

Mark 5:21-43

I might have mentioned before my uneasiness with miraculous-healing passages from the gospels. I am uneasy with them because I cannot answer the question of why God seems to heal some but not others. Like so many questions in theology, I don't know the right answer, but I do know the wrong ones. It is not lack of faith or insufficient prayer. It has nothing to do with sparing someone from future suffering or God needing another flower for his garden. It has nothing to do with God trying to teach someone a lesson. God does not cause suffering. God redeems suffering. God gives suffering meaning. God gives us hope, even when our most fervent prayers are not answered.

I understand a parent's desire to save his or her child. Jairus, although a leader in the synagogue, a man of prestige and honor in his town, had no qualms about falling at Jesus' feet and begging him to heal his daughter. Each of us with children know that we would do anything to save them. Hearing that there was a person in their midst who could heal sickness, how could Jairus not beg him for healing for his daughter?

Sandwiched into the story of Jairus, we have the story of the woman who touches Jesus' robe. She had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years, the entire lifetime of Jairus daughter. She had tried every known method of treatment, spent every denarius she had. Still she suffered. Not only did she suffer physically, I am sure that she suffered socially and spiritually as well. Who wants to be around someone who's bleeding all the time? And her condition made her ceremonially unclean, unable to enter the synagogue and worship with the other women. How people must have talked about her.

So we have a story of two people, the leader of the synagogue and a woman unable to even enter the synagogue. Both come to Jesus for help. Although they approach our Lord in different ways, neither does it the wrong way. Jairus is willing to humble himself in front of the crowd at the synagogue where he is a leader. The woman summons the courage merely to touch the hem of his garment. Both receive the healing they seek. This is not a story of the right way and the wrong way. It is a story of the breadth of Jesus' love and compassion. Both a leader in the synagogue and the woman forbidden to enter it find compassion in our Lord.

We, too, approach our Lord in different ways. Our faith is expressed outwardly and inwardly, both silently and aloud. There are those emboldened by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to go out and proclaim the good news of God in Christ to everyone they meet. Others live their lives of faith quietly, being Christ to the world in ways other than direct proclamation. Both are part of the kingdom of God. The important part is not *how* we live out our faith but *that* we live out our faith. We need to be intentional and aware of being Christ's representation to the world. We are the only gospel some people will ever hear.

What's the right way to do that? Like miraculous healing, I don't know one right answer to

that, but I do know some wrong answers. We are Christ in the world when we build up, not tear down. We are Christ in the world when we are compassionate and empathetic, not cold and unconcerned. We are Christ in the world when we invite in rather than shut others out. We are Christ in the world when we share the gifts that God has given us with others rather than hoarding them for ourselves. We are Christ in the world when we love rather than when we hate. Every choice we make, every thought we entertain, every post on Facebook, is an opportunity to be Christ in the world.

We gather at the altar of God to be fed with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be strengthened and assured to go out into the world and do those things that God has given us to do. We spend time in prayer every day, pouring our hearts out to God and being silent to let God speak to our hearts. We read our Bibles to hear about those in the faith who have come before, to know and to learn about those who have encountered God. We gather in study groups to share our own experiences with God. We live out the good news of God in Christ.

And we look for healing. Sometimes it is physical healing. Sometimes, what we need most is spiritual healing. One commentator shared the story of a good friend who suffered from Parkinson's disease. In the last days of his life, he said, "I have been healed, not of Parkinson's disease, but I have been healed of my fear of Parkinson's disease." (*Feasting on the Word* as quoted on www.pulpitfiction.us) Healing and wholeness are not just manifested in the physical, but in the spiritual and emotional realms as well. God will heal us; it just may not be in the way that we think we want. "Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and live us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (BCP 394)

We come to Jesus in various ways. We receive healing from God in various ways. We live out our faith in various ways. But there is one Body, one Spirit, one hope; one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. We are many, but we are one. We are unique individuals caught up in God's one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We are all so very different, yet drawn together into one family of God. I don't have all of the answers, but that one is a good enough answer for me. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*