

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost - Year B
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Lamentations 3:22-33
Psalm 30
II Corinthians 8:7-15
Mark 5:21-43
06/30/2024

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

21When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. 22Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 23and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." 24So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. 25Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. 26She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." 29Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" 31And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32He looked all around to see who had done it. 33But the woman, knowing what

had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” 35While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” 36But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” 37He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” 40And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” 42And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

The Gospel of Our Lord.

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Whole Truth

Good morning! “How did you injure your back?,” they ask. It’s at this time that I try to do a little detective work. Do they ACTUALLY want to hear the whole story? Do we have enough time? Is it a socially acceptable situation? Because if we’re sitting down at coffee hour I can share, but if

this is the greeting line after worship... well that's a different story. I mean, even I don't want to go through all the details, do they actually want to hear this boring tale?

It was the history of my back problems that was on my mind as I read verse 33: *"But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth."* It's that last part especially that's on my mind. *"... and told him the whole truth."* A woman of Israel in pain for over 12 years. That's a long story. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's start at the beginning.

We have been following along mostly straight through the Gospel of Mark for the past few weeks. We heard about the huge crowds, the teachings on seeds, and then last week they got into a boat and crossed the Sea of Galilee. During that less than delightful crossing Jesus commanded a storm to cease, and unlike when I yell at the sky, the weather actually obeyed. Jesus lands on the shore, performs another miraculous healing, and we pick up our story today right from that point. Jesus and the disciples cross again BACK to where they came from. I bet that was an interesting boat ride. I bet the disciples kept sharing looks wondering what would happen THIS time.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four written, and so it usually moves very quickly. One of the interesting details about today's reading is the length. It's very clearly one whole story, and unlike the shorter sections we see in the rest of Mark, this is a longer one. Another unique feature of the text is the way the healing of the woman is bracketed by the healing of the young girl. It's clear that the writer of the Gospel of Mark wants us to see these two stories together.

When Jesus arrives he is met by Jairus, a man of importance and respect. The Temple in Jerusalem was where important sacrifices happened, but synagogues were where the daily life of a Jew took place. They were places of prayer and community. Jairus is a leader at his local synagogue, and upon meeting Jesus he falls down at Jesus' feet. Now, if you remember the parable of the prodigal son, grown men did not behave in such a way. A grown man of great respect did not fall down in obeisance before another who wasn't a VERY important person. But Jairus is desperate, his daughter is on the verge of death. They make their way towards the "little girl" and we once again are told that a large crowd follows.

It is here that we meet a woman who has been suffering for twelve years. A scholar from Luther Seminary writes that "*Mark provides no details about what sort of hemorrhaging is occurring. It does not have to be a menstrual disorder or the result of a pregnancy-related injury. That inference is nevertheless reasonable and ingrained in the passage's interpretive history. If that is her condition, presumably it makes her infertile. Given ancient understandings of anatomy, menstruation, and ritual purity, Mark's implicit point would therefore be that her womb is no longer a source or a site of life.*"¹

Wow. "*No longer a source or a site of life.*" So, on top of the physical toll of an injury that has lasted for twelve years, on top of the fact that she seems to have spent all that she had trying to find a cure, on top of the fact that everything had failed and that she was getting WORSE, on top of all that, she has spent the last twelve years ritually impure. This meant that it

¹<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-13-2/commentary-on-mark-521-43-10>

would have limited her access to community, support, and relationship. She believes that Jesus is so powerful that just touching his cloak will bring her restoration.

She touches Jesus and is immediately healed. Jesus knows that power has gone out from him and looks around for the source. It's here that we interrupt the seriousness of the story with a little humor. Jesus looks around and asks who touched his cloak. I always imagine this played out like a scene from the show *The Office*. We have already been told several times that the crowd is huge and surrounding him. When he asks who touched him I imagine the camera panning to disciples, first to maybe James or John as they look at the camera with A LOOK. Then Peter, it's gotta be Peter, right? Peter opens his mouth in a sarcastic and frustrated way to say "What in the heck do you mean who touched you? Everyone is bumping into everyone."

But the woman, even in her fear, steps forward. She falls before him, and as the text says, tells him the whole truth. We're given the picture of a patient Jesus who stops and listens to all of the long tale that she has to tell. As I said, she has been suffering for twelve years, in both body, mind, and soul. As she shares her struggle Jesus listens to it all. As she finishes Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well.

During this time we must imagine that Jairus is waiting impatiently, knowing that his daughter is near death. As they continue on their way they are met by a group that informs them that the "little girl" has died. They tell Jairus, in a very gruff and insensitive way if I do say so myself, to leave Jesus alone since she has already died. But Jesus isn't having any of this, and rushes on ahead with just a chosen few. It seems that the girl has been dead long enough for a crowd to gather outside to weep. Jesus rushes in,

kicks everyone out, and informs them that the girl has just fallen asleep. He tells her to wake up, and miraculously, she does! Jesus tells everyone to keep it a secret, but I mean, how do you keep a girl coming back to life a secret?!

At the end we learn another interesting detail. The girl was around twelve years old. Her entire life has been lived during the same time the first woman was ill. They are connected in some way. But it also tells us that she isn't really a young girl. I mean, in our eyes, absolutely. But in the first century she was not. Jairus, who refers to her as his "little daughter" is like all fathers who still see their little girl. Culturally, she was ready for a marriage. Young men and women began courting at the age of twelve. So we are presented with a woman whose life had been over for twelve years, and a young woman whose life seemed to have ended before it had even begun.

But both these stories show us the incredible faith that people had in Jesus. The older woman knows that if she only touches his cloak she will be healed, and Jairus says at the very beginning that he knows that if Jesus just lays his hands on his daughter, she will be made well. We see a Jesus who seems to spread healing and restoration from his very person wherever he goes!

It is a lesson we need to hear. It tells us that healing is a holistic thing. Just as Jesus heals the physical ailments, he also restores the women to community. He sets them on a path that brings emotional and spiritual healing too. At a time when we celebrate the Fourth of July in our country, I can't help but wonder who else might need to be set free and made whole in our communities too. Amen.