



Stealing a Healing and Only Believe

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Today's gospel lesson presents two powerful stories. That's what we will focus on in this morning's sermon; the first story - stealing a healing, and the second story - only believe.

Today we join Jesus after he returned from the journey to the other side that we talked about last Sunday. That voyage began on calm seas, but a great windstorm arose suddenly and the waves beat against the boat.

They took on a lot of water and were already being swamped when the frightened disciples came and begged Jesus to wake up and do something.

Jesus rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And immediately the wind ceased and there was dead calm.

Jesus turned to the disciples and asked "Why are you so afraid? Have you no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"¹

While Jesus was away, on the other side, he encountered a Gerasene who was possessed with a legion of unclean spirits. Jesus had compassion and healed the man.

Now Jesus and the disciples have returned from their challenging journey. They are walking along, making their way as best they can because everywhere they go now, great

¹ **Mark 4:35-41**

crowds gather around them. They pressed in on him and made it difficult for them. Perhaps that's why, after healing someone, we often hear Jesus saying to them, "go but don't tell anyone."

This is where our first story begins. A man with authority, a leader from the synagogue named Jairus pushed his way through the crowd and fell at the feet of Jesus. Again and again he begged, "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." Jesus went with him. The crowd, still curious about this rabbi from Nazareth, followed them. They were headed to Jairus' house to see what would happen next.

Our second story begins here. It's a story within the first story.

This one involves a woman who has an issue of blood has been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years. As challenging as this might be for any of us to have such a condition, it was especially challenging for someone who lived in biblical times. Because of the bleeding, the woman was considered unclean. She could not live within the community. She was separated from her family. Desperate for a cure, she visited many doctors and spent all the money she had but no one could heal her. And though she had run out of options, she had a great faith. She saw Jesus from a distance and had heard some of the stories about him.

She said to herself, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." It was a big risk, for she wasn't allowed to be near people, but she snuck in amongst the crowd, reached out and touched the hem of his cloak. And when she did, her body was healed.

Jesus sensed her presence, and the strength of her faith. And now, with the whole crowd watching, he stopped and asked, "Who touched me?"

There as the crowd continued to press in on him and follow him, and though he was determined to get to the home of Jairus, to heal the sick child, Jesus stopped. "Who touched my clothes?" He asked.

In spite of the crowd was pressing against him, Jesus felt something. It was power flowing out from him and into her. Someone had summoned from him great healing. "Who touched me?"

She was so afraid that she was trembling. She fell down before him and told him the whole truth. She knew that she was considered unclean because of her illness and that she was not to be in the company of others. She was certainly not to touch anyone, especially not a man. But she was desperate and had great faith. So, she came forward and confessed that she was the one who touched him.

He could have shamed her. He could have blamed her. He could have sent her away. Instead, there in front of everyone, he said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease."

He declared her well, so she could be restored to the community, accepted as clean and able to take her place once again, after 12 long years of isolation.

While he was speaking with her, some people from Jairus' house came with the news that the little girl was dead. When Jesus heard this, he said to Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe." And he sent the crowd away.

There, at the house there was much loud weeping and wailing. Jesus reassured them, "The child is not dead but sleeping." With the child's mother and father, he entered the room. He took her hand, and said, "Little girl, get up!" And she rose from the dead and began to walk about.

Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Who then is this that by faith and the touch of his hem, one can be healed?

Who then is this that is willing to touch a dead body and make himself to be regarded as unclean, then, in his unclean state, call her back to life?

This is Jesus, the Christ.

Jesus loves the outcast. Jesus embraces those who are unclean. Jesus enters the darkness and brings with him great light. You know what else Jesus does? He calls us to do the same.

As his disciples, we are committed to carrying on and continuing the movement that Jesus began. Therefore, we need to look for those who need our help. We need to be willing to enter the darkness and hold out the light of hope that is the good news of Christ. We need to embrace the outcast and serve all those whom God loves. We need to keep the faith.

If you ever feel overwhelmed and worry that you don't have the strength to do what you are called to do, remember Jairus. He was in one of the darkest places a person can experience, he just found out that his daughter was dead. And what did Jesus say to him? "Do not be afraid, only believe."

Only believe. In the Name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.