

Mark 5:21-43 (NRSV)

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 he 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.

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

The Tuesday before we left for vacation was very much like an ordinary day in a minister's life. I went to the hospital early that morning to be with one of our parishioners before surgery. I had a meeting later on with the Calvert Interfaith Council, an ecumenical group in the county. I had time between the hospital and the Interfaith Council meeting to stop in at the county Board of Commissioners and see one of our young people, Tierney Guido, get an award for the work she does with children in the county. Now, I had read the Gospel reading for this week and it felt ironic to see myself in the Gospel lesson as I went from one thing to another.

I know that we think that we are busier than people have ever been, but this reading tells us that even Jesus was a multi-tasker. Jesus had been over on the east side of the Sea of Galilee in what was probably Gentile country and cast a demon out of a poor fellow and into a herd of swine who leapt into the sea. He comes back into Galilee among his own Jewish people and is met by Jairus, one of the leaders of the synagogue, whose daughter is gravely ill and needs Jesus' healing touch. Jesus' life is a little more exciting than mine, but the principle is the same. A large crowd is following him, pretty much the same as is usually true for me.

One of the people in this crowd is a woman. The woman has been bleeding for twelve years and this causes many problems. First, of course, is the bleeding itself, she is weakened and tired all the time, she gets sick easily. Second, because she is bleeding, she is considered to be unclean in the Judaism of the day and so she cannot attend religious services, she cannot take part in the life of the

community. And she has spent all of her money to regain her health without success and that is her third problem, now she is poor. She is bleeding, she is outcaste and she is poor. If she has any relatives who could help her, we do not know about them. She has heard of this healer Jesus and she thinks that maybe if she can just touch the hem of his cloak, she can be made well. And she is right.

She touches his cloak and can feel her body heal. Now there comes a part of the story that seems very modern – Jesus can feel that power has come out of him and asks, “Who touched my clothes?” Like a rock star or a rapper, some kind of celebrity, who is surrounded by fans or paparazzi, his space has been invaded and he wants to know who did it. The disciples, who seem very much like the rapper’s entourage, say, “Look, there are people everywhere, *everybody* is touching you, you want to know which one in particular? Why?”

Why, indeed? Why does Jesus care which of them he had healed? Well, one reason might be is that the healing is not complete. Oh, her illness is cured, but there is a further healing to be done. You see, being ill is a condition that is shameful. Something is wrong with you. Any of you who has ever been ill for an extended period knows what I’m talking about. Any of you who has had chronic pain or an extended period of recovery knows what I’m talking about. You come to take on a new identity, the identity of “sick person.” And people with the best of intentions make allowances for you, treat you as a little broken, a little less than you used to be. And instead of being the capable, independent person you used to be, you now are a “sick person.”

This is what had happened to the woman, over the course of twelve years of isolation and estrangement from her community. And Jesus calls out, “Who touched me?” And the poor woman knows that she has afflicted Jesus, made him unclean, she has been a burden on him. But the woman musters up all her courage and comes to him and says, “It was me, I did it. It was me.”

This is the classic “Come to Jesus” moment, the moment we all fear, we all imagine. We turn to God, we come to God with what we know is shameful and injured and degraded and God turns to us and says, “Which of you asked for healing from *this*?” Healing from illness or hatred or jealousy or addiction or shame. And the spotlight shines on us and everyone looks at us and says, “Wow, that’s worse than I’ve ever done, that worse than I’ve ever heard of, even thought of doing.”

My dears, my very dear friends, I’m here to tell you that God has listened to prayers from billions of people over thousands of years. Nothing you have to confess is very new. In the topic of offenses against God and each other, there are probably no more original sins. But there *are* original *sinner*s, each unique, each wonderfully complex, each worthy not simply of redemption but also re-inclusion into a world that so very much needs your, that very much needs all of *our* special gifts and special contributions. A world that really won’t be the same unless we are fully a part of it.

And so, what Jesus is doing when he calls out to the woman is *completing* the healing. She has been healed physically, but now she needs to be healed *socially*, she needs to be brought back into the community of which she always was a part but in which now she can be a complete part. But this healing requires her cooperation, which she gives. She tells Jesus what she has done, and instead of condemning her, instead of holding her up for ridicule, Jesus completes the healing. “Daughter, go in peace, be healed,” he says. Now, she hasn’t yet done the things that need to be done to make her clean in the eyes of her religion, the bathing, the rituals, the rites of purification. I can only imagine that when God wants, God can overlook those details. You see, we don’t make rules for God, God makes rules for us.

Jesus goes on to heal Jairus’ daughter, the daughter of someone important, the daughter of someone who matters. But the woman who was healed was someone’s daughter, too, and Jesus knew it.

“Daughter,” he called her, and as she thinks back on that moment in years to come, she’ll remember that. “Daughter,” he called me. He called me “Daughter.” And those years of being excluded, those years of being something less, something unclean, they just fall away. He called me “Daughter.” He called me, “Son.”

It wasn’t a big thing. It was something he could do on the way from something to something else. But it meant everything to her. Is there someone who is waiting to hear that word from you? Maybe your own daughter or son or mother or father. Maybe someone who once was someone’s daughter or someone’s son and who now needs a word of healing. You see, healing is only partly a matter of making a disease go away, only partly a matter of clinical practice. Healing is also, and perhaps mostly, a matter of the heart, a matter of being returned to full membership in a community of which we were always a part.

There’s a quote attributed to Mother Theresa, that “In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.” Jesus knew that. Now, you know that, too. On the way from someplace to some other place, heal someone. You know, you really can.

Amen.