## **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 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.

Three very different people come across Jesus' path in today's gospel lesson. Jairus is a respected leader in the synagogue, a man of position, power and respect. An unnamed woman has a disease that has severely disabled her for twelve years. Perhaps worse, the nature of the illness has made her an outcast, unclean in the eyes of her neighbors. Jairus' daughter is twelve years old, a young girl who is so ill that she is on the brink of death.

On the surface, these characters have little in common, save for the fact that Jairus and his daughter are related. Yet, in the presence of Jesus, they are united in their vulnerability, suffering and need of healing. For all the power he has in his community, Jairus is powerless as he watches his daughter grow more and more ill, closer and closer to death. When Jairus approaches Jesus, he is desperate, so desperate that he ignores the norms that tell him to stay away from this itinerant preacher with no standing in the community, so desperate that he risks making a fool of himself by begging Jesus to heal his daughter.

The desperately ill woman believes that if she can get close enough to Jesus to touch him, even just touch his clothing, she has a chance at healing, a chance to regain the life that has been so cruelly taken away from her. Maybe then she can find some thread of belonging, of relationship with those who have shunned her for over a decade.

In the context of this story, Jairus' daughter knows nothing. She is either already dead or so close to it as to be unaware of anything around her. Yet she too is in desperate need of healing, of a second chance at a life that she has barely begun to live.

A powerful man. A powerless woman. An unnamed girl. We may see them as different, yet Jesus sees what is the same about them: they are all in need of his love and compassion. So he heals them. He heals the woman of her disease and her isolation. He heals the child of her deadly illness and gives her a chance at a full life. He heals Jairus of the despair only a parent of a seriously ill child can feel. And those who watch all this happen, what do they make of all this? Do they marvel at the healing power of this mysterious man? Do they thank God for the miracles he has brought about? Do they begrudge Jesus healing the untouchable woman, celebrate him healing the little girl, judge Jairus for making a fool of himself for something that might have blown up in his face? Is their reaction a mixture of all of the above? Mark doesn't tell us that part of the story, but we can make some educated guesses about how the crowds reacted to what they saw that day. We know Jesus' actions did not endear him to those who felt threatened by his healing power, his ability to reach across the boundaries humans put up to separate themselves one from another.

For all the differences we see in one another, Jesus sees what we have in common: our need of his healing touch. Those who hold positions of power. Those who have no power. Vulnerable children. Those who are shunned. Those whose fear moves them to shun, some of them in the name of a loving God. We all need his touch. Physical, psychological, cultural, moral, global healing: our need is what unites us. It is what makes us the same in the eyes of our Lord. It is what moves him to reach out and touch us with hands of exquisite, life-changing love – *all of us*, no exceptions.

This is how Jesus heals a broken world – one person at a time. We, so wise, so accomplished, so self-sufficient, are all beggars at the hem of Jesus. When the Spirit tamps down our pride, makes us aware of our deepest need, we reach out for him, cry out for him to help us. Always, always, he hears our cries, hears them even before we utter them. His hands, scarred and healed themselves, are always extended in compassion. He heals us. Then he makes healers *of* us, fills our hands with that exquisite, powerful love.

Last week, when we were in Panama, someone arranged for Billy and me to get massages. We heard about this woman – Magdalena. Magdalena is the daughter of a healer, someone who made people well with her touch and Magdalena sees herself as a healer also. This was a massage like no other I have ever had. The first thing Magdalena did was put her hands together in the gesture of prayer and bow her head. She prayed in Spanish and I didn't get all of it, but enough to know that she was asking Jesus to pour out his power through her hands. The person who had arranged the massages told us not to say anything about where we might be hurting. “She'll find it,” we were told. And she did. She zeroed in on those aching spots with an energy that I have never felt before. At one point Magdalena said, “This massage is not for relaxing. This is for pain.” What a gift she has! What a privilege to know that God has anointed your hands to lessen the pain of those you touch!

At first, I was envious of Magdalena's gift until I realized I have it, too. Not in the same way, perhaps, but I have it. You have it, too. We who have been healed by the touch of Jesus are able to reach out with Jesus' power and heal others. As with all power, that gives us choices. We can sit on our hands and do nothing when we see pain around us. We can point fingers and shake fists at others for their suffering. Or we can we conduits of Jesus' incredible healing power through our prayers, our words and our actions. As Teresa of Avila wrote, way back in the 16th century:

**Christ has no body now but yours**

**No hands, no feet on earth but yours**

**Yours are the eyes through which He looks**

**Compassion on this world**

**Christ has no body now on earth but yours.**

This world needs Jesus now, maybe more than ever. Those who suffer around us and around the world need our eyes to look open them with compassion, need our bodies, our hands and our feet. That reality may scare us. It probably should. It should also call us to action, so we can be who Christ calls us to be: wounded, healed healers for the sake of this broken, hurting world.

Amen.

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*Floyd-Willis Lutheran Church*

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