

Year B Proper 13 Your Faith Has Made You Well Mark 5 vv21 to 43

There are two stories in the Gospel reading – one sandwiched in between the other and they are meant to be together, to enhance one another like peanut butter and jam, like watching movies and eating popcorn. Mark frequently does this throughout his Gospel – using a story within a story to shed light from one to the other.

Another thing we need to know about Mark's Gospel is that it is called "apocalyptic." As I mentioned during the Bible presentation last Tuesday, "apocalypse" is the Greek word for "revelation." One of the tragic misunderstandings of popular thinking is that "apocalypse" means the same thing as war and destruction and the end of the world in a violent manner. This has led many to misinterpret large chunks of Scripture and to create an inaccurate picture of the Bible's teachings. Apocalypse means revelation – it is God's revelation to us, usually through an otherworldly being. God reveals to us his purpose for the world, showing us what the world will be like when God's kingdom fully arrives on earth as in heaven. Mark shines a heavenly light on the here and now – he gives us glimpses of the coming perfection using worldly events and worldly materials. And the otherworldly being who reveals to us the perfection of God's kingdom is Jesus Christ.

So, here we have two stories that go together like peanut butter and jam and we have Mark sharing with us what Jesus Christ reveals about the coming perfection of God's kingdom. It sounds exciting – let's take a closer look...

Our story begins with Jesus crossing to the other side of the lake. Without hearing what comes before, this seems insignificant. However, Jesus has been preaching,

teaching, and healing on the gentile side of the Sea of Galilee and now he is back on the Jewish side. Jesus is approached by a Jewish religious leader named Jairus which lets us know that, despite an overall impression of animosity, there were Jewish religious leaders who did not oppose Jesus but were attracted to his activities and to his message.

Jairus, a prominent male figure in his community, openly approaches Jesus to desperately beg the young healer to cure his dying daughter. Jesus agrees but their trip to Jairus' home is interrupted by an unnamed woman. Like Jairus, she is desperate for the help of the young healer but, unlike Jairus, she cannot openly approach him. Mark goes to great lengths to paint us a picture of her despairing situation. For twelve years this woman has been hemorrhaging – the constant bleeding would have meant she was considered unclean and required to keep herself separate from the rest of the community. She'd suffered at the hands of physicians who'd relieved her of all her wealth but not her affliction. She had no money, no status, no welcome among other people...but, she did have faith. That Greek word, *pistis*, means more than believing something is true. It means complete trust and reliance and confidence in something.

This unnamed woman had faith that even if she just touched Jesus' cloak, she would be healed. And she was right. When she touched Jesus' cloak, she instantly felt the change in her body – her flow of blood stopped, she was healed. But Jesus instantly knew that a flow of power had left his body. The translation doesn't do the Greek word justice – we hear that Jesus "looked around" but the Greek word means he intensely stared at each person near him. With great personal interest, Jesus examined the crowd around him and demanded to know

who had touched his clothing...who had pulled healing power from him without his permission.

Despite her “fear and trembling” caused by the awesomeness of what had just happened to her, and being addressed by the clearly powerful man who had done it, the woman came forward and told him “the whole truth.” In faith, she had touched him knowing she would be healed and in faith she proclaimed the truth of what she had done.

Her truth telling and her faith earn her not a scolding but a blessing. This shunned woman is now named “Daughter,” by Jesus. This is daughter with a capital “D”. It is the difference between saying to someone, “This is my dad – small ‘d’” and using it as a name, “Dad – capital ‘D’ – can I use your car?” This unknown woman has been claimed as daughter as if she were a blood relation, his very own flesh and blood. She receives his blessing and the confirmation of her healing. “Go in peace, your faith has made you well,” Jesus says. Not simply healed but “well”: saved, healed, rescued – from the same primary word that gives us the word “salvation”. This woman is “well” in body, mind, and spirit... “Your faith has made you well.”

In the meantime, the religious leader’s daughter has died. Some messengers bring him the tragic news. Jesus has just named an unknown woman as his “Daughter” and commends her faith and his next words are to encourage that same faith in Jairus who is fearful for the life of his own daughter. And here begin a series of contrasts to the first healing. The hemorrhaging woman had been healed unexpectedly – without asking permission – amid a crowd crushing in on Jesus. For this next healing, Jesus limits the onlookers to his three closest

disciples and the parents of the girl. This healing has been publicly requested. The young girl is surrounded by family, extended family, and community mourners who had been anxiously attending her in her illness. The woman, on the other hand, had been shunned by family and community because of her constant ritual uncleanness. The young girl enjoyed privilege and status because of her father's position. The hemorrhaging woman had been robbed of her status and wealth because of her ongoing condition and the doctors who had dried up her cash flow but not her flow of blood.

The differences between the situations of the two females in need of healing perhaps make the commonalities more striking. The young girl is 12 years old. The woman had been bleeding for 12 years. Twelve is always a significant number when we come across it in Scripture. The twelve tribes of Israel – the wholeness and unity of an Israel functioning in relationship as God intended – is the foundation for the other “12’s” we then encounter like the 12 disciples of Jesus, symbolizing restoration to wholeness and unity. The woman's bleeding had pushed her out of society whereas the young girl was entering a stage of life where she would be expected to enter into society through marriage and the bearing of children.

Both were healed. The woman was restored to life...not simply alive but thriving because in healing her Jesus had healed the shattered relationships between her and her community caused by her illness ...your faith has made you well. The young girl was literally restored to life...not simply to live but to thrive as her father had earlier expressed when his faith had first brought him to Jesus' feet: “to be made well, and to live” he had begged Jesus. By healing her Jesus had

healed the shattered relationships between her and her community so recently caused by her illness and death.

Both were healed with touch. Touching the bleeding woman and touching the dead girl technically would have made Jesus impure as well until he ritually purified himself. No mention of this is made though. The person on the other side of wall built by purity laws held the importance for Jesus. He has the power to change the condition of the people he encounters and so he does. He not only restores life, he gives abundant life – a life in relationship, a life that is whole, completely healed.

Your faith has made you well, he says. Jesus' life brings the restoration of our lives to wholeness. His healing ignores societal boundaries of ethnicity, status, wealth, age. His life brings wholeness and life-changing healing to all who place their lives in his care. We have that life, Jesus' presence in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. That life will bring us wholeness so that we are not simply living but thriving, whole, in relationship.

This is a precious gift we bear but it is also a gift we must share. Not only in today's gospel but throughout the gospel, Jesus' mission is clear. It is a mission of restoration – restoration of the wholeness of life through his preaching, through his teaching, through his healing, inviting everyone to enter into the kingdom, to live the wholeness of life in the kingdom. Just as clear, is that this mission of restoration to life in the kingdom is not only about a relationship with Jesus, it is about relationship with everyone around us...ignoring the many boundaries that divide our society, restoring people to life.

Today, Jesus gives us a glimpse of the coming perfection. God's plan for the future means not only healing from all sickness, not only life without death, but also the mending of shattered relationships. Complete reconciliation is the endgame – a three-way right relationship between God, people, and planet. Our relationship with God is important but not the endgame. God's kingdom is our world and God's kingdom is filled with other people. It is not just between us and God. To be a part of the coming perfection we must live into the wholeness of that perfection and that means being in right relationship with God, people, and planet. The message is striking in its bluntness and intensity: the unnamed woman is given the same love and compassion by Jesus that Jairus gives to his daughter. The unnamed woman is named "Daughter" and is healed and included just as Jairus' flesh and blood daughter.

We are shown the standard. That inclusion and compassion is our standard. We are tasked with changing lives just as Jesus does. We are tasked with crossing boundaries and erasing them just as Jesus does. We are tasked with bringing healing and wholeness, mending and building relationships just as Jesus does. Living our faith – the faith that believes Jesus can and will heal all things – living that faith, not only with our lips but in our lives, makes us well.