

The Weak Made Strong

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Have you ever felt like society has cast you aside?

- Judged you as low, sinful, and worth less?
- That somehow you didn't measure up to some standard that somebody, somewhere created?
- Have you ever had someone who believes they live up to that standard speak death over you?
- Predict doom, gloom, and failure over your life and tell you that its your destiny no matter what you do, or how hard you work?
- Once upon a time there was someone in our lives who said "you ain't ever going to amount to nothing."

If you've ever felt this way, today's message is for you. God the Holy Spirit is the One Who brought you here. He is One Who called to your soul and your heart and drew you here today, so that you could hear this sermon. **Hear...and believe.**

Believe what? **That God knows you, sees you, cares about you**, and has a destiny for you that overrides anything anyone else has ever said about you. That is greater than what society has decided about you and your worth.

To begin this journey, **I want to give the history of Addison** and even if you're not from here and live in one of the surrounding townships, it applies to you equally because what happened back in the day wasn't isolated here.

In the 1860's there was a company called the Brooklyn Flint Glass Works, located in the Brooklyn, NY. After a fire burned down his factor, owner Elias Hungerford began exploring land in this area to rebuild because it significantly cut the cost of doing business. Specifically, he could get coal from the PA fields far cheaper than he could in NYC...so he wanted a place in NY, but close to the border of PA.

Some historical accounts claim that he narrowed his choices down to 2: Addison & Corning. In 1868 he immediately received an offer from Amory Houghton, Sr. to invest \$75,000—a small fortune in 1868—to build the Glass Works in the Town of Corning. 3 other Corning investors came forward to add another \$50,000 and the deal was signed in May 1868. 100 workers immediately arrived by barge and built what we know today as the Corning Glass Works.

As those of us brought up in this area know, **CGW has expanded into Corning, Inc. and has become a multinational corporation**, with branches in 14 countries and a net worth of 130 billion with a B. They have 67,000 employees. Since 1868, CGW has drawn to the City of Corning jobs, prosperity, money, businesses, stores, and population which is now around 10,500 people.

In 1868 when the Glass Works chose Corning over Addison, **it created a rift of resentment** on the part of the Addison residents who, for years, *went down the “what if?” rabbit trail.*

- What if the Glass Works had chosen us instead?
- Would we be the big, prosperous, and well populated Town?
- Would we be looking down on them vs. the other way around?

If you were brought up here or in any of these surrounding communities, you know exactly what I’m talking about. This unhealed wound between us and them continues to fester to this day. They call us a community of sin, welfare, poverty, and crime. A bunch of unwashed, low IQ knuckle draggers. We take aim at them too; calling them self-righteous, arrogant, hoity-toity types who think they’re better than everyone else.

I’m not here to try and heal that wound, or to make it worse by taking a side and shake my fist at the other one. **I’m here today to talk to any of you who’ve felt looked down upon by others** and society and give you a piece of good news: *God loves the weak.*

- God works through those society views as worth less.
- God is glorified through the cast down and the cast off of society.

For centuries, **Israel waited for her Messiah.** She prayed, pleaded, and waited on God to finally bring Him into their midst. And then it finally happened...but not like some thought it would. I read to you from *John 1:43-46*:

[Jhn 1:43-46 ESV] 43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, **"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"** Philip said to him, "Come and see."

We've heard this plenty of times, haven't we? About us and where we live.

Nazareth was the same. It's max population in the days of Jesus was 1000, it was a farming community, and no major roads ran through it. It was a village full of the poor and the uneducated. Obscure and unknown in the nation of Israel.

Yet that is where God chose to live in human form.

Jesus was and is more than a prophet and miracle worker. He was and is more than a long haired Guy Who preached about love. **He was God made flesh.**

Colossians 1:15–20 (ESV)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

God...the Creator of the universe. God who once said “let there be Light” and there was Light. God Who once parted the Red Sea, raised the dead, and walked on water. These are not tales or myths, they are testimony written in the Bible, which is the Word of God.

He didn't choose the great city of Jerusalem, which was majestic and contained one of the world's great wonders: The Temple. Jerusalem, the holy and exalted city with a strong religious and business presence, prosperity, and population. Everybody who was anybody lived there and was proud to call it their home.

While Jesus was born in Bethlehem, to fulfill OT prophecies about the Messiah, **why did He choose to be raised in the Village of Nazareth?** I turn now to the *1 Corinthians chapter 1* for the answer and let me give context: **the Apostle Paul is talking about the power behind Jesus dying on the Cross for our sins.**

There was more hope, love, and power in the Crucifixion of

Jesus than any other life or death in the history of this planet. We were all born with a problem...a big one: we inherited the disobedience of Adam and its result: sin and death. Separation from our Creator. A wound far greater and more encompassing than Addison vs. Corning.

Jesus came to heal that wound, and heal it He did when He shed His blood, died, then rose from the dead 3 days later. The moment He walked out of the tomb He didn't merely restore what Adam lost, He utterly defeated death and sin! Who comes back from the dead? Jesus did, and He returned in a body made from the stuff of heaven vs. the dirt of the earth. His new body will never get old, weak, or sick: death no longer has dominion over Him.

Then He did something crazy: **He offered to heal the wound inside US...the one we inherited from Adam.** The one that causes us to be passed by, like Addison was passed by when the Glass Works chose Corning. Jesus made the offer to the whole world; the rich and poor, the loved and unloved, the righteous and the criminals, everyone! His desire is that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance and Salvation.

Yet here is what's happened in the last 2000 years: **it's the weak, the poor, the uneducated, the crime ridden, and the addicted who have come to Jesus in droves!** When Jesus first "went public" at the age of 30, preaching and performing miracles, those who were cast off and passed by were the ones who surged forward to believe and be healed! The ones who had no hope and were told by the priests of the time that righteousness would only come when they obeyed 613—an actual number and not one I made up—rules were the ones willing to go days without eating just to hear Jesus preach and press through crowds so He could lay hands on them.

Now, finally, we get to 1 Corinthians 1, where I said we'd start reading:

[1Co 1:26-31 ESV] 26 For consider your calling, brothers: **not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.** 27 But **God chose what is foolish** in the world to shame the wise; **God chose what is weak** in the world to shame the strong; 28 **God chose what is low and despised** in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 **And because of him you are in Christ Jesus,** who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

You and I got picked! We got chosen! We didn't get passed by this time! We're not one of the cast-offs when it comes to God!

Why choose us? If we get Saved, if we get forgiven, and we get transformed from death of life, from darkness to light, ***then the world KNOWS it had to come from God!***

We've already been told we would never amount to anything!

Were of little or no value to society! If anything, that we were TAKING from it and making it less or worse! That no one wants us or thinks we have any worth! Passed by and passed over by what is “strong” in this world!

- Therefore when an addict comes to Christ and is set free, the glory goes to God!
- When a thief gets Saved and goes from stealing to giving, Jesus is the cause!
- When someone like me who used his mouth to cut other people down and cuss people out gets converted to someone using His voice to preach the Gospel and exalt the Lord, only the Lord could make that happen!

God chooses the weak for Salvation!

- God calls to the despised to be forgiven of their sins and brought into everlasting life!
- Christ redeems the addict, the crime ridden, and the poor and seals them with the Holy Spirit!
- The weak love God and run to Jesus because we've been rejected by this world!
- The rich and powerful of this world have passed us by and aren't holding their hands out!

The good news is that the most powerful Being alive, the One Who created all things, **has reached HIS hand out and you and I just need to take it!**

Jesus told a fascinating parable in Luke 14 of a **mighty King putting on a grand wedding for His Son**. The King sends invitations out, far and wide, and keep in mind He's inviting the “strong” of the world b/c that's who kings know: business owners, high level priests, politicians, etc. Yet the parable goes on to tell that they REJECTED the offer and declined to show up.

Let's pause: **the King is God our Father**. His Son is Jesus and Revelation 19 states Jesus is getting married...right before He returns to earth. This really isn't a parable, it's a prophecy.

Back to the parable; **the “strong” people God invites to Salvation decline the invitation** and here's what happens next:

[Luk 14:21-24 ESV] 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and **bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.**' 22 And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, **and still there is room.**' 23 And the master said to the servant, '**Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.**' 24 For I tell you, none of those men [the "strong"] who were [originally] invited shall taste my banquet."

You and I are the poor, crippled, blind and lame! You and I were the ones on the highways and hedges who have been compelled to grab hold of Jesus and be SAVED!

And there's still room!

I end with ***a prophetic dream I had years ago about this very event:*** listen to it now and see yourself in it.

I was running a marathon and finally came to the end, which was the Golden Gate Bridge in CA. On the other side was the finish line. As I started to jog over the bridge I saw thousands of other runners. When I finally made it to the other side my wife was with me, and a man dressed in a black tuxedo wearing white gloves ushered us into a massive banquet hall. It was set up for a wedding.

I recall a feeling of eternal peace and rest coming over my entire being. One that would never leave me again, not run out, or turn into anything else.

He escorted us over to a large round table, and cards with names on them were placed on each one of the plates. I saw my name and that of my wife on two of the plates, and the waiter seated us there. In the center of our table was a card several times larger than the others, and it said "Gateway Fellowship."

It was the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, Jesus Christ...and our church made it.

Let today be the day of your Salvation.

[Mat 11:28-30 ESV] 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

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