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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8B)

June 28, 2015

Text: Mark 5:21–43

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We confess that Jesus is the Savior of all people. Red, yellow, black and white they are precious in His sight goes the Sunday School song. But when it comes to real flesh and blood people who are different from us, things become harder. Different cultures with unusual foods, music, customs, different histories, different socioeconomic status, different hopes and dreams. But in the end, we all need the same thing which can only be given by the same Person: the forgiveness of sins leading to eternal life promised by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's gospel reading from Mark 5 provides a stark contrast between two people from two different ends of society. One is the 12 year old daughter of a prominent, wealthy religious leader. The other is a mature woman with an incurable disease that has robbed her of her wealth, her standing in society, and her hope. Both need Jesus even though they come to Him from different worlds.

The first in need is the unnamed daughter of Jairus; he's one of the rulers of the synagogue (vs. 22). Such a position afforded him a measure of wealth and an even greater measure of dignity within the Jewish community of his day. But his socioeconomic status could not protect his daughter. According to Jairus' own words, she's at the point of death. We don't know the disease or injury. But it's mortal nonetheless.

Throwing aside all the dignity his status afforded him, Jairus came to Jesus as a beggar. Listen to the pathos of a fearful, frantic father in vs. 22–23, “Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing (Jesus), he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, ‘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.’”

Not all Jewish leaders were antagonist to Jesus; not all believed that Jesus cast out demons by the power of demons, as we heard in Mark 3:22. We don't know what Jairus thought of Jesus before his daughter took ill but it seems that, at least some of

the Jewish leadership, acknowledged our Lord's miracles as being from God. Regardless of public debate, the mortal danger of his daughter compelled Jairus to seek our Lord's healing assistance. The possibility of his daughter's death forced him to seek assistance even from the controversial preacher, teacher, and healer from Nazareth. How often we driven to Jesus by our desperate needs. Our Lord never turns us away. Jesus agrees to go with Jairus because He is certainly the Savior of the wealthy, respected, and influential segments of human society.

At this point in the narrative, you would expect Jesus to go to Jairus' house, heal his daughter, and save her from the ravages of an untimely death. It's the perfect setup. But things become complicated.

The crowds are following Jesus. Mark says they "thronged about him" (vs. 24). This is a large, bustling crowd. You wonder if Jairus is wishing the crowds would go away so that Jesus can get to his house of the more quickly. His daughter is dying and people keep getting in the way.

It gets worse in vs. 25 with the introduction of the second woman in need, "And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was not better but rather few worse" (vs. 25–26). What makes this woman different from Jairus' daughter is twofold. First, according to Numbers 5:2, this woman was unclean. Her persistent menstrual bleeding cut her off from society. Put them outside the camp says Numbers 5:2, lest they defile the camp. Second, her wealth had been spent, exhausted on medical bills and her condition grew worse. She's unclean, unable to participate in the normal religious and social life of Israel, and poor on top of all that. She once was comfortable and wealthy but that's all gone.

This explains why she approached Jesus in a completely different manner than Jairus. He came in dignity and desperation. She came in fearful humility and desperation. One had the praise of society; the other had society's scorn and derision. But both came to Jesus. We must not miss that very significant point. Both came to Jesus in different ways, from different worlds. Jesus received them both. The psalmist wrote, A broken and contrite heart, O Lord, you will not despise (Ps. 51:17).

This bleeding woman knew she wasn't supposed to be in the crowd in the first place and she certainly wasn't supposed to touch Jesus' or any other man's clothing. That was scandalously outrageous. From behind, she touches Jesus' outer garment

thinking, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well” (vs. 28). Amazingly, the woman is healed! I think this is the only time a miracle happens this way in Jesus’ ministry. Normally, Jesus touches the person needing to be healed. Or He speaks the word. But here, the woman reaches out and touches Jesus. And by virtue of that touch, she is healed. The Lord knows it too. Vs. 30, “And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my garments.’”

Maybe we need to stop thinking that we can predict or limit the ways in which Jesus can go about doing His loving work. To be sure, the Lord Himself has promised to create and sustain saving faith through His Word and Sacraments. We must cling to them as our greatest treasure for they give us Jesus and all His gifts, even as He promised. But our Lord can use His gifts in ways that far out-stretch our preconceived notions and ideas.

Jesus knows His healing virtue has done its work. He desires to see this bold and brave person. “Who touched my garments?” (vs. 30) A rather silly question in light of the crowd bumping into Him. But here, Jesus isn’t talking about a glancing touch but the touch of faith and hope and trust. Who touched me?

The bleeding woman, now healed, “came in fear and trembling and fell down before Jesus and told Him the whole truth” (vs. 33). I touched you Jesus and you healed me. You did for me what no other could do even with all the money of the world!

Listen to the love in Jesus’ response, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease” (vs. 34). Jesus is the savior of the despised and scorned of society. The walking wounded of our world are loved and accepted by Jesus. The call to repentance, the turning away from sin, is not some moral prerequisite so that we can be good enough to follow Jesus. Perish the thought. Repentance is turning away from that which harms and kills and destroys faith and life and joy and peace with God and man. We come to Jesus not by repentance but by faith, simple trust that He will not reject and despise this broken sinner. Jesus takes us in His loving arms, calls us son and daughter, forgives our sins and gives us His Holy Spirit. That is the gospel work of our Lord Jesus.

But haven’t we forgotten something? Jairus and his dying daughter. Can you imagine the frustration he must have been feeling? Jesus is his hope. The crowd is slowing Him down and now this? Jesus has stopped altogether and my daughter is dying.

And the news arrives. “Your daughter is dead” (vs. 35). And whoever delivered the message didn’t have a clue as to the heart and nature of the Lord Jesus when he (i.e., the messenger) said, “Why trouble the Teacher any further?” (vs. 35) It was for this reason that Jesus came: to face sin and its most evil consequence, death, and defeat it.

We Christians are a most curious people. For when we face death and tragedy, we confess that they are defeated and we are victorious. The martyrs of the Christian Church went to their death singing of their triumph over death. Countless Christians throughout the ages have proclaimed that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, not life, not death, neither things present nor things to come.

Jesus hears the terrible news and tells Jairus, “Do not fear, only believe” (vs. 36). Believe what? That He is the Lord over life and death. On this occasion, Jesus gives a preview of what will take place for all people on the Last Day. He speaks to the girl, “Talitha cumi...Little girl, I say to you, arise” (vs. 41). Because of Good Friday and Easter, we believe and confess that Jesus is the Lord over life and death, the Lord over our life and death...and our resurrection unto eternal glory.

Jesus is the savior of all people. The barriers we raise in this life – money, gender, race, personal histories, failures and triumphs – are swept away in the love and victory of Jesus. Our Lord would not be bound by a woman’s uncleanness nor would He be silenced in the face of death. Neither shall this congregation be limited by the barriers so easily erected by our world. Not tragedies, not the changing views of life and marriage, not the doubts being raised as to what it means to be human, male and female created in God’s divine image, not even by death itself.

Jesus is our Savior, our living Savior. His steadfast love never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is (His) faithfulness (Lam 3:22–23).

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.