someone you love is fighting cancer. You were counting on God to come through for your family just like He always has. But this morning, the doctor calls back with the test results that you don't want to hear. You need a miracle in your life!

Today, in our text, we'll see a miracle performed by Jesus. The Bible says that it is actually the first of his miracles. Let me read from John 2:1-11.

In this passage, there was a shortage of wine in the wedding. I would imagine that all the host needed to do was to buy additional wine. But it seems there wasn't enough money or it would take a long time to obtain some more. And so Mary had to step in. Perhaps Mary was a relative or a close friend but in any case she was also so worried about the situation that she turned to Jesus. Why did she turn to Jesus? She knew that Jesus was the Son of God and he could do something about the situation. Although, perhaps, Jesus hadn't performed any miracles yet prior to this event, she knew that Jesus had the ability to do the miraculous. She just trusted in Jesus.

And, folks, that's what we ought to do when faced with an impossible situation. Just trust in Jesus. Mary left everything in Jesus' hands. She says to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

The presence of Jesus in that wedding made the difference. If Jesus wasn't there, the bridegroom and his wife and their parents as well would have suffered shame and embarrassment. It's good that they invited Jesus to be in the wedding as verse 2 says, "Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding."

Now, by committing the situation to Jesus, Mary gave us three reasons why the presence of Jesus in our lives can make a difference. No doubt these are things that went on in the mind of Mary as she approached Jesus. So this morning I want to give you three basic, foundational and fundamental truths about God. When things get rough and you need a miracle, think of these three things.

The presence of Jesus in my life can make a difference. Why? Because...

I. HE IS GOOD

The Bible declares God's goodness in 1 Chronicles 16:34 where it says, "*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*" And the

psalmist in Psalm 119:68 worships God by declaring, *“You are good, and what you do is good...”* As we say many times here at Fil-Am, “God is good...all the time.”

What do we actually mean when we say “God is good”? It means that there is no evil in God. There can never be. He is moral perfection, embodying all truth and righteousness. Therefore, everything he does is perfect and righteous and all for the best.

Now, that seems to be a no-brainer if you’re a believer in God. “Of course, God is good. I learned that in Sunday school. The pastor preaches that.

In fact, I know all of my blessings come from him.” But a crisis comes. Your loved one contracts a terminal illness. You lost your job. Your mate leaves you. Your child is in drugs. Is God still good? That is where the rubber meets the road.

All your intellectual understanding of God’s goodness grinds to a halt. And you begin to doubt his goodness.

Corrie Ten Boom doubted God’s goodness at one point in her life but soon after recovered. She writes, and I quote, “Often I have heard people say, ‘How good God is! We prayed that it would not rain for our church picnic, and look at the lovely weather!’ Yes, God is good when He sends good

weather. But God was also good when He allowed my sister, Betsie, to starve to death before my eyes in a German concentration camp. I remember one occasion when I was very discouraged there. Everything around us was dark, and there was darkness in my heart. I remember telling Betsie that I thought God had forgotten us. 'No, Corrie,' said Betsie, 'He has not forgotten us. Remember His Word: "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.'"

Then, Corrie concludes, "There is an ocean of God's love available--there is plenty for everyone. May God grant you never to doubt that victorious love--whatever the circumstances."

Friend, let me encourage you that God's goodness never changes. Whatever you're going through the Bible tells us, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" (Rom. 8:28)

The second thing why the presence of Jesus can make a difference is because

II. HE IS IN CONTROL

It's a mistake to think that God makes a mistake. We humans are prone to make mistakes but God our Maker never makes a mistake. As one evangelist

once said, “God never says, ‘Oops.’” The Bible says in Deuteronomy 32:4, “*his works are perfect.*”

Just consider the solar system. God has arranged all the planets and even their moons in such a manner that they don't bump at each other as they revolve around the sun. How about the earth's ecosystem or the relationship of plants and animals? Do you know that without each other, they wouldn't survive? Plants produce oxygen which animals, including us, breathe. And animals produce carbon dioxide to enable plants to produce oxygen. It's a cycle. And there's always just the right number of plants and animals to keep this system going. And it's been going on for thousands of years. Only God who is perfect can design such a system. He did not make a mistake. He is in control.

The Bible says that there is a purpose in everything. And so, it assures us that there is a purpose in everything that God does. You may not understand it, you may say it doesn't make sense, but behind it is a grand plan that God has designed especially for you.

You see, there is always the temptation to blame God for our troubles. We may even think that God makes mistakes when things go wrong. I remember the time when I was in California years ago. I was preparing for a return trip to Russia as a missionary. I was all set. I have a visa to Russia, my bags were packed and my friends were just waiting for me to confirm. But I couldn't go.

You know why?

I didn't have a plane ticket. I waited and waited but the money to buy the ticket did not come. Until my friends left without me. I was so disappointed and frustrated and embarrassed that I said, "God, you don't know what you're doing. You made a mistake." Of course, God didn't make a mistake. He knew what he was doing. He had other plans for me. That plan was better than what I was bent on doing.

God is the one who sees way ahead down the road we are going. I always like to think of it as being in a car on a two-way highway. You're behind one of those huge trucks and you're trying to pass, but every time you pull out, a car is coming in the opposite direction. But God is high up above and He can see the road way up ahead and knows exactly when it will be safe to pass. Well, in my case, He was miles ahead of me. All I needed to do was to trust Him.

I read a story about the passengers in a boat that was steaming along the St. Lawrence River in Canada.

They were very angry because, in spite of the fact that heavy fog was encircling the boat, full speed ahead was maintained. At last they went to the first mate, and complained. "Oh, don't be afraid!" the mate replied, with a

smile. "The fog lies low, and the captain is high above it, and can see where we are going."

Are you tempted to complain of the way your Great Captain is leading you? Believe that He can see the end of the way. Then, declare as King David declares in Psalm 4:8, *"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."*

The first reason why the presence of Jesus makes a difference is because he is good. The second is because he is in control. And the third is because

III. HE KNOWS WHAT'S BEST.

What does the future hold? That's the question of many people. In our society many people are wondering what's going to happen next. They turn to fortune-tellers in order to know their future. But fortune-tellers themselves don't know the future. They can't predict the future with pinpoint accuracy. Otherwise, all they need to do to get rich is to buy the winning lotto ticket.

Do you know Ms. Cleo, the Jamaican born Floridian who claimed to be a psychic? Well, she became quite popular a few years back and has appeared in the psychic channel. It turned out that she was a scammer.

She earned hundreds of millions of dollars while she tricked people into believing that she can predict the future. However, she wasn't able to predict the lawsuits which were filed against her.

Why do people want to know the future? Because we're curious. Also, because I think we want to have the best in life. For example, if you know that a year from now, the company you're working for is going to lose money and lay off people, then you'll already make preparations to look for another job.

Or if you know that your child is going to get involved in drugs in school then as early as tomorrow you'll transfer him to another school. Or if you know that the Wizards are going to win the NBA title next year, which is a major miracle, then you'll already save up money for a front-row ticket.

We all want the best. For ourselves, for our children, for our family, for our church. The problem is, many times what we think is best for us is not really the best for us. Because we really don't know what's best for us. We have limited knowledge. We can't predict the future.

For example, you get attracted to this really cute guy or girl in school or at work. I'm talking to singles only, ok? And he's neat and nice and looks like a Christian. And you say, "If he becomes my boyfriend and then we get

married, I'll be the luckiest and happiest person in the world." Well, he becomes your boyfriend and you get married but you find out that he's a two-timer or she's a nagger. Instead of being the happiest, you end up being the most miserable person in the world.

I'm sure many of us have experienced something like that. We set out to do something which we think is the best for us. But we end up with a disappointment. The Bible is right in saying, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*" (Prov. 14:12)

This passage actually talks about an ungodly lifestyle that can destroy us. But it applies to all kinds of things we think are right but are actually not.

There is one person, however, who knows what's best for you and me. That person is God. God knows the future. How couldn't he? He's the creator. He is beyond time and space. He knows exactly what lies ahead of you. You can trust him with your future because he knows the beginning and the end.

In Isaiah 46:10, God says, "*I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.*"

Because he knows the road ahead of you, don't you worry when you're going through a rough journey. When you're sailing on a stormy sea, just be still because God will bring you safe to shore.

There's the story of an Atlantic liner that was caught in a storm. For two days the wind raged. Passengers were frightened. At last an anxious passenger climbed by great effort to where he could see the pilot. Coming back down among the passengers, he spread the glad tidings of peace. He said, "We are all right. The ship will make port; for I have seen the pilot, and he is smiling."

With the great Pilot directing our life we can smile on through every storm. This is hard, of course, but all God wants for us is to trust him and give our future to him. There was a time in King David's life when he was relentlessly pursued by his enemies. But he didn't give up. He didn't lose hope. He just trusted in God. He wrote in Psalm 31:14-15, "*But I am trusting you, O Lord, saying, 'You are my God!' My future is in your hands.*" And you know what, wherever you are right now or whatever your situation is, that is exactly where God wants you to be. He has put you there for a reason. Maybe because he wants you to learn a lesson. Maybe because he is purifying you. Maybe because he wants to protect you. Maybe because he wants you to draw close to him.

Whatever the reason, God knows what's best for you. He never failed you in the past. He will never fail you now and in the future.

Now, going back to that scene where the police officer in the movie World Trade Center was lying hopelessly in the ground amid the rubble, he closes his eyes finally in seeming surrender to his sorry fate.

Then, he sees a vision of a white figure who was enveloped in bright light. There was no mistaking that it was Jesus because of the cross in his heart. Jesus was reaching out to him and his hand was holding something. It was bottled water.

Suddenly, the police officer woke up and shouted to his buddy, “I saw Jesus and he was holding a bottled water.”

That vision of Jesus with the bottled water put back hope in that person’s heart. He persevered to survive until the rescue workers came to pull them out of the rubble. Suddenly, the presence of Jesus even just in a vision made the difference between life and death for this police officer.

Do you feel like you’re in a rubble? Do you feel tired and sleepy and ready to give up? Don’t, because Jesus is right there with you. He is reaching out to you with hope.

All you need to do is invite him in your life. Invite him just like the wedding celebrants invited Jesus to their wedding. And you’ll find out that when things become hopeless, Jesus will give you hope.

Jesus cares for each of us and he is right there with you and me.