

IK Synod Sermon and Prayers
June 27, 2021
5th Sunday after Pentecost

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark the 5th chapter
Glory to you, O Lord.

Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and 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."

So Jesus went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd 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?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And 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. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

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

I have always liked this Gospel reading. The collision of these two stories. The healing that Jesus does in the midst of an interruption as he is pursuing another task. It reminds me of how often in our lives that interruptions offer us opportunities for listening to someone, or caring for someone, or lending a helping hand.

A theme that seems to be woven through these two stories is vulnerability. Think about the three characters in this story and how they are both different and similar.

First, we have Jairus, a leader in the local Synagogue who by gender, position, and status enjoys a comfortable level of power and prestige.

Next, we have an unnamed woman afflicted for more than a decade with an illness that has likely been not only painful and exhausting but also has more than likely moved her to the fringes of her community.

And finally, we have a young girl, deathly ill, who has no rights, no power, little life remaining, and she has no say in what will happen to her.

These are three very different people from different stations in life. So different, but so similar in their extreme vulnerability.

Jairus reduced to the painful helplessness that every parent feels when a beloved child is ill. So helpless that he throws himself into the posture of worship, falling at Jesus' feet and begging Jesus to help him.

The woman, who has been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years. This woman who is brave enough to push through the crowd and its potential hostility in the hope of only touching the healer passing through her town.

The little girl who is 12 years old, deathly sick and wasting away with only hopes and prayers to surround her.

Notice that Jesus responds to each of these three with compassion, naming the unnamed, calling both the woman and the little girl "daughter." Jesus calms the fears of both the woman on the fringe of society and the man who leads his synagogue with words of peace and courage. Jesus restores the girl to life and to her father and he restores the woman to health and to her community.

Jesus responds to each of these with compassion. Is that surprising? Probably not. Jesus' compassion is predictable, after all, expected, common place. But perhaps it is the predictability of this compassion of Jesus that makes this scene so extraordinary.

Jesus responds to the vulnerability of these three different characters, restoring them to health, life, and wholeness....because Jesus *always* responds with compassion – isn't that extraordinary?

Remember last Sunday in our Gospel reading, Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee (calms the storm, stills the wind and waves) and he and his disciples arrive in Gentile territory. We skipped the next story in our lectionary, so let me remind you. As soon as the boat reaches the shore, Jesus encounters a demon possessed man who lives in a cemetery. Jesus sends the demons into a herd of pigs and they meet their demise as they run down a steep bank into the sea and drown.

At the beginning of our Gospel reading today, Jesus is once more at sea and has crossed once again the border between two opposing lands with different and even hostile cultures.

Jesus' mission in each territory is the same – to seek out, heal, and restore those who are most vulnerable.

Jesus always responds instinctively to human need and he calls us, his disciples, to do the same. Who is it in your life that needs your compassion, your care, your listening ear, your helping hand, your acceptance, your love?

Yes, we are called to share our compassion with others. But, we can also count ourselves among those who are sometimes vulnerable and in need of Jesus' compassion.

Jesus loves you as you are.....timid or bold, a leader or an outcast, employed or unemployed, married or single, black or brown or white, heterosexual or LGBTQIA+, young or old, strong or weak. Jesus loves you! Jesus is always ready to respond to your needs!

What's your need? What's your crisis? What's your fear? Like the three characters in our story, Jesus seeks you out. Jesus is with you calming your fears, giving you peace and courage, healing you and restoring you to life, health and community.

Your personality, your quirks, your temperament, your status, your life choices, nor even and especially your sinful history.....none of these can keep Jesus from showing you compassion, care, love, acceptance and grace.

Jesus knows you and loves you unconditionally – no matter what. Jesus cares about your needs, your fears, and your crisis. And Jesus is ready to help. He listens to your up-front, head-on pleas like that of the father and he senses hopeful hearts at the back of the line and behind the door like the woman and the daughter.

Jesus responds to you and me, with compassion. Jesus *always* responds to vulnerability, offering health, life, and wholeness to those in greatest need of them.

Jesus, the one who always and everywhere sees, cares, heals, and restores. It is this same Jesus, who also invites us to see ourselves as those for whom he reaches in healing.....and then, sends us forth in love. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray for the needs of the world, responding to each petition with an echo of today's Psalm 30, "We cry out to you."

O God, for the church around the world we pray, for congregations without pastoral leadership, for troubled denominations, for Christians facing persecution, and for our own faith community: Mighty God,
we cry out to you.

For your earth we pray, for lands suffering under excessive heat and drought, for waters rising along coastlines, for animals deprived of habitats, and for our own green spaces: Benevolent God,
we cry out to you.

For the nations we pray, that governments learn the ways of peace and cooperation, that the poor receive food and shelter and respect, that gun violence and all prejudices come to an end: Righteous God,
we cry out to you.

For the hungry we pray, for starving children, for relief agencies, for the end to famine, and for an increase in generosity among us all: Merciful God,
we cry out to you.

For the sick and afflicted we pray, for children who are at the point of death, for women who endure hemorrhaging, for persons who receive no relief from physicians, for everyone who struggles with COVID-19, and for those we name here before you. . . Compassionate God,
we cry out to you.

For ourselves we pray, that we live in the peace of Christ, and that you receive our private pleas: Faithful God,
we cry out to you.

We give thanks for all the faithful who have lived and died in the faith (especially those we name now). We pray that at the end all your people will meet in the joy of your presence. Eternal God,
we cry out to you.

Into your hands, we commit all for whom we pray, trusting in the grace made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hear us now, Father, as we pray the words that Christ has taught us,
Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
+ be upon you now and forever.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ.

Thanks be to God.