

“WHAT WONDER-FULL POWER!”
Imagine Meeting Christ Series #6
2 Kings 17:35-39, Ephesians 1:15-23, Mark 4:35-41
May 15 & 16, 2021

When you think about **the word POWER**, what comes to your mind? Is it the force of the wind that strips the land bare of all housing and vegetation? Is it the energy of the seas that can wash away inhabitants from islands and coastal regions? Is it the relentless wearing down of rock due to continuous running of water, forming great canyons and valleys? Is it the mighty eruption of a volcano that can form an island, or destroy all life within miles of its caldera? Or could it be the gravitational force exerted by the moon on waters of the earth causing the tidal changes every 12 hours? Or could it be the massive explosion of an atomic bomb that sends debris thousands of feet into the air and wipes out everything within reach of its shock wave? Or maybe it's the influence of a governmental leader setting actions in motion at the exclamation of his or her word? These are just a few things, but what comes to mind when you think about power? There are so many more things that we could talk about when it comes to power, both natural and human.

But have you ever stopped to consider **how much power the Lord God has**? When I ask that question to students in confirmation classes, the response is pretty unanimous – all power. Think about that - all Power. But what does that mean when we say God has all power? If you seriously consider that response, it can begin to blow your mind. Although nature can exhibit massive power, God's power is so much more than anything the world can show. God has universal power!

When the Greeks considered the words strength and power, they put together a word that explains it very well. It is the word *pantokrator*. Even the word exudes strength.

This Greek word is a combination of two words put together, *pantos*, which means “all,” and *kratos*, which means “might.” Put together these two words create a powerful concept: “Almighty.”

“But it's more than a concept. It's a name. A person. We see it at the end of Revelation 1:8, which goes, “*I am the alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, (and here it is) the Almighty.*”

“Pantokrator, the almighty, Jesus Christ.

“He who has (always been in existence – [John 1:1-2]).

“He who commands the armies of heaven with a word. (Isaiah 13:13)

“He who created all the macro-worlds, where planets form galaxies and galaxies form the universe. (Genesis 1:16-18)

“He who created all the micro-worlds, where ants build their intricate subterranean palaces and where neutrons and protons shake hands unfailingly in bilateral agreement.”¹

Almighty God, “creator of the heavens and the earth,” as we state in the Apostle’s Creed, the One who was there in the beginning (Genesis 1:1, John 1:1), and will be there long after the end of this world, “the One who Is, and Was, and Is to come” (Revelation 1:4, 1:8, 4:8). Almighty God, who is able to do whatever He desires and makes all things good, who is perfect and holy and loving to all He has created. All-Mighty God! There is none like Him! No expression of power comes close to describing Him! He is the Ultimate Source and Expression of power.

But think of this – what if this Almighty God, Pantokrator, desired to visit His creation? What would happen to us if we were to suddenly find ourselves in His presence? The created standing before the Creator? How would we ever survive His raw power? How could we experience the sheer magnitude of His sovereignty? We’d be blown to bits, zapped into smoke in the light of His intensity. How would it be possible for Almighty God to interact with His creation because of such a radical difference in power and authority? There is no way that we could survive as humans in the presence of the Almighty God.

And for us to stand before a pure and holy God – the exposure of our sinfulness and complete ungodliness would crush us completely. We would be absolutely overcome by our wickedness, and the guilt laid out upon us would destroy us. Could it be possible for us to survive a visit by the Most Holy and Powerful God, now or even in the future? Not very likely!

¹ (Robert Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1998], pg. 75)

So how was it possible for us to survive **WHEN He did come** to the earth? When Almighty God visited this world in the presence of Jesus Christ, how is it that we aren't left as smudge marks on the eternal walls of Heaven? It was because of the most fantastic miracle of self-control that the world has ever seen. Pantokrator, the One with all power and all authority came to earth in our own likeness, giving us an infinitesimally small peek at His greatness and power. He provided us a microscopic display of the total power that He has so that we might begin to comprehend the magnitude of His greatness, and still live to tell about it. He provided just a glimpse of all His majesty.

Remember when Moses asked to see God's glory (Exodus 33:18-20)? God's answer to him was, *"I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion to whom I will show compassion."* He further said, *"You cannot see My face, for mankind shall not see Me and live!"*

This is the God who calls us to love Him and obey Him. He has done great things for us and given us all things, and He invites us to follow Him and abide by all His commandments. The All Powerful God, the Almighty, desires that we trust Him in all our ways so that He might continue to provide for us, protect us, and guide us (2 Kings 17:35-39). But with all this raw power, do we dare trust Him? Do we dare obey His commands? Do we dare walk in His ways? Or should the question be better asked, do we dare NOT follow His commands, or trust in His ways, or follow Him with all that we are? God provided us a peek at His Almighty power, not enough to destroy us, but so that we might trust in Him, obey His commands and walk in His ways so that He might continue to bless us and provide for us.

However, we happen to have redundant amnesia when it comes to remembering the things that God has done for us through His mighty power. We forget His title, His Name – **ALMIGHTY God**. We forget His mighty works, displaying His almighty power. And so we wander off to do our own thing, and we put our trust in only that which we can see, or touch, or understand. And we wonder why we find ourselves in trouble, attacked by our enemies, ravaged by the ones who adamantly reject God,

and suffer under the oppressive governments that rule over us. When we put our hope and trust only in the things of this world, we are living under only a smidgeon of the power available to us if we were to rely upon the Almighty God.

And not only that, but **if we do trust in** the Lord God Almighty, often we become offended when He calls us to do things that don't make sense, the things that seem difficult, and the things that seem impossible. We put a limit upon what God can do based upon what WE can do, so we no longer believe that He can do all things. We put God in a box and we treat Him like any other human, limited by the things of this world. And because we limit what God can do, we begin to believe that He CANNOT do very much. So we begin to make God, not "Almighty," but "Possibly-Mighty," or "Occasionally-Mighty," or even "No-Longer-Mighty" AT ALL, and we begin to think that things will only get done through OUR OWN strength and wisdom and energy and creativity. We basically slap God in the face and tell Him, "No thanks, God. You're not really all that mighty anyway, so I guess I'll just have to do it all by myself." How absolutely foolish of us!

Well, the disciples tried that one day and they found themselves in a heap of trouble. Listen to the account as it's found in Mark 4:35-41. (READ Mark 4:35-41)

Jesus and His disciples were there on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had been teaching them many things through parables, and many crowds that had gathered around to hear, too. It's late in the day and Jesus calls the disciples to go to the other side of the lake. That doesn't seem to be too big of a request since many of the disciples were fishermen by trade. However the situation is that the winds typically escalate during the day and often create huge storms in the evenings, exactly the time that Jesus wants to cross over to the other side. Surely Jesus knew about that. One could always count on having turbulence on the lake. What was so important that Jesus wanted them to go across the lake right then? It seemed to be stupid to the disciples.

But off they go onto the lake, facing gale force winds and huge swells. It may have started out to be nothing unusual for those experienced fishermen, but as the trip goes on, the waves get taller, the

winds get stronger, and the courage of the sailors gets smaller by the minute. They're doing their best to keep the boat upright and afloat, bailing like mad to keep it above the waves. But there's something strange going on – Jesus is asleep in the back of the boat with His head on a pillow! He seems totally oblivious to the danger that surrounds them. While everyone else is beginning to wonder if they're going to make it, Jesus snoozes in the back of the boat as if without a care in the world. You can almost hear one of them thinking to himself, "*How insensitive of Him! Irresponsible. I'm going to die because of a whim of God!* (What could be worse than the Master sending you in a certain direction and then falling asleep?)"²

Well, maybe you can understand the anger and agitation of the other guys in the boat and they see Jesus sleeping, when they're working like mad to try to keep the boat upright and floating. The storm must have been unlike anything the disciples had ever seen. They are scared to death!

Finally they've had enough and they cry out, "Lord, we need You now! We're about to sink because of the storm! Don't You care that we are about to die? Do you even hear what we're saying? We're sinking and You're sleeping right into your grave! Help us!"

They could laugh at it later. "Imagine the absurdity of being angry with the Son of God for allowing (us) to encounter life's inevitable trouble, as if being in His company somehow entitles (us) to less turmoil than the next boatload of pilgrims."³

You all can relate to that, can't you? Life gets so turbulent that we recognize that we can't handle it any more on our own, and we call out to Jesus for His help. In fact, we also get angry with Jesus for letting us get into the mess we find ourselves in the first place, as if to think that when we have Jesus with us we're guaranteed a life without struggles and trials. Why wouldn't He protect us from all this world's corruption and exploitation? Why wouldn't He protect us from all the immorality and perversion? Why would He allow us to get into ANY storm of life or let us come to the brink of death?

² (Robert Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, pg. 81)

³ (Ibid)

Does He really care about us? Is He listening to us at all?

That's the thought of many who profess faith in Jesus. We just don't understand why Jesus would let us endure such struggles, asking us to do "unreasonable" things and then to fall asleep on us so that we're forced to endure it all on our own. The questions betray our lack of understanding of who Jesus really is, however. We have that recurring bout of redundant amnesia, forgetting that Jesus is Almighty God, here with us, giving us a peek at the immensity of His great power. How else could He show that great power unless we find ourselves in such situations that He can demonstrate His power before us? So what storm, what situation, could bring about the death of the Almighty without His permission?

Throughout the Bible we see accounts of God watching all of the events unfolding against His people. They too, cried out, not understanding the perfect timing and awesome power of God. But in each situation, God tells them over and over, "Relax, I've got this. Stand back and watch the things that I can do. Trust Me, I really do have this under My control."

Well, the disciples found that to be true for them. There in the storm of all storms, desperately striving to sink the very boat that holds the Son of God, they find themselves calling out to Jesus to save them. And Jesus wakes up, understands the severity of the situation, and takes the most unusual action. Instead of grabbing a bucket and starting to bail water to keep the boat from sinking, He stands up onto the bow of the lurching boat, balancing effortlessly with His hand on the mast line, and addresses the wind as a mother addresses a fussing child, "Shhh, be still now!" And He speaks to the waves, "Be quiet!" **AND THEY OBEY HIM!** The wind stops howling and decreases to a whisper. The waves stop cascading over each other. At the power of His word, the storm abates and the sea becomes calm once more. And the boat is safe, rocking gently in the placid waters of the Sea of Galilee.

I'm willing to bet that there were twelve sets of jaws on the bottom of that boat, the disciples standing there absolutely amazed at the authority of Jesus over the immensity of the storm. And then

Jesus turns back to them, and as if He is chuckling to Himself, asks them, “*Why are you frightened? Do you still have no faith?*” (Mark 4:40)?

When we get into tough situations that seem to have only one disastrous outcome, we become frightened, too. Fear gets a grip on us and we lose our minds to common sense. We get so distracted by what’s going on around us, the waves and the wind, that we forget who we have with us, Pantokrator, The Almighty God, The Creator, The Savior, **the One who has all power and all authority, Jesus.** And when He majestically demonstrates His wonderful power by saving us from all that seeks to destroy us, we are absolutely amazed, as if we thought it could never have happened. Our amnesia suddenly clears and we remember all that He has done for us before this current event.

When things are going great for us, there is no need to rely upon our faith, **because we have** all things under control of our life. But when the bottom drops out of the floor beneath our feet and we’re bailing for all we’re worth with no hope in sight, often our faith blows away with each bucket of water.

Yet, faith comes to us as we remember Who is in control of all things. We need to remember that we have Jesus in our boat with us, and though He may seem to be unconcerned about whether we live or die, He is inviting us to trust in Him so that He can do a great work through us and for us. Though the result may end up totally different than what we expect, Jesus knows our needs and only asks that we have faith in Him, in the good times AND in the tough times.

But Jesus’ words to His disciples were not so much rebuke them as they were the invitation to stop worrying and remember Who He is, and that He has all power at His fingertips and at His command. Jesus wants to encourage us and challenge us to be unafraid, so that every day becomes an adventure with Him. He wants us to love Him and live for Him in such a way that it demonstrates His wonderful power. He wants us to be assured that He will always come through with the right solution to any condition or situation. Maybe it won’t turn out like we expect, but He will always bring us through it in order to bring Him honor and glory. Even when the wind and the waves beat at us and seem to get in His way, if we trust in Him and have faith, there is nothing impossible for Him to do.

Psalm 42:5 asks a very important question for us. *“Why are you in despair, my soul? And why are you restless within me? Wait for God, for I will again praise Him for the help of His presence, my God.”* Are there things in our lives that cause us to become restless, worried, or even fearful?

Is this pandemic causing a storm within you that is threatening to sink you? Are the winds of corruption and waves of political unrest causing you to forget the One who has all power and authority is right there with you? Is the uncertainty of the economy of the nation threatening to wash you overboard with concern? Are you so overwhelmed by the violence and hatred of others that you find the floods rising around you with nowhere to turn? Are the waves of medical concerns cascading over you, threatening to submerge you in their weight?

Hey, **trust in the Lord Jesus, Pantokrator, Almighty God.** He knows where you’re at! He knows what’s going in your life! He knows the storms that are pressing hard upon you. Don’t give up your faith in Him. Keep still and know that He is God, and trust that He can bring about the stilling of any storm around you. When you have faith and trust in Jesus, you’ll be ok.

I like the prayer that Paul sent to the Ephesians to encourage them in the midst of difficult times. He said, I *“ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know Him. I ask that your minds may be opened to see His light, so that you will know what is the hope to which He has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings He promises His people, and how very great is His power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength which He used when He raised Christ from death and seated Him at His right side in the heavenly world. Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; He has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next”* (Eph. 1:17-21).

And this is my prayer for each of you, that you may put your unfailing trust in God, as Almighty God, Pantokrator, the One who has such wonder-full power for the works of all people. In the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord! AMEN!