

July 30th, 2017: Superhero: More than we can ask or imagine



Over the past month in worship, we've been looking at the different ways that God is our superhero, particularly through a Trinitarian understanding of God as Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit. The Almighty God who created us and guides us through this life is always there when we cry out for help. Jesus Christ, the one who walked a journey like ours and knows our struggles, offers us saving grace through his life, death, and resurrection. And the Holy Spirit empowers and strengthens us in our everyday life, always connecting us to the heart of God through the Breath of Life.

Last week, as we spoke of the Holy Spirit as our superhero, we ended with the realization that through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, WE are transformed into superheroes for God – empowered to do God's work and share God's love. This week, we'll delve deeper into what is really asked and expected of us as God's superheroes, and what that looks like in the life of the church.

In the scripture I just read, from Jesus' farewell message in John's gospel, where he relays to his disciples how to continue on their work and not lose hope after he's gone, he says some pretty powerful words! "The one who believes in me will do the works that I do (the ones that point to God's abiding presence), and will even do greater works than these!" He's saying that WE, not just his disciples listening to him that day, but anyone who believes in him, will do works similar to those Jesus did.

To what works is he referring? In John's gospel, Jesus is often found performing miracles meant to display the power of God working through him. Our scripture started today with, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves." If you don't believe what I say, then believe what I do. He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed people miraculously, cast out demons, turned water into wine, calmed the seas, stopped storms and so many other things. Through his words and actions, he brought people to a deeper understanding and experience of wholeness and abundant life. He brought a kind of salvation that transformed life in the here and now, as well as in the yet to come. He saved people from physical hunger and spiritual thirst, crippling infirmities and mental illness, social exclusion and shallow living and he showed them all a better way, the way of life and love, care and community – if only they would choose to live it out.

We look at what Jesus did, at all the miracles he performed, at the sacrifices he was willing to make, and we think – there's no way I can do that! I'm not Jesus! But we sell ourselves short, and we underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit working within us to accomplish God's great work. Or, we do it without even realizing it! Friends, we DO have people who feed the hungry, who heal the sick, who share the living water that Jesus came to pour out in our lives, and they're here in our church today!

We have a number of people in our congregation who spend their days healing the sick, working as doctors and nurses, caring for people day in and day out, helping them to find healing, but with our contemporary knowledge of science, we simply call it medicine.

We have people who serve passionately within a variety of ministries, like Lunch Break, the Backpack Crew, CROP walk, and more, working to feed those who are hungry, and while we might not call it miraculous, you can be sure the people who receive the gift of food from complete strangers do!

We all have the capability to do great and miraculous works, like those of Jesus, if we are willing to put ourselves out there, and sometimes that means stepping out beyond our comfort zones... making sacrifices in our own lives... and believing that God can do something through you that you might not believe you can do yourself.

In our Ephesians scripture, we hear that “the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” – meaning that God can do with us what we never thought possible! As I thought about these two scriptures and the calling on our lives to be God’s superheroes, my mind kept going back to Suzanne Dice and the work that’s been accomplished through the Backpack Crew. After church last week, I asked if 10 years ago she would have ever imagined her life would look like it does today, she laughed and said that NEVER would she have imagined they’d be running the Backpack Crew, a feeding ministry that continues to grow in its scope and impact. I asked her to share with us today a little bit about her experience with God empowering her to do far more than she asked or imagined.

SUZANNE DICE

Thank you for sharing with us your experience and reflections!

This is a great example of God’s calling and empowerment beyond all imagination... and you know, we are all called in different ways, ways that match the set of gifts that God has created and is growing in you. But too often we’re held back by our fears of inadequacy, our self-doubts and our lack of faith... our disbelief that we could perform these great works in God’s name. But God has called us to greatness, to live out our calling boldly, and to believe that through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us, we can do far more than we can ask or imagine! Thanks be to God and may the Spirit continue to bless and call you to your next task as God’s superhero! Amen.