



Faith, Hope, and Love

Faith: Saving Faith

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Happy Father's Day

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.*

As we walk through the words- Faith, Hope, and Love-this summer, I hope we are able to spend some time thinking through what these words mean for each of us and how we are sharing our faith, hope, and love with everyone we meet. In light of what happened at Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, I have struggled with the message today. As I have continued my reflection on faith and living it out, this congregation in South Carolina does just that. I want to remind us of these words from Kathleen Norris- "faith is like energy itself—fluid, always in motion but never constant." As we look at these passages today, we will be exploring the power of healing, relationship, touch, bowing down before Jesus, and having a saving faith. Let us pray.

I don't know about you, but there have been many times in my life where I have asked and prayed for healing for myself, people I love, and strangers I have met. I believe and have faith that God heals...but...to me, passages such as these will raise questions to many of us, "Does prayer work?" If we mean by this, "Do you get what you pray for?" the

honest answer will be "Sometimes, but not always." Many of us know that all prayers are not answered as we pray them. Healing stories in the bible can sometimes bring up concerns for everyone as our faith is always in motion, but never being constant. Let us remember that prayers for healing are not simply utilitarian. Meaning that prayer is not simply a matter of bending God's ear toward my will, my needs, and my hopes-almost misinterpreting the passage "my will be done." More profoundly, to ask something of God is to edge into deeper relationship with God. God's mind may or may not be changed, but I—my mind and heart—may be. As we walk through these stories, I want us to explore how these stories both lead to a deeper relationship and faith in God.

Our passage for today is one of those places where there is a story inside a story, almost making Jesus the best multi-tasker known. Jesus and the disciples have just crossed back over from the "other side" where they have healed a man possessed by demons. For his act of healing, he was asked to leave. So they cross back over into Jewish territory and a great crowd is waiting for him. In the reading for today, when a wealthy man wants Jesus to heal his daughter, he must wait for the healing of a destitute woman.

In the first section of the passage, Jesus is greeted by the ruler's request. Jairus, is someone who would have been



considered highly esteemed and often well-to-do. And it is this man who recognizes Jesus as a healer and honors him by

“falling down at his feet.” Jairus is asking Jesus to come and lay his hands on his daughter because she is dying. He wanted her to be restored to physical health and spiritual salvation. Jesus doesn’t say anything to his request, he just follows him. Jesus’ action demonstrates his compassion for Jairus and his daughter.

As Jesus begins to follow Jairus, his journey is interrupted by a hemorrhaging woman. This unnamed woman would have been an outsider in society and not someone who typically would have been in a crowd. She actually would have avoided human touch because people, especially men, because contact with her would have been considered unclean by Jewish law. For me, it is out of respect that she for the Jewish Law that she has removed herself from society and from being amongst crowds. But something draws her in and she goes against what the social norms are and joins the crowd, touched Jesus’ cloak, and was immediately healed. After 12 long years of severe illness and spending all she had to be healed-she was well. And she knew it.

And so did Jesus. Jesus immediately knows power has been taken from his body. He wants to know who touched

him. And as Jesus asked this question, the disciples wondered who HASN’T touched him! Because the woman knows she can’t hide, she comes forward and falls to her feet out of fear and trembling-telling him everything. Then Jesus calls this woman “daughter,” acknowledging that her faith has made her healthy and healed her from her illness. Jesus sends her away in peace, providing a very public acknowledgement of this healing that has taken place within her body.

Then we move back to Jairus’ daughter who has died. The household managers make this announcement to Jairus, not paying attention to Jesus, saying it is time to go home and grieve. But Jesus urges the ruler, just as he did the woman, “Do not fear, only believe.” Jesus moves from this public space that is crowded with all sorts of people and moves into a very private, intimate setting with Peter, James, and John; and dismissing what the hired mourners are saying about the child being asleep and not dead. Jesus admonishes everyone that death is not the final answer. In the presence of God’s healing power, even death cannot sustain its stronghold. In comparison to death without hope, this child has hope for restored life, so Jesus says she is merely “sleeping.”

Jesus and these three disciples gather with the parents of the child, asking the mourners to leave. And in this very intimate moment, Jesus utters the words that any parent who has a sick or



dying child would want to hear "Talitha Cum...little girl, get up!" God's healing power is instantly seen!

She gets up and walks

around. For this 12 year old little girl has lived as long as the woman who has been sick. Witnessing this healing caused great amazement. And then Jesus asks for the child to be fed, again showing his compassion towards this family. Jesus demonstrates both that she is very much alive and needs sustenance, and that he has concern for her humanity, as he had for the outcast woman.

Both are victims of illness and are females who are considered ritually unclean, one as a result of death and one as a result of hemorrhage; both represent the significance of the number twelve in Jewish tradition, a number that represents the authority given to humankind by God, the number of completeness-and both are regarded as daughters. And an act of touch restores both women to new life even as those surround them lack understanding. An enormous amount of faith was demonstrated by the ruler, the woman, and the daughter. This is an act of faith that ebbs and flows throughout the people in the story. It makes me wonder what role faith plays in our healing. The hemorrhaging woman has the audacity to transgress a whole host of social protocols when she touches Jesus' robe without permission to claim her own

healing. Talk about faith! And then there is Jairus, whose faith caused him to fall at Jesus' feet, despite how Jesus is regarded by most synagogue leaders. These examples challenge us to examine our own faith, asking how we find the strength to claim God's promises of healing and hope for ourselves, and how we empower others to do the same.

When was the last time you fell on your feet before God? What does it look like to pray so fervently during times of suffering? What would faith look like if we had the faith of Jairus, the hemorrhaging woman, and the dead child? I hope you walk away recognizing that we are all daughters and sons of Jesus. It doesn't matter how old you are, what color your skin is, what you are wearing, how many tattoos you have, who you love, or what you have done. YOU are a daughter and a son of Jesus Christ. And for me, that is enough to know what saving faith really means. Amen.