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Sermon
June 27,2021
Mark 5: 21-43
"Connected"

Gracious and Loving God, May the words prepared for this day be pleasing to you and inspire each of us to thirst for your word and understanding of scripture.

Amen

Our text today tells two very different stories, but they are connected: a parent desperately trying to save his daughter, and an unnamed woman desperately trying to save herself.

First, we have Jairus,(jay rus) a leader of the local synagogue, who begs at Jesus feet for him to save his daughter. Jairus is a man of great privilege: respected, well-off, a religious leader in the area. But his privilege does not exempt him from pain, or fear. Despite all his privilege, he's unable to help his 12-year-old daughter. In the end, he's just like every other parent who has begged God to help their child.

The crowds that are pressed in around Jesus make way for Jay rus to pass through. "My little daughter is at her end. Help. Save her." Jairus is the only religious leader in the gospels that seems to really see and accept who Jesus is: He bows before him, he asks for salvation, he has faith. Without a word of response, Jesus goes with Jairus. There's not a moment to lose, but the crowd surrounds

them, making it difficult to move quickly. They don't have time for this. And then...

Jesus stops in his tracks. "Who touched me?" he asked. A strange question to ask as he fights his way through a crowd. He's being touched at every moment. I can hear Jay rus say; come on Jesus, we're in a hurry here! But Jesus knew this was no ordinary touch – something happened with this touch – power went out from him – he felt it, without him intending it to happen. Jesus refuses to go on. He seeks out the one whose need causes them to reach out to him.

And there she is – the woman comes forward, falls at Jesus' feet, and tells him the whole truth: She had been sick for 12 years, with a constant flow of blood. She'd seen all the doctors, done all the treatments, to no avail. This woman has suffered for twelve years. And on top of her physical suffering, this particular ailment ostracized her from her community. According to the purity codes of the Jewish Law, women who were menstruating were unclean, and sent into isolation. One ancient Jewish text warns that even close proximity to a menstruating woman can cause death. And touching a bleeding woman was *totally* taboo.

This woman was not just isolated and deemed unclean once a month, but for 12 years straight. She was perpetually unclean, quarantined, a threat to anyone who came near. For 12 years, she tried and failed to receive healing. So, in our story, her presence among the crowd, pushing through them to get to Jesus, is scandalous. She exposes everyone she touches. She risks nullifying Jesus' healing powers with her own supposed dirtiness. Her very presence in our story is unlawful. This is what her culture and religion has taught her: *she's illegal*. How dare she push her way to the front.

This woman is bold, disobedient, and at her wits end. So, she risks everything, including perhaps the comfort and status of those around her, for one last chance. “If I can just touch his clothes, I will be saved.”She touches the hem of Jesus garment, and she feels her body healing. She feels it!!!

And everything stops. Can you imagine how Jay rus feels and how he reacts? “Let’s go, Jesus, we’re wasting time! Focus on me! Focus on my little, innocent daughter!” But Jesus stopped. He finds the bold woman. He connects with her and he calls **her - daughter**. He speaks words of peace and healing and salvation over her. And just as she experiences healing and restoration, Jay rus gets the devastating news that *his* 12-year-old daughter has died. Jesus doesn’t stop for pastoral words, but barges into the house, past the mourners, and takes the dead girl’s hand: “Little girl, get up!” And she rises. Not even death is strong enough to stop Jesus’ saving power. Did you notice that **in** both situations Jesus explicitly disregards two very clearly stated purity codes from Leviticus and Numbers? He touched an unclean woman and a dead child – both serious violations of Jewish Law. Jesus blows past the religious rules, breaking the law to help them. Jesus calls them both daughter. Their healing, their salvation, is not in competition with one another, but inextricably connected.

Jairus and the bold woman in our story today could not be more different from one another.

- He is a parent. Her illness has likely prevented her from having a child.
- He is a man of privilege. She is a nobody, an outcast.
- He is a religious leader. She has been cast out by her religion.
- He is wealthy. She’s spent everything she had on failed attempts at cures.

-He approaches Jesus with a formal request. She pushes her way forward and doesn't ask permission.

Their healing and their salvation, is not in competition with one another, but inextricably connected by their faith. The woman has been suffering for 12 years – the same age as Jay rus' daughter. Both, in very different ways, express incredible faith. Both fall at Jesus' feet. Both experience God's salvation, God's healing, through Jesus.

I began wondering about how Mark – the Gospel writer, would tell this story today? Perhaps instead of a synagogue leader, Mark would write about an immigrant father, begging God to save his little daughter's life from the gangs in El Salvador, from illness brought on by the journey north, from being separated and lost in a system somewhere. Perhaps instead of a bleeding woman, Jesus would be interrupted by an American black mother, who is desperate for the protection and safety for her two black sons' as they leave each day for school. She begs Jesus to protect them. The stories are connected.

Or perhaps Mark would write about a Texas military wife, pleading at Jesus's feet for her spouse to come home safely, for his wounds to heal. Anxiously clinging to Jesus and rightly demanding his full attention. Mark might interrupt her story with the story of a trans man, pushing his way through the crowds that do not want him there – that consider him unclean. Forcing his way through for just a slight touch. Their stories, their faith is connected.

Our stories are connected too. As different as we are, as different as the ways we come to Jesus are, whether with dignity or without, with privilege or without; we all come to Jesus in our desperation, we all fall at his feet. Jesus looks

into the face of each of us; not just those that look like us, but those who are so very different from us as well, and calls each daughter, son, a beloved child.

Our world seems so divided right now, it can feel like my healing and your healing are at odds with one another. But in our stories today, Jesus shows us that as different as we are, our liberation, our very freedom and healing are bound together.

God of love and compassion may we look around at all of God's children, all of the world's desperation, all the diverse ways people are reaching out for help, and recognize that all our stories are connected. May we, like Jesus, speak words of peace, healing and hope. May we, like Jesus, lift each other up. Holy God may it be so! Amen