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Mark 5: 21-43

Within the orthodox Christian world there is a custom, perhaps a folk tradition which takes place during the “Great Entrance” of the liturgy when the bread and wine are processed to alter in preparation for the blessing of the Eucharist.

This tradition no doubt of coming forward to touch the hem of robe, is drawn from all the Gospel accounts of the story, we find in Mark 5: 21-43 today which presents us with two miracles.

These two miracles are a part of a larger sequence of miraculous acts that demonstrate Jesus’ power and authority.

You will recall the sermon last week from Mark 4:35-41 where Jesus calms the storm admonishing the disciples for their fear. And this followed by a second miracle, where Jesus travels heals the demoniac from the Gerasene region.

Today’s reading is an account of two miracles. It is two stories deliberately woven into one another each reinforcing the other.

Jesus is again travelling followed by hordes of people. Jairus approaches Jesus in desperation. He falls on knees before Jesus pleading to save his dying daughter.

Jairus’ situation is dire he needs help.

As he is on his way to Jairus’s home to the girl, there is woman who has been suffering from constant Haemorrhages, bleeding issues. This no doubt means according to Jewish law this woman would be viewed as unclean. And been ostracized from society. This is no doubt why she desperately attempts to touch Jesus in the hopes that she can be healed, while going unnoticed by touching his clothing.

Despite the difference in social standing and status both Jairus and this woman have one thing in common they are both in crisis and in need of help, healing.

To her surprise and, perhaps to her initial horror, and to the surprise of crowd Jesus does notice the woman, he acknowledges her publicly, she is healed. Even during this emergency, which is not as severe the man’s dying daughter, as this woman is not viewed as important, and she is not at the point of death. Jesus is

willing to take a moment to acknowledge someone of low status, someone who is unclean as being of high importance.

Jesus's challenges deeply held assumptions about status and even refers to the woman as "daughter"! Regarding a stranger as his child before continuing his way.

The woman who has suffered 12 years of bad news and 12-year-old girl here are united in bad news. But within the repetition of the number 12 seems there is a symbol of, wholeness and flourishing, think of the 12 sons of Jacob, whose lines of inheritance would be the tribes of Israel. The number 12 here indicates seems a message of good news of restoration and wholeness for the people of God.

It is important remember that outlook for both cases initially seems hopeless. Mark mentions the woman has visited many doctors who have not been able to help her, in fact she has gotten worse and spent all she had. Also, upon the healing of the woman, a group of people return from Jairus with the tragic news that his daughter is dead. So, all appears to be lost. Bad News.

Because Jesus' message throughout is good news, the woman is not just healed, but she also restored to life in society and the girl is brought back from the dead to life.

From our reading today, I think the first key take away that no matter what our station in life, we like Jairus and woman who touches his clothes are in need of healing.

The second, is that no matter what our status, high or low, we can indeed all call upon him, and he will respond to us and accept us. We may approach him differently, Jairus approaches directly, the woman discreetly, but no matter what our status is God will make time for us. He will acknowledge us, accept us as his children and heal us.

We find, here as in some many other places in in scripture that Jesus regards the impure and the outcast of society that very often the righteous and good religious people do not.

The third thing for us to remember is that Jesus is for us, even when it seems all hope is lost. We encounter his healing power in times of our most desperate need when we turn to him. Jesus can and has restore broken lives and can bring wholeness even in the bleakest of times.

To close, I return to my illustration at the beginning, that no matter what we think of the custom of touching the priest garments, when we approach the altar to receive the eucharistic we like those congregants reaching for the Priests robes are remembering this story. We like Jairus falling on his knees in need of healing power to be saved and like we like the woman reaching out to Jesus from the crowd for healing.

Are you able to imagine yourself as a part of this story? Who are you today?

When we read this scripture together as a church, we begin to find ourselves in this story. When we come to the altar seek for healing for ourselves and those who we love. Whatever our status, whether we are like Jairus or the woman in the crowd, we know that God's son will stop to encounter us, whether we approach from crowd or perhaps quietly try to reach out for him unnoticed.

And I believe we should come away as a community with a strong sense that the poor and the outcast matter Jesus, so they must matter us, even and especially those who are discriminated against or considered impure in our own society. We should be reflective of the way our societies elevate some, while excluding others.

Our Gospel today reminds us that Jesus' healing and the gift of faith is really and truly offered to all. When we come to the altar today, we are reaching out receive him, and to be received by him, as his sons and daughters, although we are unworthy.

That is good news for us and for the world.