

Sermon for Sunday, August 27, 1972 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor  
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"UNTAPPED RESOURCES"

Acts 2:1-21

Text: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men, shall dream dreams." Acts 2:17

Each one of us this morning has great resources, both physical and mental, that are virtually untapped. Each one of us is capable of doing greater and better things than he is presently doing. Each one of us has gold mines of potential that have not yet been mined.

For example, most persons go through life with great physical resources that are virtually unrealized. Some of our greatest athletes have been produced because some physical disability made them reach down to tap the hidden resources of their bodies. An Olympic swimmer became a champion because her legs were once paralyzed by polio. A champion distance runner came into existence because as a child he was told that he might never walk again.

Perhaps you remember the story carried in Reader's Digest some years ago about a truck driver in Houston, Texas named Charlie Jones. Jones had lost his little girl when his home was destroyed by fire and in his soul there was born a deep and abiding hatred of fire. Over a year later Jones came upon a wreck near Houston. A fourteen-wheel truck-trailer had piled into a huge oak tree and the driver was pinned in the wreckage. A wrecker had been hooked to the cab in an attempt to free the driver, but three trucks working with the wrecker had not been able to pull the cab apart sufficiently to free the driver. Flames began to lap about the cab and with no fire extinguisher there, it seemed as though the driver would be burned to death. It was then that Charlie Jones tapped a hidden physical resource that he never knew existed. With his bare hands he ripped off the crumpled, jammed door of the cab; with his hands he bent the steering wheel out of the way; with his hands he practically tore out the brake and clutch pedals that trapped the victims feet. With his shoulders he bent the top of the cab upwards and freed the driver. A deputy sheriff said this about the incident, "If I hadn't witnessed it, I'd never believe a lone man could do a job we couldn't do with three trucks and a wrecker." When interviewed, Charlie Jones said, "A man don't know what he can do until he sees another man hurtin'."

But in addition to untapped physical resources, all of us have mental powers and capabilities that are also untapped. Psychologists tell us that many of us use as little as ten percent of our mental capacities and that few if any of us develop our total mental capabilities. For example, I read a story once about a street car conductor from Canada who was taken into the service during World War I. Before the war was over, he had risen to the rank of general! Imagine that! From street car conductor to general! Here was a man with vast, untapped capabilities. As a conductor he used only a small part of his mental resources. Like the rails of his vehicle, his mind was limited to a narrow, repetitious rut. Yet, under new circumstances, new stimuli, new challenges, he tapped into a great reserve of mental powers and resources that had never been touched.

I remember hearing a speech by Catherine Marshall not long after she wrote her famous book about her husband, "A Man Called Peter." She said, "I had never dreamed that I could actually write and the undertaking of a story of Peter's life seemed far beyond my abilities. Yet, by God's grace I went to work and finished it

in nine months time." Catherine Marshall had a gold mine of talent that had lain untapped. And while we can't all be successful writers, each of us has vast reservoirs of mental potential that probably we will never exploit. Very likely few of us will ever stretch our mental potential to the horizons of which we are capable.

But in addition to our physical and mental potentials, there is a third area of our lives that is also virtually untapped. That area is our spiritual potential. Jesus once said, "The things that I do, greater things than these shall ye do." Yet, hardly a one of us has tapped into such spiritual power. Surely few of us are utilizing even a major proportion of the spiritual resources that God has available for us. And as we look at the spiritual poverty of the world today, we cannot but realize that we have hardly scratched the surface of the spiritual power God desires us to have.

Look, for example, at the disciples of Jesus prior to Pentecost. They were leaderless, frightened men who cowered like frightened rabbits in some hidden room, afraid to show their faces in the street. Yet, out of that room came the most vital, dynamic group of men the world has ever seen who, in the space of a few short years, were to change the course of history for mankind. It is an amazing, fantastic story that would be hard to believe were it not so authenticated by history as to be indisputable. When that little band of very ordinary men got plugged into the mighty power of God, they transformed the world.

Across the centuries there have been many who tapped their spiritual resources: men such as Martin Luther--a timid monk until he tapped the spiritual resources of God and initiated the Protestant Reformation; a woman such as Joan of Arc, a simple peasant girl who never learned to read or write, yet who, when she tapped her spiritual resources, freed her native France from British tyranny; or a person like Dwight L. Moody, who though uneducated and though untrained as a speaker, became in spite of his handicaps a mighty servant of God when he tapped the spiritual resources open to him.

Our scripture for this morning provides us some clues as to how the disciples tapped in to God. Since few of us are exercising our spiritual potential, perhaps it will be helpful to us in growing spiritually if we can discover how the disciples got plugged in. Let me suggest first of all that Pentecost--the outpouring of God's Spirit--could happen because of the atmosphere in which the disciples were living. The Bible tells us in the first chapter of Acts, that after the ascension of Jesus the disciples returned to Jerusalem and that "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer." Then, after Pentecost, the Bible says of those early Christians, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." In other words, the early Christians lived in an atmosphere drenched and saturated with worship and prayer.

Our environment has so much to do with how we act. For example, our sociologists tell us that if we are to change the crime and poverty syndrome of the ghetto, we must change the environment. Those of us who are sending young people off to college this fall are concerned about the environment of our children and the impact this will have on their lives. And all of us know that the places we go and the people we associate with have a direct correlation with how we act. So it is that we need a certain spiritual environment, a certain spiritual atmosphere, if we are to tap in to our spiritual potential.

People tell me that they can commune with God on a beautiful lake or in the midst of nature and I know that is true. Yet, how many people do you know who were given

a great spiritual vision or who became great spiritual giants because they were fishing or playing golf? No, we need a spiritual atmosphere drenched with prayer and worship. Look at Jesus himself. The Bible says that as was his custom he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath. Time and again we are told of his withdrawing from the crowds to be alone with God in prayer. And on the night before Calvary, we are told how he spent the evening in prayer in an atmosphere of worship and reverence in the Garden of Gethsemane. If we are to tap the spiritual resources available to us, we must provide our souls with the proper spiritual atmosphere.

The second clue we get from the disciples is that their spiritual power came not only from the proper atmosphere, but also from the proper attitude. And what was that attitude? It was the attitude of a will surrendered to God. It was willing to will God's will. There is one area of your life that God will never invade. It is the area of your free will. God will never take from you your freedom to say "no" to him. Look at Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. God will not force Calvary upon the free will of his own Son. Yet, there in the Garden Jesus wills to will God's will for his life. "Nevertheless," he prays, "not my will but thine be done." The attitude of the surrendered will. Or look again at Peter and John who had been imprisoned by the Jewish authorities and who were threatened with dire punishment if they continued to tell about Jesus. The Bible says that they responded to the threat, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." Yes, the attitude of the surrendered will.

Fulton Oursler, one of our best-known Christian writers who gave us such books as The Greatest Story Ever Told, was not always a Christian. At thirty he was a self-styled agnostic who believed there were no absolutes of right and wrong and did not believe in anything approaching the supernatural. He once wrote, "I sneered at God as an elaborate self-deception and did all that I could to tear down the faith of those close to me." Yet, the day came that Fulton Oursler was out of a job, his health failed him and his marriage was in trouble. He was absolutely helpless to do anything for himself. At the end of his own rope he ventured into a church. He tells what happened this way, "In ten minutes or less I may change my mind," he prayed. "I may scoff at this--and love error again. Pay no attention to me then. For this little time I am in right mind and heart. This is my best. Take it and forget the rest; and if You are really there, help me." Yes, "This is my best. Take it and forget the rest..." An attitude of the surrendered will.

The third clue we get from the disciples as to how they tapped in to their spiritual resources is their actions. You can have the right atmosphere and the right attitude but until you begin to exercise your faith you can never uncover your spiritual potential. Right after Pentecost, when the early Christians were being threatened and persecuted, the Bible says of them, "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness." Yes, "they...spoke the word of God with boldness"....they acted, they exercised their faith, they put their power into action.

Just the other day I saw the membership statistics of main-line Protestant churches and again in 1971 membership declined. Why? Because Christians are not in action. They are not exercising their faith. A woman once remarked to Fritz Kristler the great violinist, "I would give my life to play as you do." "I am", replied Mr. Kristler, "that is exactly what I did." He not only willed to play the violin, he was willing to make the sacrifice necessary to do so. Many of us want to do God's will, but too often we are not willing to do God's will--to put it into action in our lives.



A moment ago I mentioned Fulton Oursler. He not only surrendered his best to God's will, he put God's will into action. As a result he made a massive contribution to the religious faith of millions. He tapped in to his spiritual resources and from his pen flowed eighteen books and many, many articles. On May 23, 1952, when he was stricken with a heart attack, his book, The Greatest Faith Ever Known, was interrupted in mid-sentence. Yes, in the atmosphere of worship in a church; out of an attitude of a surrendered will in which he offered God his best, Fulton Oursler put his faith into action until the end came.

Jesus on the cross is God's love in action. Each of us is left a legacy of spiritual power that is far beyond anything we have yet discovered or experienced for "the things that I do, greater things than these shall ye do." We have clues as to how we can tap in to our inheritance, but each for himself must put in the plug.

is the way of your life will... never take from your inheritance...  
"I will... as Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane... God will not...  
upon the cross with his last breath... there is the God... Jesus...  
God's... he prays, 'not as I will but as thou wilt...'  
The attitude of the surrendered will... Of Jesus... and John...  
impelled by the love... who...  
if they... the Bible... they...  
thrust... the... of God...  
God, you... for... we have...  
the attitude of the surrendered will.

Fulton Oursler, one of our best-known Christian writers who gave us as a people as  
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