

B – Pentecost 5

6/27/2021

Mark 5:21-43

“Helper of the Helpless”

He was at his wits end. He and his wife had done everything they knew to do for their daughter. She was only twelve years old, and as soon as it became obvious that there was something wrong, they took her to see every doctor and tried every remedy and exhausted every avenue no matter how remote it seemed. Nothing worked. And the doctors had spoken those dreaded words – “There’s nothing more we can do.”

They were utterly helpless. They were desperate. Can you imagine it?

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At first the bleeding was the monthly bleeding that’s normal. But she soon realized that this was NOT normal because it never stopped. For twelve years, (*as old as the couple’s daughter*), she had been under the treatment of every available physician. But rather than saying, “there’s nothing more we can do,” she kept treating her until “**she spent all that she had.**” And not only was she no better, it was getting worse.

She was utterly helpless. She was desperate. Can you imagine it?

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Jesus had been on the other side of the Sea of Galilee – that is, the Gentile side because there was a man who was possessed by demons – and he was utterly helpless and desperate. “**Come out of the man, you unclean spirit,**” He commanded. And the UTTERLY HELPLESS and DESPERATE man was BACK AGAIN - sound in body, sound in mind.

“**And Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side**” – that is, to Galilee -the Jewish side. No sooner does Jesus step onto the shore, than “**a great crowd gathered about him.**” They must have been watching for his boat to appear on the horizon. And as soon as it was spotted, the word went out and everyone came running.

There is that compelling summary statement of Jesus' ministry in St. Matthew's gospel which goes like this, **"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and HELPLESS, like sheep without a shepherd."** (Mt. 9:36) Man's **"HELPLESSNESS"** compels our Lord to **"COMPASSION."**

Out of the midst of this 'great crowd' crowding in on Jesus, the spotlight is focused on ONE MAN. He's the father of the little girl. His name is "Jairus" and he is one of the rulers of the Synagogue. As a 'ruler of the Synagogue,' he was used to being IN CONTROL. But when it came to saving his daughter, he is, as we said, utterly HELPLESS. And HELPLESSNESS can drive a person to abandon all pride and dignity - EVEN TO THE POINT OF BEGGING.

**"Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet,"** and made his desperate plea. **"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."**

He must have either seen or heard about how Jesus had healed so many simply by the touch of his hand. And that's what he wants Jesus to do for his little daughter. AND QUICKLY! There's no time to spare. SHE IS **"AT THE POINT OF DEATH."**

**"And he went with him."** Can we imagine Jairus guiding Jesus through the crowds surrounding Him – trying to get Him to his home as quickly as possible BECAUSE his little daughter is **"AT THE POINT OF DEATH"**? If he had flashing lights and a siren, Jairus would surely have had them on.

But as Jairus pushes through the throng saying, 'make room, make room,' suddenly Jesus stops, and starts looking around at the crowd saying, **"who touched me?"**

And in, what may be one the most engaging scenes in Mark's gospel, Jesus disciples are incredulous. He is so deeply immersed in our humanity that they fail to recognize his divinity and treat him as though he were 'one of us.' **"You see the crowds pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"**

It was the woman with the flow of blood. She too was aware of all of the people this man had healed simply by the touch of His incredible hand. But she was 'Bloody.' Which made her 'UNCLEAN.' And no clergy would ever 'touch' her because that would make them unclean too.

But she was ‘helpless’ and ‘desperate.’ And in her desperation, she thought, ‘IF HE CAN’T TOUCH ME, THEN I’LL TOUCH HIM.’ And **“if I touch even his garments, I will be made well.”** And she snaked and pushed and ‘excuse me’d’ through the crowd... and carefully, **FROM BEHIND**, ‘and with this crowd pressing in on him he’ll never even know,’ **‘she touched his garment.’**

**“And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.”** (That word that our bible translates as ‘disease’ is the Greek word, “*tais mateegos*” which literally means, “*the lashing*” or “*the flogging.*”)

And simultaneous to her **feeling in her body** the end of *the flogging* that she had felt for the last 12 years, Jesus **“perceived in himself that power had gone out from him.”**

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We need to stop for just a moment right here. **“He perceived in himself that power had gone out from him.”** We want to ask, is this what it was like for Jesus with every one of those who came to him with their sicknesses and diseases and demons and He touched them and healed them? Could he feel power go out from him with each one?

And is this still, even to this day - even to the last day - how it is for Jesus as He heals all our diseases of both body and soul? **“He perceived in himself that power had gone out from him.”** Is this what it means when it says, **“he had compassion on them”**?

If it is, this surely gives new appreciation as to why Jesus Christ must be FULLY GOD. For who has enough power to **“go out from him”** to heal the whole world - and the whole creation - but God alone – who is ‘almighty’ – ‘all-powerful’ – whose mercy and compassion is bottomless?

But this surely ALSO gives new appreciation of St. Paul words to the Philippians, where he writes, **“though he was in the form of God ... HE EMPTIED HIMSELF,”** one illness, one disease, one demon, one death at a time. (Phil. 2:7)

He took this woman's *lashing and bleeding* onto Himself and emptied Himself for her. He took the little girl's death onto Himself and emptied Himself for her— even unto death, even death on a cross. There, hanging from the cross, HE IS UTTERLY HELPLESS. And IN HIS UTTER HELPLESSNESS, He shows us the way to God. **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”**

It is because Jesus Christ became UTTERLY HELPLESS that He has compassion on the UTTERLY HELPLESS – and becomes their HELPER. **“For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”** (Heb. 4:16)

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Back to the woman. Once she realizes that she isn't going to get away as anonymously as she had hoped, and **KNOWING WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER**, she is now MORE AFRAID than she had been. **“In fear and trembling, she came and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.”**

**“In fear and trembling”** she said, “Sir, I have been bleeding for twelve years without stop and I've exhausted every last dime on treatments that never worked and I was desperate!” What is she afraid of – that He'll be mad at her, and maybe take the healing back, or maybe, give her even worse.

What she doesn't yet understand is that it is FOR THIS MOMENT, FOR HER, that He came, not just to the other side of the Sea, but into this world. HE WANTS to touch and be touched by the helpless that His power may go out of Him that they may be healed. He will give His very body in the bread and His very blood in the wine precisely for this reason and to this end - that the harassed and helpless of every generation to the very end of the age, might touch and be touched by Him - that HIS POWER MAY GO OUT OF HIM, and they may be healed.

**“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”**

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And while all of this is going on, THE CLOCK IS TICKING for Jairus' little daughter. And what must poor Jairus be thinking through all this? But just as He will do again, when He is told that His dear friend Lazarus was ill, He delays going to this little girl who is **“at the point of death.”** And as with Lazarus, he delays too long. His timing is off. HE LETS THE HELPLESS BECOME EVEN MORE HELPLESS.

**“While he was still speaking”** to the woman, **“there came from the ruler’s house some who said, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?’”** Jesus may be able to help the living, but REALLY, what can he do for the dead? Once you’re dead you’re dead.

Let’s stop again, and ask, ‘what would you do if you were Jairus’? Would you scold Jesus for delaying and getting distracted by ‘LESSER’ CASES THAN HIS LITTLE DAUGHTER? It wasn’t like the bleeding woman was **“at the point of death.”**

Would you blame Jesus, because ‘IF HE WAS REALLY GOD HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET THIS HAPPEN?’

Or would you have just figured that **‘this illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it’?** (Jn.11:4)

But before Jairus can say anything, Jesus speaks to him. **“DO NOT FEAR, ONLY BELIEVE.”** After a bit of ridicule and mocking from the professional mourners, Jesus throws them all out of the house and takes the mother and father into the room where their little daughter was lying.

Her father had asked Jesus to lay HIS HAND ON HER. But He **“takes her hand”** and speaks to her AS THOUGH HE CAN SPEAK ALL THE WAY INTO DEATH ITSELF. He speaks His Word into her dead ears. **“Talitha cumi.”** And by the power that His Word has to create everything from nothing and life from death, **“IMMEDIATELY THE GIRL GOT UP AND BEGAN WALKING.”**

And her mother and father were **“IMMEDIATELY OVERCOME WITH AMAZEMENT”** - which doesn’t mean they were JUMPING FOR JOY. It means they were overcome with **FEAR AND TREMBLING.**

Eventually they will learn **TO NOT FEAR AND ONLY BELIEVE.** And they will join their hearts with the Psalmist’s, **“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.”** (Ps.30:11)

But for now, **“He strictly charged them that no one should know this...”** There will come a day, AFTER HE HAS EMPTIED HIMSELF FOR THE WHOLE WORLD, that may tell what the Lord has done for them. But for now, His chief concern seems to be that this little girl hasn't eaten in a while and needs some dinner. **“And he told them to give her something to eat.”**

It's the same for us. We are 'utterly helpless' and 'desperate.' But our Lord has crossed over and come to us and says, **“Do not fear, only believe.”** **Come and eat.**