

23

Aug

Power

Lessons in Leadership

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

This worship explores the complex theme of power by highlighting unconventional biblical leaders who bravely used their influence to defy oppression and champion truth.

Recognizing that power itself is simply a tool, the service will challenge us to examine how we wield our own influence and confess where we fall short. Through focused prayers, hymns, and storytelling, we will come together to seek the wisdom and humility to use our power faithfully for God's purposes.

REFERENCES

Exodus 1:8-2:10

Psalm 124

Romans 12:1-8

Matthew 16:13-20

COLORS

Green

Liturgical Resources

CALL TO WORSHIP

In a world where powerful people make decisions to lift themselves up and cast others aside, how does God teach us to use our power?

God teaches us to protect the vulnerable, resist the oppressors, and persist in doing good.

In a world where power means might, how does God show us what power means?
God shows us through the midwives' daring, Peter's truth-telling, and Jesus' humility.

In a world where power is held over people's heads, how does God exercise power?
God exercises power with—with the oppressed, with the outcasts, with the poor and downtrodden.

Beloved, we gather to recognize our world as it is and to grow as disciples and imitators of Christ.
So, how will you use your power today?

We will side with the vulnerable, build community in the margins, and love all of our neighbors with the exuberant and all-encompassing love of Christ. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, May 2026.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

O God, Sustainer of all life and Creator of the universe, you set us aside to be leaders, so help us see things as they are and not only as they affect ourselves. Grant that we may have a wise and modest estimate of our own powers and live in full contact with all things high, true, and good. Teach us our failings and our faults; give us courage to acknowledge them and, by your grace, enable us to overcome them.

Lift us above the unstable currents of our self-will and establish us on the rock of your purposes. Be to each of us the secret stay and the inner guide of our lives. May your Spirit dwell in us more and more, that your peace which exceeds all understanding may possess our hearts and minds. Amen.

Adapted from Lawrence Gandiya, Zimbabwe. Found in Prayers Encircling the World: An International Anthology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 91.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

While we may yearn to be like Jesus,
we know that in our hotheaded choices, our frantic lives, our impetuous words,
we are too often like Peter.
But like him, we can confess Christ as our Lord,
speaking of our need for your saving presence in our lives.

We look for you in all the wrong places, God of the lost,
and wonder why we cannot find you.
We wander the corridors of power,
while you are on the sidewalks, beside the homeless.
We sit at the head tables of the world,
while you are handing out soup to the hungry at the kitchen's backdoor.
We applaud those who win the race,
while you are cheering on those in last place.
In forgiving us, God of new life,
you would transform our cold hearts
into those melted in service to others.
In granting us mercy,
you challenge us to think of all those we have ignored.
In gifting us with grace,
you enable us to proclaim Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior,
as the hope, the joy, the peace the world seeks.

Silent prayers of confession

Assurance of Pardon

It's not money, but our generosity with it;
it is not power, but our willingness to humble ourselves;
it is not our efforts, but Christ's gift,
which transforms us into God's children.
It is more than just how we think.
In mercy and grace, our hearts, our lives, our spirits
are transfigured and made new.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Written by Thom Shuman and posted on his blog, [Lectionary Liturgies](https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/08/act-of-confession-proper-16a.html). Re-posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/08/act-of-confession-proper-16a.html>.

BENEDICTION

Beloved, God calls us to use our power wisely and in the service of those the world has disempowered. May God bless you with the courage to notice injustices in the world and the perseverance to keep showing up with God and one another as we empower one another to set the world aright. Amen.

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