

## "Go Power"

Acts 2:1-21 & John 20:19-23

May 15, 2005

I read recently about a man who got up one morning and went out to start his car so that he could go to work. But when he turned the key, nothing happened. After struggling for some time to start the car - [I can imagine him wiggling the key, hitting the dashboard and saying unkind things] finally he went to the front of the car and lifted the hood. It was easy to figure out way nothing happened when he turned the key. Someone had stolen the motor. — It is not hard to understand that if the driving force is gone, you are going nowhere.

**Today we come to Pentecost. It is one of those truly remarkable moments in the history of the church that we hold up as a turning point in the life of the church. There is no question that it is really baffling and has caused a lot of consternation over the centuries. And although there are many different ways we could approach our scriptures today - and especially the events of that Pentecost day - what I would like to suggest to us as one understanding is that it is about power to get up and get going. Frightened disciples were gathered together behind locked doors. They knew what Jesus had asked them to do. But they could not get started. They were frozen in fear and stuck in the muck of sorrow and confusion. As hard as it is for me to understand cars and engines, I am smart enough to know that if the engine is gone you are going no where. It is even harder to understand human beings. It is pretty easy to understand many of the things that make the going tough for us - many of the things weigh us down and get us stuck in a particular place in our lives where we do not want to be. And unfortunately, we can not just open the hood and see if the engine is missing. But today we see frightened disciples roar to life - hidden disciples are given the power to come out to openly speak of God. And a very diverse group of people were given the power to hear of a salvation from God.**

**I'm not exactly sure why, but Pentecost makes me think of a manure pile that I encountered years ago. I can't remember if I share this with you before or not but I love the story, so please bear with me. I was in High School and was helping a neighbor {Oliver Magneson} with some farm work. It was spring and the ground was just about completely thawed. It is usually a wonderful time of the year in North Dakota when the long winter is past and perhaps there is just a little bit of spring insanity that makes people do some things that they may not normally do. One thing that isn't so wonderful in all of this spring thawing is that the manure piles out in the pastures behind the barns thaw right along with everything else. The smell is bad enough but probably the worst part is that those manure piles thaw into a deep, soggy, disgusting muck. It happened that Oliver had just gotten a shiny new red pick-up with 4-wheel drive. It was something that was pretty uncommon in our area way back then - and Oliver was bragging about the power that he now had in**

that pick-up. With the huge engine and the 4-wheel drive he said: "You couldn't get this thing stuck no matter how hard you tried." --- Now this is where that little bit of spring insanity comes into the story. He looked at the huge pile of thawed manure and at me -- and said, 'get in - you drive.' I thought it would be fun and he was the boss, so we pointed that shiny new pick with all of it's power toward the deepest, soggiest part of the manure pile and headed in. We hadn't gone far when we came to a complete halt, stuck firmly in the muck that was now all around us. The farmer smiled broadly to suggest that I had done good, and he reached over and engaged the 4-wheel drive and said: 'OK, now you will see the power - give 'er some gas and back us out of here'. Well, I gave 'er the gas and all 4 wheels began to spin - and we started to move - but it wasn't backwards - it was down deeper into the muck. Oliver's smile was gone as we sat inside that powerful new pick-up that lay on it's belly with all 4 wheels turning freely in the muck. I was sure I was also in deep trouble for getting the new pickup with all of its power so hopelessly stuck and dirty. But in a minute he smiled again and said 'well I know you can't get my tractor stuck'. So, one of us had to take off his shoes and roll up his pants and trudge out through the muck to bring the tractor and a chain - and soon we set free the pick-up with all of its power.

The disciples were stuck in a muck of their own - it was fear. They had power. They were a bunch of tough hard working folk. They had walked with Jesus and had been instructed by him. Jesus had empowered them more than once, He had even breathed on them and imparted the Holy Spirit - but they were stuck and even with all of the power that they had been given they were stuck - moving no where. But Jesus came and hooked on with forgiveness and the Holy Spirit and they were set free. And they were able to get going again. The people who had gathered from every nation and language were smart people but they were stuck in their own little worlds too - lost in ancient beliefs and hung up on impossible superstitions. But the Holy Spirit came with more power and lifted them up.

We are an intelligent and powerful people. Still we drive into deep do-do {Can I say that in church?}. Still it is easy to find ourselves stuck in all kinds of muck, spinning our wheels, unable to move forward. Stresses, fears, worries, superstitions, pain, problems, or even the routines that are just so comfortable for us leave us immobilized. But the fact is that God has given us power for living and He isn't afraid to continue to come and hook on with more love and forgiveness. When we get stuck it would be natural to believe that He would get disgusted with us and throw up his hands in dismay and simply say: "I give up." But He doesn't. He continually comes through His Word and through His people, He come through Bread and Wine and the waters of Baptism; and He comes through the pronouncement of forgiveness and daily needs supplied -- and He says: "Peace be with you - receive the Holy Spirit". -- "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." And having empowered us again He opens the door and with a little push says, 'get going again - give it another try -- "I Send You!" I will be with you. But now you go with My power - carry the power of forgiveness and life to your world.

**If the source of power is missing - we can go nowhere. And there are times in our lives when the power is available to us but the 'muck' of life simply gets too deep and we are hung up just spinning our wheels. But God's word and His presence has the power to lift us up out of the deepest do-do. The stuff we get into may leave us stinky and covered with much but even that washes away in the renewing waters of forgiveness and life that flow from the throne of God. Cleansed and set free, the disciples get going in the powerful presence of God's Holy Spirit. And in the same way God seeks to send us out - freed from the muck and washed clean - He sends us out as agents of forgiveness and love.**

**AMEN**