

## **Fifth Sunday after Pentecost June 27 2021**

### **Mark 5:21-43**

Each week, in our prayers you hear a list of people. These are the ones whom we have been asked to hold in prayer. Prayers for healing from sickness, prayers for wholeness in mind, or spirit, or for bodies that are just wearing out. Prayers for safekeeping.

You may do a similar thing in your personal prayer life. I have a practice in the morning, before things get going too much, of writing out my prayer list- naming those people and places that especially need God's healing, God's love, God's mercy.

In this way, we are like Jairus. Coming to God on behalf of another- not necessarily a beloved daughter, but perhaps a parent, a friend, someone in our community, even a stranger whose story we saw on Facebook, or the news, or heard about through a conversation.

This kind of prayer is called, intercessory prayer. You intercede- literally step between God and another. It is the equivalent of going to someone who has fallen over in the crowd and yelling for help. Calling attention to their plight.

This is a kind of prayer all of us can do. A way of loving our neighbors regardless of where we are. It is a practice that benefits the one whom we pray for but can also benefit ourselves. And not just because it makes us more mindful of others.

Suzanne Anderson, who lives in Colorado, shared in her blog that the act of sharing a prayer concern about her mother- who lived in Florida and had fallen

and fractured her hip- was not only an asking for the help of her congregation in prayer for someone else, but also an asking for prayer for herself. It was a realization for her of why God encourages us to meet as communities and to pray for one another to share our burdens and our choices so that it's never too much for one person to bear. It is why I wish more people would be open to this prayer in their lives. To sharing their need for their own prayer, but also for those whom they love. It is gift not only to the one prayed for, but to those who love them as well.

Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, a well-educated, influential man of prominence bares his pain, anguish, and desperation not just to Jesus but to the crowd pressing in upon him. All that which up to that moment had defined him, was pushed aside for the one who mattered more- his daughter.

And Jesus responded. Surrounded by a crowd, the cacophony of cries for his attention, to teach, to heal, and Jesus responds to this man's request. And his trust. "If you lay your hands on her, "Jairus says, "she will be delivered out of danger- pulled back from the precipice of death upon which she tatters- and live."

As Jesus moves through the throng, he encounters another woman in need.

She is like many who come to Jesus along the way. A remarkable woman in her own right – despite 12 years of suffering from a flow of blood, despite making herself financially destitute spending all she had on healthcare that didn't work but rather caused her more suffering, despite all of this- she persisted in pursuing healing. She did her research and heard about Jesus, convinced that if she but touched his clothes she would be made well. And so this woman of suffering fought her way through the crowd to Jesus- just as Jairus did. Reached out and

touched the fringe of his cloak. The merest thing attached to Jesus – and the healing power came out of him like a zap of static electricity. An exchange that both she and Jesus felt. And she was healed.

These are the ones who come to Jesus on their own, this is us, asking for what we need in our prayers. For that job, for peace, for understanding, for reconciliation, for healing, for help on the test. Pursuing Jesus as our hope.

And even though the exchange is fleeting, the crowd is great and pressing in upon him, Jesus wants the relationship, “Who touched me?” Then she too throws herself at the feet of Jesus and confesses what happened. And Jesus confirms what was the active ingredient in her healing- “Your faith has made you well, go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

Then we return to the story that brought us here – a child on the precipice of death- and the word no one wants to hear, “She is dead”. But Jesus hears the understanding of the world, “It is too late!”, and tells Jairus, “Do not fear. Only believe.” Do not let fear gain a foothold, but only believe, trust in what brought you to me in the first place.

Jesus hurries there, brushes past the ones who cannot believe that Jesus can restore this child, comes into where she lay, takes her by the hand and calls her to arise. And she does! Jesus calls her from death to life.

The author of Mark ties these two women together, not just with the story within a story, but also verbally. Both are called daughter. The child is twelve (just on the cusp of her majority) and the persistent woman has suffered for twelve years.

They are also tied together by what their afflictions have done – they have threatened community, family, relationship. They have destroyed or put at risk their social lives. Threaten all that makes life worth living.

For the woman, her flow of blood would have prevented her from attending to her religious obligations according to Jewish law. It would also have forced her to keep away from people as even contact with her would have done the same to them. Forced her away from the support of family and friends. Kept her from her faith. All comfort of community stripped away from her.

For the child, and her family, her sickness threatens the ultimate rupture in relationship through her death. Something that affects not only her but all in her family and, through her father, the community.

In their encounter with Christ, they find both healing and restoration. Through their faith and the faith of those around them, they find life. Life fuller and more abundant, life in relationship with others. Reconciled to them.

Friends, if you are in need of this kind of healing or you know someone who is, it is yours. Because we know this about Jesus from this story and so many others- his desire is to heal, to restore, to bring to life, but also to know you. To be in relationship with you. Why? Because this is who his Daddy is as well. From the beginning, God's desire is to be in relationship with us- God's beloved creation. God's desire is for life for us – all of us. A life fuller and more abundant with God than when we try and go it alone.

This life, this relationship, happens in many ways but certainly through the gift of prayer. A conversation with God. It comes, through the gift of scripture, the story of God's pursuit of God's people, a means by which the Holy Spirit can blow into

our lives. It comes, through our own actions and words, the embodiment of this desire of God for healing for all people, for restoration of relationship, for the growth of that first of the gifts of the Spirit- love.

I invite you to come this day to another visible sign of that love of God for us and for the world. Come to the table and receive the Body and Blood of Christ. A Meal given for the forgiveness of sins, for mending our broken souls, for reconciliation with God and one another, for being made whole. For healing.

I still carry in my memory the image of a woman at my home church coming down the aisle at St. Mark's in Charlotte, NC to receive this meal of healing just beaming. I carry in my memory countless conversations with believers who talk about their own encounters with this Meal where they felt in their bodies its healing work. A physical change where worries melted away, where attitudes changed, where barriers broke down.

Come to this Meal, come to Jesus in prayer and supplication either for yourself as the woman did or for others as Jairus did, come and experience for yourself that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, that God's mercies never come to an end. Come and experience that God in Christ really is the healer of our every ill.

Come.