



Calvary Presbyterian Church  
Sunday, SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

**Christening Calvary: "Created to Sail"**  
Rev. Eyde Mabanglo

**INTRO TO SCRIPTURE**

What are the various ways that electricity is generated today?  
States generating the most electricity from these sources of power...

- COAL West Virginia 84%
- NATURAL GAS Connecticut 93%
- SOLAR Vermont 44%
- WIND Iowa 39.5%
- NUCLEAR New Hampshire 59%
- HYDROELECTRIC Washington 73%

The question for us today is where does the church get its power? As we read this morning's scripture passage, listen for how the author prays to, prays about, prays for the mighty strength, ability, agency, and power of the spirit to indwell and move through the community of faith...

**NEW TESTAMENT READING – Ephesians 3:14-21 (NRSV)**

**Prayer for the Readers**

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit <sup>17</sup>and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup>I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON

Today, we are beginning a fall sermon series called "Christening Calvary".

Like at a baptism when we christen a child with their name and dedicate them to God's care and dedicate ourselves to their care, we can Christen a vessel with a new name and dedicate it to certain purposes.

I have to admit that I thought about breaking a champagne bottle over the pulpit this morning to really make this new sermon series official, but I hope that you will imagine with me that we are Christening Calvary this morning - or, at least, on the occasion of her 131<sup>st</sup> birthday, re-Christening her as part of this season of stewardship.

The sermon series is loosely based on a book that Calvary's session is reading together called "Sailboat Church", written by a pastor in our tradition, Rev. Joan S. Gray. Essentially, the premise of her book is for church leaders to renew their trust in our only true power source and that is the power of the Spirit of God.

Pastor Gray describes how many churches rely on their own power, and she describes their churches at rowboat churches. What this means is that they put their trust in the efforts of its staff, its clergy, its people and operate independently of God. Through her book, she is trying to help churches reorient their attitudes and look to God's Spirit for the guidance and ability to move forward - after all, most churches assume that they are dedicated to God's work, so it would do us well to allow God to ordain our direction and our decisions.

ROWBOAT Churches look like DIY (Do It Yourself) Churches. If we are determined to behave like a do-it-yourself project, then we will not be transformed, our neighbors' lives will not be transformed, and our communities will not be transformed.

SAILBOAT Churches understand that their power comes from beyond themselves. A sailor must learn to read the wind - the source of their movement. A sailor must learn to wait for the wind at times, but when it is evident in the ripple of small waves on a distance wind line or felt on their sun-kissed cheeks or detected from the telltale ribbons off the mast shrouds, then they can respond to this power by hoisting a sail canvas and harnessing the power that will propel them on in an adventure of faith.

Friends, we were created to sail. We are here to praise the Spirit and rely on the Spirit.

Our scripture today begins with the author taking on the posture of a Christian leader and that is by kneeling humbly before God. This part of the letter is a prayer...meant to be overheard...a prayer for the community of believers to be Spirit-powered, Spirit-led, Spirit-resourced, and Spirit-filled.

There is an invitation here for us to also practice prayer on bended knee, to pause long enough to go to the source of our power and ask for the literal IN-SPIRED or IN-SPIRITED essence of God to fill us and mold us and use us for holy purposes.

In this letter to the churches in Ephesus, the author has been overwhelmed by the mysterious and miraculous blessing of God's grace and mercy and favor and love for the Gentiles. This is what he is responding to...this is why he begins this prayer with "for this reason".

The author, the prayer of this letter, is blown-away by the power of such an open and inclusive heart—that the people of God are now a global community, that there are no longer separations of culture or bloodline that separate our human siblings. God is building something, and it is not a building. God's temple is no longer of brick or mortar or planks or stained glass or plaster or gold, but God's temple is the heart of the Almighty...God's temple is love, God's buildings are his heart. This is why the words of the pray-er (the writer of this letter), the words in this prayer, sound like someone offering the schematics of a large, unimaginable, expansive blueprint.

*I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

The author offers words of praise - a doxology - for the power of love! The mind-blowing/wind-blowing power of God is building and has always been building a LOVE larger than life...this life...our life...eternal life. We can't fathom the size of God's heart. We can't contain God's heart. We can't ever overpower the power of God's heart.

This is all good news. This is indeed praiseworthy!

As we go forward as Calvary, we must keep our attitudes in check. We must be honest about the source of our true power. We must accept, as we embark as a newly Christened Calvary, that our power comes from God. The word for power in the Greek is **dynamis** - literally meaning power, force, miraculous work, mighty work, strength. It is where we get the word dynamite! We can't compete with the power or the dynamite of God's Spirit. Even the word for ability comes from **dynamai** (a verb form of **dynamis**). God's Spirit spoke the world into existence...God's Spirit breathed life into the first humans...God's Spirit brought Jesus back to life...God's Spirit reconciles... God's Spirit blesses you and me...God's Spirit makes all things new. God's Spirit is the only true power. Praise God.

VERSE 20: *Now to him who by the power (**dynamis**) at work within us is able (**dynamai**) to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...*

Friends, I want to encourage us to use our imagination. Many of us have been ordained as deacons and elders and we were asked to enlist our imagination as part of our service to this congregation: **Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?**

Our scripture passage this morning seems to ask us the same thing. And as we pray, the Spirit of Christ, the wind of God, will continue to blow us away. We can do nothing without the Spirit of Christ, but with the Spirit of

Christ we are able to do more than we can possibly imagine! As our friend John Lennon says...

*You may say I'm a dreamer...But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us...And the world will live as one  
(Imagine Lyrics by John Lennon)*

I like to think that John's lyrics came from the Spirit.

Calvary, newly Christened Calvary, I want to conclude this message by praying today's portion of this letter to the Ephesians. I want to kneel before our God (and before you) and humbly ask this prayer for Calvary. I will be using the words from Pastor Eugene Peterson (from his translation called The Message). May it be our prayer throughout this season of stewardship. May it be our prayer for ALL of God's faith communities throughout our town, our nation, and the world.

[kneeling] Please pray with me...

*<sup>14-19</sup>My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.*

*<sup>20-21</sup>God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.*

*Glory to God in the church!*

*Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!*

*Glory down all the generations!*

*Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!*

Oh, Yes!

