



Sermon: "Healer of the Desperate" - 7-1-18 - Mark 5:21-43

Grace and Peace on this Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – Pause and Reflect...

This last Friday in the New Yorker there was cartoon with a man at his doctor's office, the man is sitting on the examination table and the doctor is looking of the man's chart in great detail contemplating the possibilities of the health condition of the man. He finally makes this statement: "Here's your problem – It looks like you're paying attention to what's going on." (Copyright © Condé Nast 2018. One World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. All rights reserved.) If you have been paying attention to what's been going on lately in our world and country and even our neighborhood, you may feel like you need to see a medical professional. So much has and is happening which impacts people emotionally that they respond physically, it is called a somatic response to an emotional stressor.

With the recent shootings in Annapolis, MD the impact of grief, loss and lack of control can come flooding forward for people, even if one didn't know any of the 5 people killed. It is felt because; it has an impact on our society as a whole, and our vulnerability as human beings. It is easy to resonate with those grieving with these senseless deaths because they were just average people going to work never expecting something so horrific might happen. It also has an impact because it is yet again an example of an issue that is being avoided by society and that is gun violence. The more any issue is not addressed the more it seems to come to the surface as an issue needing to be addressed.

Jesus in our gospel today addresses a number of issues. Jesus is addressing the needs of a man named Jairus. Jairus is a leader of the synagogue, who comes to Jesus for help. What is interesting is that most of the Jewish leaders of the synagogue found Jesus message and teachings questionable and even heretical. Yet some were like Jairus, and found his message attractive, maybe because his daughter was near death and this was his last straw – we don’t really know. The thought of a twelve-year-old girl, at the point of death is difficult to imagine, the desperate agony of watching her dwindle away is beyond what any parent ever wants to do.

Jesus responds and goes with Jairus. As they are traveling the crowd goes with them and presses in on Jesus, curious to see the miracle worker that some were claiming to be the Messiah. Along the way he is interrupted by an encounter with a woman who’s just another face in the crowd, barely known, but chronically ill. But this woman showed something about herself and her faith in a moment – somehow believing that if she only reached out and touched his cloak she would receive healing and her life would be changed. We hear that she has tried many doctors over the 12 years that she had experienced the hemorrhaging but nothing worked.

In our modern heads we have a hard time understanding how this could be, but we live in a time of modern medicine, which has its own downfalls. In Biblical times medicine was mostly about herbs, creams and ointments, doing anything someone suggested and paying everything she had. They used what we might consider “Home Remedies” which were thought to be tried and true, but based on traditions and myths of what has or has not worked in the past. It was thought that sacrificial or ritual practices of pleasing God in certain ways would ward off disease or cure illness. This woman had tried everything and like Jairus was desperate as she came to touch the cloak of Jesus. She was desperate but also trusting in what she heard about him.

She had heard of Jesus’ reputation as a healer. “She had endured the treatment of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and now reduced to poverty; she was no better, but rather grew worse.” This woman was been declared unclean, because of her hemorrhaging and she was no longer fit to be in the Temple—not even in the Court of the

Women. Jesus often addresses the misperception in the culture of his day that if someone was suffering, this was God's punishment for sin. The ongoing hemorrhage would have left her increasingly cut off from community.

We still have diseases that come with a stigma; Mental illness, HIV/AIDS, Addiction, chronic pain, even cancer – all have stigmas because they make us uncomfortable. This woman's sickness defined her for everyone who knew her - except for Jesus. In biblical times, her standing in society would have been connected to a man, just as it is in Saudi Arabia today, where women just got the right to drive this last week – amazing! Just as Jairus goes to Jesus on behalf of his daughter, this woman would need to be in the company of a brother, uncle, or son. Instead, she went on her own, independent and unusual – out of the norm

Because of Jesus travels it made him difficult to find but when this woman found him that day on the seashore she was ready to be healed. She was one of many who gathered wanting to hear Jesus and to receive healing as well. Then there was a change of plans when an important religious leader named Jairus came to Jesus and asked him to heal his daughter.

As Jesus started toward Jairus' house, the woman reached out for just the edge of his robe, touching the very throne of God, as life and healing from the one God flowed through it. What she hoped for happened, the bleeding stopped. Her twelve years of suffering were over.

Then suddenly Jesus stopped and the whole crowd stopped with him. Jesus turned around and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me? But Jesus cried out wanting to know who touched him. It was such a difficult question to answer.

There is so much power in this moment as the woman most ignored because of her disease and poverty came forward. Mark's Gospel tells us in fear and trembling she fell down before Jesus. How could she not be terrified? In so many ways, she felt unworthy, feeling cursed by God and unclean. And now this—once more, she would be humiliated.

The woman knew what had happened and came up to him and Jesus said to her; "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

After so many people had looked down on her, Jesus lifts her up, looks into her eyes and says the words which make her healing complete. With the eyes of love, he said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed."

Jesus called her "Daughter." No longer an outcast - no longer a woman alone in a society that based her worth on the connection to the men in her life. She was a beloved child of God – no longer considered outcast – but now considered daughter. "Your faith has made you well." Jesus knew what great faith she had to come and believe that touching the very hem of his robe could make a difference.

When Jesus says "Go in peace," to the woman he says; Shalom which means so much more than a lack of war. This peace is health, well-being, and wholeness. Her body was healed, but so was her mind and spirit—she experienced a complete healing that day, setting her free from the prison of suffering.

Her Illness had defined her. Then Jesus set her free to be a daughter of God. One's illness never defines them; it is part of one's situation. I wonder what her life was like after she left the crowd and went home. Her faith in Jesus must have given her faith in herself again. Because of her encounter with Jesus she could tell others about this man who heals, not just illness but Wholeness – MIND – BODY – SPIRIT. Her perseverance and determination to see Jesus made her life better. She didn't give up, she didn't let the culture norms of her day get in the way of what she needed, her desperation turned into determination. Most of all she thanked God for the healing and wellness she experienced.

So often, people, beloved children of God, are judged by society and seen as less than. They are considered outcasts and treated less than human in many ways, we have seen it most recently. And until all of God's children, the whole human family, are welcomed, in God's house at God's table, we fall short of the kingdom of God. So we pray for the grace to see the world as God sees it and the courage to act as God does.

If you are one whom others have seen as unworthy and judged as less than, know that God loves you as you are and wants the best for you. You don't have to even have touch the hem of God's robe for this to happen. Just bring your pain and suffering. to God for peace, healing and wholeness just as the woman in our Gospel did, who is called Daughter – we are called Children of God, empowered to share a faith that is unforgettable to others who are outcast for one reason or another. Amen.

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