

## Happy Father's Day

There's a story about a guy who stopped in the grocery store  
on the way home from work  
to pick up a couple of items for his wife.  
He wandered around aimlessly for a while  
searching out the needed groceries.  
As is often the case in the grocery store,  
he kept passing this same shopper in almost every aisle.  
It was another father trying to shop  
with a totally uncooperative three year old boy in the cart.  
The first time they passed,  
the three year old was asking over and over for a candy bar.  
Our observer couldn't hear the entire conversation.  
He just heard Dad say, "Now, Billy, this won't take long."  
As they passed in the next aisle,  
the 3-year-old's pleas had increased several octaves.  
Now Dad was quietly saying,  
"Billy, just calm down. We will be done in a minute."  
When they passed near the dairy case,  
the kid was screaming uncontrollably.  
Dad was still keeping his cool.  
In a very low voice he was saying,  
"Billy, settle down. We are almost out of here."  
The Dad and his son reached the checkout counter  
just ahead of our observer.  
He still gave no evidence of losing control.  
The boy was screaming and kicking.  
Dad was very calmly saying over and over,  
"Billy, we will be in the car in just a minute  
and then everything will be OK."  
The bystander was impressed beyond words.  
After paying for his groceries,  
he hurried to catch up  
with this amazing example of patience and self-control  
just in time to hear him say again,  
"Billy, we're done. It's going to be OK."  
He tapped the patient father on the shoulder and said,

"Sir, I couldn't help but watch how you handled little Billy.  
You were amazing."  
Dad replied, "His name is Wesley.  
I'm Billy!"<sup>1</sup>

Fathers and mothers are sometimes reluctant parents  
Not that we don't love our children  
But we sometimes just act like we know what we're doing  
We are leaders for our children  
We are all they have  
We sometimes are figuring out what we're doing  
As we are doing it  
But God has placed these little ones into our hands  
God has given us authority over them  
And it is a humbling experience  
We just love them as we are able  
With God's guidance and strength  
Today, we hear about another gift of responsibility placed in our hands  
We are given the Great Commission by Jesus  
We are all given a leadership position in the church  
Whether we're at the grocery store  
Or at the park  
At work, school, home, or FaceBook  
Christ is present in us to meet people in their needs  
We are given the job of being the Church in all those places  
And in every opportunity  
Christ is in our leadership  
Giving life to the world through us

A shot rang out just as I was beginning to write this  
This real world, full of death, is our context  
Yet Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me..."  
A second shot rang out  
It's nothing compared with Syria or Libya or Gaza or Afghanistan  
The authority of the gun, the weapon of death, gets our attention

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<sup>1</sup> Roger W. Thomas, *A Father's Faith, Sermons.com*

Yet Jesus says, "All authority ... has been given to me."

God has placed all authority, in heaven and on earth, in Jesus' hands

Whether we recognize it or not

Whether we know it or not.

All authority belongs to Jesus

The power to end life

And the power to begin life

The power to give life

This is the power Jesus gave to his disciples

This is the power Jesus gives to us

The power to give life

We baptize in the holy name of the Father,

the Son,

and the Spirit

we give life through teaching

teaching the life-giving commands of Jesus

and we give life through the presence of Christ in us

in the Church

as we gather

and as we are sent into this world

filled with gunshots

and sad ignorance of Jesus' authority

we all ignore his authority

yet today we are gathered in the Holy Spirit

to remember his authority

to remind each other of the design at work in the universe

and in our lives

we come together to give each other life in Christ

Jesus gives life

Now some of the disciples were worshiping him

They recognized him

He was their risen teacher

The Father and the Spirit were present in Jesus

Just as they had been at his baptism

The Good News was all coming together for them

But even as some worshiped Jesus

There were others who were troubled

They came anyway  
And Jesus gave them authority anyway  
Jesus turned over the keys of the kingdom to them anyway  
To those who were doubting  
And to those who were worshipping

He is present in our baptizing and teaching  
Whether we're able to worship him  
Or sometimes all we can do is come to him doubting  
And he is still with us  
The Father is with us  
The Holy Spirit is with us  
God is full of power and God comes to us  
Giving us life  
So that we may give life away to others

Earlier at the tomb

Life had been given again to Jesus  
And the stone had been rolled away  
And Jesus was loose in the world  
To give life to us  
The angels who had attended to Jesus  
Remained to greet the women who came back to the tomb  
They told the women the Good News of Jesus' resurrection  
And that News was joined to a command to go meet him in Galilee

Craig Koester, New Testament professor at Luther Seminary, writes:

*The angel's voice is one of command,  
for he tells the women to direct the disciples to Galilee  
where they will see Jesus for themselves.  
Then, before the women can follow through,  
the risen Jesus appears and repeats the command  
that the disciples should go to Galilee.  
The plot thickens as rumors spread  
that none of this resurrection news was true,  
and that the disciples were the ones who had stolen the body.*

*Against this backdrop, our passage begins.<sup>2</sup>*

So here they all were

The women and the rest of the disciples were all here  
Here in Galilee at a mountain  
They walked from Jerusalem  
And here in Galilee is where they found him  
He was waiting for them

Matthew mentions "the eleven"

Jesus' twelve leaders, minus the one who had betrayed him  
Jesus' leaders received authority to give life  
The Church is invested with the authority of Jesus  
So that from the highest Pope  
To the smallest child  
The Church might be effective  
In being the hands and feet and heart of Christ  
in the world

We don't know which mountain they went to

But we do know where Jesus has directed us to meet him

It is where the Church is baptizing

It is where the Church is giving life to those who need it

It is where two or three are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20)

It is where we are feeding the hungry

Giving a drink to those who are thirsty

Clothing the naked

Visiting those in prison

Bringing comfort to those who are sick

Giving a welcome to strangers (25:31-46)

This is where Jesus tells us to meet him

This is where the Church is giving life

In the context of gunshots and death

The Church is giving life

Max Lucado tells the story about the time he was sailing  
with his son and a church friend

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<sup>2</sup> WorkingPreacher.com

off the coast of Miami.

They were having a leisurely cruise and the weather was perfect.

But out of nowhere a storm appeared.

The sky darkened, the rain started  
and the ocean became violent.

Max was terrified and looked at his friend Milt for help.

Milt was deliberate and decisive.

He told the men exactly where to sit  
and gave them specific instructions.

Last he said, "just hang on."

They did what he said. Why?

Because Milt was the only skilled sailor on board  
and knew exactly what to do in a storm.

Until then Max could have boasted about his merit badge in sailing  
that he had received in the boy scouts.

But, that was no comparison to a real storm on the high seas.

He had no choice but to trust in Milt's directions.

Their safety mattered to Milt

and he guided them safely through the storm.<sup>3</sup>

Leadership is about knowing what to do in a storm

Having the experience with storms in your own life

Being able to share with those going through difficult times

It's about facing storms together

We have no one else who can guide us from death to life

Christ alone has the experience

He alone has the authority

And he has turned over this authority to us

We are the only leaders other people have

They have no choice but to follow our lead

Their safety matters to us

And Christ has placed us here to help them

To guide them safely through the storm.

Are you a leader?

Do you have leadership experience?

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<sup>3</sup> *Come Thirsty*, Max Lucado, Sermons.com

Do you have leadership authority?

Have you been through a storm in your life?

Christ was with you through the storm

And Christ has turned over the rudder to you

Christ is giving you the authority to hold onto the rudder

That will guide others through their storms

You are the only guide they have

You are Christ in their boat

In calm waters

And in violent waves

Christ is with you

Empowering your hand

To guide their boat to safety

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
God be with all of us in our leadership

To make us effective

In bringing life to this dying world

In guiding all ships to their safe harbor in Christ.

In guiding our shopping cart to the checkout

Amen.

Other stories that didn't make it into the sermon:

A young salesman was disappointed about losing a big sale, and as he talked with his sales manager he complained, "I guess it just proves you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink." The manager replied, "Your job is not to make him drink. Your job is to make him thirsty." So it is with evangelism. Our lives should be so filled with the passion of Christ that we create a thirst in others for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Most people expect me and every other minister in the world to witness and do the "E" word thing. You're sort of like secret agents. Most folks don't expect you to talk about your faith or be involved in this whole Evangelism deal. But you know what, you are exactly who Jesus would have chosen. Jesus called fishermen, tax collectors, and the every day ordinary kinds of people. He didn't have a single Pharisee, Sadducee, Priest or Levite on his staff. It was all run by the laity. And after Pentecost their ministry exploded.

William Willimon said: "In baptism we are initiated, crowned, chosen, embraced, washed, adopted, gifted, reborn, killed, and thereby sent forth and redeemed. We are identified as one of God's own, then assigned our place and our job within the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Mordecai Johnson, the African-American educator, once told of a colleague of his. He tried to interest his friend in Christ, but he was always met with polite refusals. Finally Johnson got the man to talk. It seems that when he was growing up in a small southern town, an evangelist

visited for a week of meetings in a tent. The little boy had gone, drawn by the excitement of it all, and sat in the back of the tent reserved for Negroes. At the end of the week it was announced that Sunday morning would climax the week when all those who were ready to receive Christ would be baptized in the river. Those wanting baptism were to appear on the bank dressed in white. So the little boy had hurried home to tell his mother what he wanted. His poor, old mother had to take a sheet off one of the beds to make him a little robe. Proudly, yet somewhat frightened, the child made his way to the river on Sunday morning. Oh, it was quite a meeting with singing masses of folk. Scripture reading, testifying, and preaching. One by one, many were baptized into Jesus Christ, the king of lovers. When finally the service was over and the crowd dispersed a little black boy stood alone on the riverbank in a little white robe that was all dry. He was waiting for someone to notice him, to talk to him, to baptize him.

He's still standing there, that little child. His face is many colors. He lives on every continent. His eyes still plead. "Come, love me, and share with me. Teach me faith in Jesus. Baptize me. Disciple me. Fulfill the commission of Christ!"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce Ball, *Cowboys and Christians*

<sup>5</sup> Billy D. Strayhorn, *From the Pulpit*, CSS Publishing Company, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen M. Crotts / Stan Purdum, *Sermons for Sundays: After Pentecost (First Third): Hidden In Plain View*, CSS Publishing Company, Inc.