

June 27, 2021

5th Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 5:21-43

Pastor Ann Hultquist

How he must have loved her, don't you think?...

Jairus' daughter--12 years old; not quite a woman but not a child either--an awkward age for girls and their fathers.

Perhaps more so in the biblical time of this passage, when sons were seen as a treasure for the future and daughters were a liability. After all, you had to find someone to take her off your hands--a good marriage would cost you in a dowry, but would hopefully bring some grandsons. It was foolish to care so much--but she meant everything to him.

When she got sick, they did everything they could to help--prayers, medicine, more prayers--none of it helped. The illness consumed her; and those gathered around, who had seen it all before, finally said "Just a little while now."

How he must have loved her, running from the house, searching, asking "Have you seen him? Have you seen that Teacher?"

It was a last chance desperate move, falling at Jesus' feet and begging, *begging* him to heal his little girl--what man in Israel would do such a humiliating thing?

She was desperate, too--did you hear how Mark's gospel describes her situation? *Bleeding for 12 years, endured much with many doctors, spent all she had, did not get better but rather got worse.* Humiliation and quack cures, only to get weaker and weaker. Twelve years of being in some way separate from the community--her bleeding made her unclean, as was everything and everyone she touched.

She didn't want Jesus to see her, didn't want that kind of attention--didn't want to be 'found out'--but if she could *just* get close enough. Hopeful, bold, with nothing left to lose, she slid into the crowd.

What do you think of these two? Maybe you've never felt such desperation; never felt such deep anguish that you would do *anything* to help the person you love so

much. But I doubt it...there is more than enough hurt to go around in this world, more than enough sorrow so that each one of us has tasted some of its bitterness. And we all discover that our own love is not enough to protect our friends or family, children or spouse from illness, or suffering, or struggles in life.

For people of faith, even a shred of faith--these realities, these traumas can shake us. If God loves the world, why do these things happen? Why me? Why the people I love? Is God even listening?

You may have noticed that people have developed some “pat” answers to these questions, such as “God has a plan,” or “Everything happens for a reason,” or the very unhelpful “Isn’t it time for you to get over that?” There is always encouragement, isn’t there, to stuff down those feelings, move quickly past the hurt, and certainly not ‘over-share’ our suffering or tears.

Scripture, despite what we might think, will have none of that! The Bible is full of human struggles, hurt, and people of faith crying out to God. Of course there are words of assurance like today’s verse from Lamentations: *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God’s mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* But on either side of that declaration are chapters--*chapters* that overflow with pain, questions, and heartache. Trusting in God is not somehow a call to us to pretend that all is well when it isn’t. Faith that actually impacts our lives and the world and people is faith which lives *in* the realities around us.

Think again of our Gospel passage today: A desperate woman reaches out and touches Jesus’ robe. A distraught father displays his love and anguish for everyone to see. Jesus doesn’t stand far off and say “Sorry, but your suffering is part of a much bigger picture,” does he? Jesus listens, goes, stops, heals--says ‘daughter’ and ‘little one’ and touches with compassion and love.

Jesus’ entry into human life--into our lives--in his life, death, and resurrection is such an astounding grace-filled promise: that there is nowhere, no moment of struggle, sorrow, or hurt where we are left alone. Christ is always present. The “immense grace of God” that Pr. Tyg talked about last Sunday.

Now, being honest about our lives and honest about faith calls us to also say that healing and new life are not always instantaneous, as they are in this passage. Chronic illness--physical or mental--can be an ongoing burden; grief doesn't magically disappear; tears can last many evenings and mornings and all the hours in-between and there are times when there will not be a cure. But all that we experience, all that we are, is gently enfolded in the scarred hands of Jesus again and again, and we hear those words "Do not fear."

Wherever you find yourself this morning--whatever burdens you are carrying, whatever brokenness you know, whatever sorrow is weighing on your heart, I hope that you hear this grace is for you. Today.

How Jesus must have loved all of them, don't you think? A little girl, a woman, a father...how much Jesus loves us, too.