

Pentecost 8, 2009  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Ephesians 3:20

St. Paul to the Ephesians, this chapter 3 verse 20. Paul says, Now to Him who, by the power at work within us, is able to accomplish more than we could ever even ask or imagine—to Him be glory for all generations, forever and ever, Amen.

The Word of God. And we pray:  
Lord Jesus, in days of old you poured out your Holy Spirit on the chosen disciples, filling the believers with power and love. In every generation Lord you've repeat this miracle, filling people with your Spirit, sustaining your church in the face of hardship, and persecution, and laziness. Now Lord on this day, pour your Spirit out on us. Fill us up with your power and love, and use us anyway you want, today and forever; Lord Jesus in your name, AMEN.

If. If only. Oh if only I had a million dollars, if only I had 10 million dollars. Why if I had that kind of money, just think of all the swell things I could do. I wouldn't be greedy, honest. Oh, maybe I'd keep a *little* something for myself, but mainly if I had 10 million bucks I'd go save starving children in Africa, really! I'd start a clinic in Haiti or fund a mission in Detroit, I'd help good old Good Hope Lutheran I would, if. If only.

Or if only I was famous somehow. Oh if only I was famous, or important, I'd use the press coverage in a *good* way, really. I'd call attention to land mines in Bosnia, I'd give speeches about the homeless, I'd testify before Congress and become the spokesman for some awful disease and people

would be grateful! They'd be grateful for all my hard work in front of the camera and I would be greatly appreciated by many if. If only.

If. If only. I've been playing pretend games like that since childhood and you know what? So have you. If only this, if only that, then life would be good, and as God is my witness I would do good too, if. If only. Well, as sins go, daydreaming may not be all that serious, but a bit of a reality check is in order. Folks, you will never win the lottery, ok. And the paparazzi do have your name and address, they're just not interested, that's all. Fame and fortune will not be yours but. But. As a Christian you have been promised a gift far greater than millions of dollars. You've been given a power that far exceeds fame or celebrity. As Paul says in Ephesians 3 today, there is a power at work within *you yes you* , a power that is able to accomplish more than you could ever ask or even imagine. A power at work within you, greater than Bill Gates' bank account or Michael Jackson's celebrity and that power is known as the Spirit of God. And there's nothing my God cannot do. The Spirit of the living God has been promised to you, it is at work within you, so what's stopping you? What on earth is keeping you, from the kind of meaningful, godly life that would really bless your family and your church and your community and your world, what on earth is stopping you. From that kind of life.

Let me pause for just a moment, to remind you, of exactly what kind of power Paul was referring to here—we're talking about, the very Spirit of God. It was this Spirit that in the beginning moved over the waters, and created heaven and earth. It was this Spirit that lifted up the prophets of old—the prophets stared down kings, routed armies, began and ended droughts with a simple word of prayer, fed many with not much—see the story of Elisha, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 4, today. That's the Spirit at work, don't you see? And it was the Spirit of God that enabled Jesus to heal the sick and raise the dead, the cross and the grave couldn't stop Jesus because the cross and the grave couldn't stop the Spirit of God at work in and through Jesus. And nothing could stop the disciples of Jesus either—filled with the Spirit, they were thrown to lions and yet they conquered the world. And in our day. We have all known saintly people, Christians who no doubt have had their share of hardships, but who keep coming, keep giving, keep helping and keep believing—I'm not sure we're worthy of them. We are not worthy of them, we can be such a bunch of spiritual weenies sometimes, just wimping out on faith, but with the Spirit's help we can do better—are you ready to be the kind of Christian your family needs? Are you ready to be the kind of Christian this church or this community needs? Are you? What on earth is stopping you, don't you know—God wants you filled with that Spirit too?

He does. He does, God wants you to have that same Holy Spirit, now, because God wants to accomplish more than we could even ask or imagine, and He wants to use you to do it. First, God intends to use this Spirit of His to forgive your sins and erase your regrets, and end your bad habits. Sound good? Sound impossible? Well it is good, it's great as a matter of fact, and it's what God wants to do in your life, now. God wants to assure you, you have a place ready and waiting in a kingdom that has no end. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will raise you up on the day Jesus comes again, heaven by definition is more than you could ask or imagine—but the Spirit of God, is going to get you there. And in the meantime, between forgiveness for the past and the final fulfillment in the future, there is today. Giving, and serving. Witnessing, inviting. Following through on those merely good intentions of yours, to become the kind of person your family needs, and your church and community is waiting for. God wants to use you, to accomplish great things for His people, there's no If or If only about it.

As Christian people, sometimes I think we don't take ourselves seriously enough. We have an aw' shucks attitude about ourselves and our faith and we think it's humility. Maybe, maybe. But maybe a failure to take yourself seriously as a Christian is really a failure to take God seriously. I'd like to

repeat that. Maybe a failure to take yourself seriously as a Christian, is really a failure to take God seriously. God created this world, God means to save it. God wants you to be a part of what Jesus is doing, and God isn't kidding—and it's time. No daydream, no far off fantasy, no buts about it. You, and me, and all of us, filled by the Spirit and with a mission to fulfill. What on earth is stopping us? Nothing I can see. So to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish more than we could ask or imagine, to Him be glory forever and ever, AMEN.