



DATE: September 6, 2009

TEXT: John 6: 1-14

TITLE: "Christian Brownout"

We now move into a look at one of the great miracles of Jesus. It is the only miracle of Jesus found in all 4 gospels. Let me say I am preaching today with some apprehension. I believe I am preaching today on the greatest problem faced by the 21st century American Church. But even more important than that I believe I am looking at a topic that is the # 1 problem that I face as an American and truthfully I believe this topic is the # 1 problem we face as a local church. The topic is this.... Christians settling for a life as a Christian Brownout.

Do you remember a number of years ago, during the energy crisis, certain parts of the country faced Brownouts? These occurred when the demand for electrical power exceeded the amount of electricity the power company could provide. What happens during brownouts is the power company reduces the amount of electricity flowing in the power lines by 10 to 20 percent. All of a sudden nothing works quite as well. Furnaces or Air Conditioners work at 3/4 efficiency. Electric motors slow down. Electric ovens take longer to heat up. Nothing gets as much power so nothing

works quite as well.

As I said, I see this as the greatest problem I personally face and the greatest problem I believe the church faces. Christians not receiving enough power and therefore not working, acting, believing as God desires.

What happens in an electric brownout is people, after a while, get used to the reduced amount of electricity. You learn to cook for a little while longer, you learn to work at the pace of the electric motor, you adjust and learn to accept the lower power. The tragic thing is... the same thing happens in our Christian walk. If a person lives at a level of reduced power long enough they settle for that level of power and faith and even come to believe that is all Christianity has to offer. This is the question I constantly ask myself and challenge you to ask of yourself: Have I settled for a brownout in my faith walk? Have I gotten comfortable in a powered-down Christian walk? Am I settling for less than what God intends for me? Possibly this morning I am preaching more to myself than anyone else in this sanctuary. As we turn to our text I want us to see 4 things that are missing from the life of a browned out Christians.

Omission # 1 Brownouts occur when we do not see the need for withdrawal. *John 6:1*

1Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),

Mark 6 tells of the same incident and records these words of Christ....

There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his disciples didn't have time to eat. So Jesus said to them "Let us go off by ourselves to some place where we will be alone and you can rest a while." So they started out in a boat by themselves to a lonely place.

It was a regular practice of Jesus and the disciples to withdraw to a quiet place. The disciples and Jesus needed spiritual rest and physical rest. We also need physical and spiritual rest. I believe the strategy of Satan in the church today is to make Christians so busy we do not have the time or the inclination for Spiritual rest. We don't have time for concerted prayer. We don't have time for consistency in the bible. We don't have time to fellowship. We don't have time to serve. If we do not regularly withdraw for spiritual nourishment we can not be powerful Christians.

This is certainly true in my life. The times of spiritual blahs, the times of spiritual depression and lack of growth and power, are caused in my life when I break my routine of prayer and study.

Psalm 46:10 states "**be still and know that I am God**" The challenge is this... Do you take

the time on a consistent basis to be still in the presence of God? Do we as the church have the spiritual discipline to be still in the presence of God? Power comes out of stillness and silence not out of actions and programs. To avoid a life of spiritual brownout be consistent in your time with the Lord... in prayer and Bible study.

Omission # 2 Brownouts in a Christian occur when we place our agenda over God's agenda.

John 6: 5-9

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" 6He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

8Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

The disciples had their own agenda. Phillip thought the situation was hopeless and thought of the cost of feeding so many. Andrew, searched the crowd for food and found only one small boy with food. Quite truthfully, The disciples wanted Jesus for themselves. In some ways I can't blame then. What a joy it must have been for the disciples to sit around a campfire, or sit in their house and just talk to Jesus. To listen to and laugh with Jesus would be greatly desired but that wasn't the

agenda of Jesus. He wanted to minister and teach the crowd. **We only gain power when we put aside our agenda in life and submit to the agenda of God in our lives.** This must be true in all area of life. Brownouts occur when we are selective about following the agenda of Christ in our lives. When we say I will follow God's agenda at home, and in the church but at work and in my recreation and in my finances I will control the agenda." That is the path of brownout. *Juan*

Carlos Ortiz is a pastor of a church in Argentina that has discovered power and revival. Ortiz preaches on a text in scripture until he believes a majority of the congregation is in obedience to the text. He has written a book entitled *Disciple* and he speaks of God agenda in our lives. Ortiz writes...

Jesus came to earth and told His disciple, "I am the commander-in-chief of the armies of God. I must conquer the universe for my Father. but to you I give the charge of this planet. You must go to all the world and make disciples everywhere.

So inch by inch I must recover the things that belongs to God. To do that, I have to eat; to eat I have to work. But the purpose of it all is to extend the Kingdom of my Lord.

Because of my faith my values have to change. I don't study at the university to get a degree: I am there as a member of Christ's Kingdom to do Kingdom business. I also happen to get a degree.

I don't work at Ford Motor company to earn my livelihood. I work there because God needs that spot on this earth. He needs one of His soldiers to conquer it for Him. And Mr. Ford happens to support my conquest. But my real Lord is Jesus Christ.

I have my own agenda. I love to read the newspaper. For many years I would read a paper.

At lunch I read the Pittsburgh paper. Truthfully, I am annoyed when I go into a restaurant and see someone I know. I want to sit by myself and read the paper. The Lord often speaks to me and says... talk to that person. I need to follow God's agenda not my own. . Power comes from living under God's agenda.

Omission # 3 Power is reduced when we do not recognize our own inadequacies. READ

John 6: 10-11

10Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. **11**Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

Jesus pointed out to the disciples that they were inadequate. They needed Him. Before we can see the adequacy of Christ we need to see the inadequacy of ourselves.

This is another area that I struggle with in my life. I want to be adequate in and of myself in all area of life. Christ again and again says to me "You're not adequate... surrender to me and discover my power." I resist that voice until the Lord, in His love, puts me in a situation where I can resist no longer. Jesus gives this lesson in *John 15:5,6*

I am the vine you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him, will bear much

fruit; for you can do nothing without me.

We can do nothing with out Christ. As long as we hold on to self-sufficiency we fail to receive the power of Christ. We remain browned out Christians.

Omission # 4 We experience brownout when we do not recognize the lesson of abundance.

READ *John 6: 12-13*

12When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." 13So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Jesus gives to us in limitless grace. He desires to give power and power and more power.

He never cuts back on the amount of power given... we cut back on the amount of power received

Ephesians 1:7-8 states....

Let us praise God for his glorious grace, for the free gift he gave us in his dear Son! For by the death of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, which He gave to us in such large measure.

Jesus desires to give us powerful abundant lives. When we settle for less than that Jesus weeps. His resources are limitless...He will meet all our needs and have an abundance left over.

Are you living a life of Christian Brownout? Are you settling for a powered-down faith?

Recognize your need to withdraw on a consistent basis and be with the Lord in prayer and Word.

Recognize you need to live under God's agenda in all areas of your life. Recognize your own inadequacies and the need to surrender to Christ. And finally, recognize that Christ has an abundance awaiting you that he wants us to claim.

Let us be power-filled Christians. Let us be a power filled church.

AMEN