

“We Have No Power”

Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus says, “Come to me.” In the past week, our community has experienced a great deal of unanticipated labor. Waking in the morning to the sound of neighbors using chainsaws made me think I was back in Wisconsin. It was impressive how the entire community got out and cleaned up the debris following the storm last Sunday night.

However, fallen trees and limbs were not the greatest source of burden or stress. It was the unknown. When will the power be restored? How long will I have to bail water out of my sump pump? Will I have enough battery backup on my medical devices? When is the food in my frig or freezer no longer any good? Should I buy a generator? Will we have water? When will my cell phone work again?

The Amish should be laughing at us. Do you know what the Amish would call the day after a storm like that? They would call it “Monday,” because it is just another day without electricity and cell phones.

Sunday night was not a restful night for anyone – even for the Amish. That was quite a storm. For many of us, the burdens of the

unknown stretched into Monday and Tuesday, and for some, it lasted even longer.

When faced with the unknown, the mind will not rest. There will be no real comfort or peace. People who had been awake for all of Sunday night bailing water, or whatever it was they were doing, they could not allow themselves to be asleep. There was too much to do. Jesus says, “Come to me . . . I will give you rest.”

With the notion that there is so much to do, we can't rest. I believe that this is why the trees and branches and debris was cleaned up, or at least moved to the curb, so quickly in many areas. It was the one thing every able-bodied home owner could do. Wood could be cut. Branches could be taken to the curb. In every movement, in every motion, you could see the accomplishment of your work. The yard got cleaner. The pile on the boulevard got bigger. There was a finite amount of work that needed to be done to clear the debris. And when it was over, you could say, “It is finished.”

There was satisfaction in getting that work done. But power being restored was out of your hands. That was the work of someone else. When, where, and how this work would be accomplished was not up to you. Someone else had to do this work for you.

When the storm hit, it was frightening. I had retrieved my daughters from a camping trip in Iowa and arrived home in Quincy at 12:30 AM. Driving south on 61, I could see the wrath of the storm approaching, but I had no clue how furious it really was.

What played out this week is really a microcosm of our life in the kingdom of God. Because of sin, the wrath of the law of God is approaching. He has told us it is coming, but I do not believe any of us have a clue as to the depth of what judgment means. Given what has happened in Joplin, MO and the other devastating natural disasters around the world, our storm this last week was just a reminder of what it is to live in a sinful world. To my knowledge, thanks be to God, there was no loss of life – although many harrowing stories.

So the “law of sin” wages war against us as Paul says in his letter to the Romans. And we experience storms. We suffer damage in our life. We have our existence diminished from the way God intended it to be. We come to understand that when storms arrive, we have no power.

When your good health is taken away, when a loved one suffers loss, when you lose your job, we come to understand that we have no power. Even more so, when we look into the mirror of God’s Law and see who are – the sinner that I am. It is clear, “we have no power.”

This is why people were so quick to clean up the trees and branches. This is something I can do. I can see my work. Me and my chainsaw, we have the power to this. But, even with an army of homeowners picking up limbs and branches and leaves, the reality was “we have no power.”

In our spiritual life, we also find comfort in our labor. And God encourages us to be good neighbors. And this past week has been

filled with stories of people being good neighbors. But no amount of neighborhood camaraderie or helping hands was going to turn on the electricity or guarantee fresh water. We have no power. This had to come from someone else.

In regard to important things like forgiveness, righteousness, salvation, when it comes to that which truly brings life, we are reminded that it comes from someone else. It is Christ, and only Christ who is able to look at His work and truly say, "It is finished."

Now Jesus says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This will not be the last "storm" that you face in your life. But you do not need to fear the unknown. Certainly, no one can tell you exactly what tomorrow will bring. We said in the Gradual that God's judgments are "unsearchable." But for all who are in Christ, there is a common, predictable end to our time on this earth. Jesus says, "you will find rest for your souls."

However, as I said in a sermon not too long ago, life and salvation is not some far off dream. The "rest" that Christ brings is here for you today. He takes away the guilt of sin. He takes away the fear of the unknown. He gives you strength. He gives you an easy yoke and a light burden, because He knows we have no power. Amen.