

<Interactive Time>



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/little-bear-in-the-woods-17993079/>; photo credit: Simone Cappellari

What do you do if you encounter a wild animal in the woods, such as a coyote or bear? <Let them respond>

What do you do if a bully approaches?
<Let them respond>

What happens if we try to rely only on our own strength when threatened or stressed?
<Let them respond>

Who can help us? <Let them respond>

How open are you to accepting help?
<Let them respond>

Not all that we go through is pleasant or easy, but we have a Savior who walks with us through it. When we live for ourselves, we are often disappointed; when we live for the Lord, we may be amazed at what the Holy Spirit accomplishes through us.

May you find joy in serving the Lord.

Gospel lesson

We continue from where we left off last week in the Gospel of Mark, after Jesus cured the woman who had been bleeding for many years and then revived the synagogue leader's daughter.



picture screencaptured from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP4GCT6S98M>;
credit: LUMO

Mark 6:1-13

(NRSV)

¹ He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.

² On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands!

³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

⁴ Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."

⁵ And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.

⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

⁷ He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean

spirits.

⁸ He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts;

⁹ but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

¹⁰ He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place.

¹¹ If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."

¹² So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent.

¹³ They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

UMH #127>

Message: In Weakness and in Strength



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/open-your-heart/seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

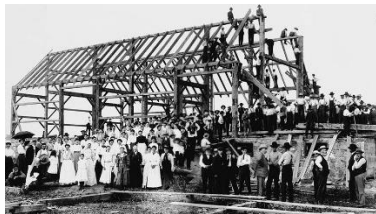
Holy source of all our strength, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may learn to trust more fully in Your grace and let Your power work through us. Amen.

We conclude the “Open Your Heart” series today with “In Weakness and in Strength”:

“In some ways, Paul invites us to plan worship around a fairly simple idea: opening our hearts to our weakness and God’s strength.”



picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barn_raising_in_Lansing.jpg; barn raising in Lansing circa 1900-19

You have probably heard the phrase, “Many hands make light work.” A classic example is the single-day barn raising when a community comes together to make it happen, such as the Amish are renowned for.

The persons who work on it may have very limited skills for the work, yet each pitches in with the gifts God gave them. At the end, it is not just the structure owner but the entire community that takes pride in it. The community bond would not happen if the owner refused to admit weakness and built it for him/herself over time, or not at all.

God uses our weaknesses for the strength of God's kingdom. Look at David in the Old Testament, who relied on God rather than his own prowess.

After Saul died, he did not claim the crown for himself before anyone else could; instead, the people saw the power of God at work through him and therefore asked him to lead them. The heyday of the kingdom of Israel was when they trusted in God rather than their own strength.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/bt-paul-prison/>

Similarly, the apostle Paul did not boast about himself, but about Christ. By the time he was writing 2 Corinthians, he was well known across Asia Minor for performing miracles in Jesus' name.

Yet he was stuck with a thorn preventing him from taking too much pride in the number of believers gained through his work. Instead, he had to keep pointing them to Christ, showing how he (Paul) was justified in his weakness - that the power of God in Jesus would be glorified. By this trust in the Lord, they could know that he was a true apostle, that the Holy Spirit was working through him.

We are currently in a season where political leaders are begging for donations, using the good they intend

to do for society as justification of their need. They ask us to invest in the future with them. How much more should we be seeking to invest in our eternal future by enabling God's work to be done?

I am not saying dump all your money in the offering plate. I am saying we should all seek to serve God the best that we can, including with less panic and anger when encountering those who have different political views than we do. Let God work thru love.

The people in Jesus' hometown had an impression of how things should be and wanted Jesus to conform to their expectations. He did little good where people put their egos in the way of receiving God's blessings.



*picture screencaptured from
LUMO-GOSPEL OF MARK CHAPTER 6:1-29*

This is contrasted with the disciples' leaving the popular world concerns behind and setting out to do as Jesus instructed, proclaiming that all should repent. Much good was done by those who trusted in God's power, where people opened their hearts to God.

In this day and age, media convinces people to rely on the power of self or mortal friends. People disbelieve or deny God. They disdain what they are familiar with and discount the unknown. They are set

up for disappointment and failure, because people have weaknesses, flaws, and faults.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/open-your-heart/seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

We have great news to proclaim: not only is God real, God sets us up for success – though not in the popular world sense. Only God is perfect in power, strength, steadfastness, and love. God more than makes up for our weaknesses, that we may truly live.

Knowing that we have the power of God behind us, we are to share the Word with those who will listen. So go find them, spend your time with them, pray with them, and share God's love in Christian community. Let the strength of the Holy Spirit bring a bountiful harvest out of our efforts by using our weaknesses.

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