

“Do something!” Have you ever shouted that at someone? You might have been frustrated with someone because they were doing nothing while they had the power to do something and you got so upset that you finally yelled, “DO SOMETHING!” Or, maybe you were watching a movie and that two-word phrase went through your mind. You might have even yelled at the actor on TV, “Do something!” When we see Jesus on trial, part of us wants to say, “Jesus, do something!” We know he has the power to. We know he has the right to. We know that if we or someone we loved were in that situation we would want it all to stop, because it’s so unfair. What they did to Jesus just wasn’t right. Jesus had the power to make it stop and the power to make it right. But he didn’t use that power.

We know what this did to Jesus, but what does it do to us? Jesus’ passion history – from the upper room to Joseph’s tomb – leaves most people with confused and mixed emotions. When you read what they did to Jesus, it might leave you troubled, perplexed, stunned, disturbed, a bit angry. To boil it down to the most fundamental and essential reality, the question is this: should Jesus’ suffering make us happy or sad? The answer is both: at first it makes us horribly sad. How could it not? Especially when we realize that he was there as our substitute, completely innocent but being treated like he was completely guilty. His suffering was the cost of *our* sin, not his. He did nothing wrong; we have. But knowing what he did brings a happiness, not a giddiness, but a gladness, an inner joy, a deep sense of being loved, valued, treasured. Jesus’ suffering for us was the depth of his love. It brings us forgiveness, peace, and gratitude. We’re grateful – and happy – that he suffered instead of us.

At what point during all this did Jesus give up his power? Was it when ***Judas kissed him*** in the Garden of Gethsemane? An act that was supposed to be a sign of loyalty and love was in this case the signal of deception and betrayal. Or did Jesus first give up his power when they ***“seized and arrested him”***? No resisting on his part, no fighting back. Or was it when all his disciples ***“deserted him and fled”*** leaving him alone with his captors? Was it when they ***“took Jesus to the High Priest”*** for their kangaroo court and mock trial, all under the cover of darkness (completely illegal!) with the results already decided even before it started? Or was it when ***“many testified falsely against him”*** to which Jesus replied with not a single word? Or was it when Caiaphas, the High Priest, entrusted with and responsible for the souls of the entire nation of Israel, stood up and said, ***“Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you? Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”*** To which Jesus said, ***“I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Mighty One coming on the clouds of heaven.”*** Or, was it when they ***“condemned him worthy of death, spit at him, blindfolded him and hit him with their fists, yelling ‘Prophecy!’ and beat him”***?

The answer is that he gave us his power long before that. About 34 years earlier.

When we say in the Apostles’ Creed that Jesus “was conceived by Holy Spirit...” we are referring to the beginning of his *state of humiliation*. That means Jesus *set aside the full use of his power and glory for a time*. He didn’t always use his power to create food – he only did it twice. Every other time he did what everybody else did – he had to grow it, catch it, or buy it, then prepare it. He didn’t always stop a storm – he only did that twice. Every other time he did what everybody had to do: make a run for it or get soaked. In school he didn’t tap into his divine power before a test, instead he had to do what everybody else had to do: study, think, concentrate, and listen.

Jesus gave up his power the moment he was conceived by the Holy Spirit inside his mother, Mary. Then he lived his entire life as one of us, putting in all the effort we put into life. Only a very few times in his 33+ years did his divine power show itself. So giving up his power in front of the Jewish leaders was consistent with his entire life in that state of humiliation.

Jesus putting aside his divine power is counterintuitive to us. It goes against our natural thinking. From childhood on, we desire the opposite. We teach kids to be confident and assertive. Those are good things. We want them to get stronger – physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically. That’s what we do as we grew up; we go from weaker to stronger. That’s important as an adult to know you have power and to rightly use that power to do good. But that shift from weakness to strength, from having little power to more power tends to permeates all our thinking. When we call the customer service number to complain about an incorrect charge, we want to appear not just knowledgeable but also strong and confident. Why? Because we want to get our money back! We debate with friends our thoughts on politics or sports or the latest trends (even here in church we debate things sometimes!) and we want to appear strong in our views. We all have power in our knowledge and we want to use that. In an argument with someone, we want to prove ourselves right. We crave strength, power, control – again, that’s not necessarily bad – but desire for power can negatively affect our relationships subtly yet thoroughly that we can so easily become pushy or bossy or sound like a know-it-all, insisting in our way. We want our way – we all do! – because it’s about having the power. We don’t want to give up the power. And our sinful nature just loves that especially when we can put someone else down. That’s when a good thing becomes sinful. The old saying about power is true: *“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”* Putting aside our power is counterintuitive to us. Holding on to our power and using it selfishly for *self*...that comes naturally.

Jesus’ nature wasn’t sinful so he was completely willing to give up his power. Imagine having all the power in the world – literally. Imagine being the Creator of this universe and you made the billions and billions of stars in the universe in a split second simply by saying, “Let there be....!” Imagine being the one who controls the weather, the one who has his hand guiding history, the one who answers prayers of billions of people at the same time, the one called Lazarus out of his tomb, brought two deceased children back to life to the delight of their parents, the one who brought yourself back to life after your death – that was and is Jesus! So when he was spit upon, mocked, hit, humiliated....to NOT use his power took incredible power.

He still does that today, every day. We see his power in not using his power. Instead of responding to mankind’s rebellion with instant punishment, he is patient. Instead of responding to our sin with anger, he is merciful and kind. Instead of resenting those who don’t appreciate and believe in the sacrifice he made on the cross, he still holds out his love to all, inviting everyone to come to him. The power he showed by choosing not to use it in front of the Jewish leaders was love in action....for every human ever. That includes you and me.

This is Jesus, the one who paid your ransom. It cost him his power. There he sat powerless – capable? Yes! – but powerless by choice. He literally did nothing. While we are amazed at that, this was lost on most of the Jewish Sanhedrin members – except two. You may have learned that when the Jewish Sanhedrin had Jesus arrested (likely around midnight of late Maundy Thursday, or very early on Good Friday) and they send word around Jerusalem for those 70 men (the Sanhedrin was made up of 71, with the High Priest as the chairman) to jump out of bed and meet for an emergency meeting – “We got him!” – they probably skipped two houses, conveniently forgetting to invite Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. You see, those two believed that Jesus was the Messiah. They knew all about Jesus already. This was the Savior. This was God’s Son. Joseph and Nicodemus trusted Jesus and would soon show a simple act of love as they would take down Jesus’ lifeless body from the cross and give it a proper, though rushed, burial.

We also know this Jesus. We know his ransom cost him his power because he was willing to pay for the times we have been so consumed with power, control, getting our way, being right. Yes, for our misuse of power Jesus didn’t do anything in those hours so we could be *forgiven, restored* as God’s loved children, and *called* now to carry our cross as we follow him. At times that means saying, “No” to the desires of using our power at the expense of someone else. Jesus calls us now to be like him.

I have a friend named Keith who told me years ago that when he was confirmed as a 14 year-old, his mom wrote in a card she gave him, “Remember, Keith, you are saved to serve.” That’s true for all of us – we’re all saved to serve. You could also say we’ve been given power to set it aside. We’ve been given forgiveness to forgive. We’ve been bought back with a ransom – paid on our behalf – so that we would treasure and appreciate the Savior who did it all. Amen.