

Jeremiah 23:1-6
Psalm 46
Colossians 1:11-20
Luke 23:33-43

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him.

Colossians 1:11-17

I learned how to drive on a 1974 VW Bus. If you are not familiar with this vehicle, it is distinctive in the sense that the driver sits in front of the front wheels. It has a large, bus-like, steering wheel and is stick-shift. First gear is pretty easy to find but second gear feels like it engages behind the driver. Third gear requires that you hit the leg of the front seat passenger and fourth gear is somewhere in the back seat. Okay, a little exaggeration, but you get the idea – it was hard to shift. It was also difficult to steer in a parking lot. There was no power steering. It was all by brute force pulling on the steering wheel. It helped if the vehicle was moving but there were a couple of parking spots that required a three-point turn that was a workout.

After college, I traded in the 1971 Toyota Corona my dad and I worked on and got running (we bought for \$75) for a 1986 Honda CRX. It had power-assisted steering. What a dream it was to drive that car in a parking lot. Just turn the wheel where you want it to go and it did! It was also a dream to shift but I'll save that analogy for a different sermon.

I brought up power steering because of Paul's letter to the Colossians. He begins this section with a benediction – a blessing – to the people of the church. He wrote this:

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power.

Doing something on your own is like driving a 1972 VW Bus without power steering. The wheel only moves if you use your own strength. But the benediction – *may you be made strong with all the strength that comes from God.* Now that's power assisted steering! You see, God's not going to take control of the proverbial steering wheel of life and take us to where we need to go. No, that's not how God does it. We make the choices, we steer, and God brings God's power to assist us as we drive.

The second line of the benediction is this:

*May you be prepared to endure everything with patience
while joyfully giving thanks to the Father.*

God's power-assist prepares us to handle everything with patience. Look, God is not going to do all the work for us. God will assist us with God's power to do our work. The first example of God's power-assist is helping us to endure with patience. I know patience is not a popular idea, but we need it. Period. And, God will help us, with God's power, to be patient. To wait for God's timing and for other people to get their work done too. There's nothing we can do to change God's timeline and there's not much we can do to motivate others to get their work done any faster. The other night the three of us Marshalls were out eating pizza at Oak and Stone. The server walked away and there was no sight of him. Elijah had Youth Group to get to. But there's nothing we could do to accelerate the system. We had to be patient. So, we sat back, enjoyed each other's company and, wouldn't you know it, the bill suddenly showed up. Elijah got to Youth Group on time too.

This past week, I had two different families associated with All Angels ask for prayer – for strength. I prayed, we all prayed, and God's power-assisted came through, as it always does. God worked through the hands and minds of medical professionals and, with the strength to endure with patience, everything turned out okay. (Better than okay, frankly)

The week before Thanksgiving, we had a three-day clergy retreat for all the clergy in the diocese. I was one of the leaders and facilitators. We had morning prayer, noonday prayer, evening prayer and compline. The bishop, or presider, would start each prayer session with these words:
Our help is in the name of the Lord.
Response: the maker of heaven and earth.

It was our four-times a day reminder that our help is in the name of the Lord and that he has made heaven and earth (without our help and input). It's a good thing for clergy to be reminded of, from time to time, that our help is in the name of the Lord. Help does not come through our own strength, or our own name; rather, our help comes from the name of the Lord.

The Father has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son

Paul's letter to the Colossians reminds us that power from God comes through us, it helps us when we need patience, and for the above part, the power of God has enabled us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light! God's assist – he has rescued us from the power of darkness. Another God-assist: he has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son.

The power of God has rescued us and transferred us. That is quite a power assist! We didn't rescue ourselves. We didn't transfer ourselves; no, God did that. God's power did that. And, through the mercy and goodness of Christ Jesus, God's grace has enabled us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Again, not through our own power but through God's power.

We have control of the steering wheel of our lives. God's not going to magically transport us to where we need to be. We need to (we get to) do the work ourselves. But God's power-assist is with us. God will help us get there. God will do that by helping us be patient, to give thanks as we wait, and also to rescue us and transfer us into His place with the saints in light. Amen.