

Pentecost 6B. "Possibilities" July 1, 2018. Dungeness Valley Lutheran Church, Sequim, WA. Lamentations 3:22-33; Psalm 30:1-13; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. 22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 23 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.' 24 So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. 25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. 26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' 29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' 31 And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?" ' 32 He looked all round to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

35 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?' 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' 40 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. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was

twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.
43He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

33But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

Think back over your years....can you remember a time when you fell down before anyone in fear and trembling? I can remember hiding from a gruff professor when he bellowed "Come in" after I knocked on his door. But I never fell down and I never told him the whole truth. I can remember telling the whole truth to a friend, confessing I had broken a confidence and trembling, but I never fell down before her. I can remember the fear late at night when the kids were not home from their dates. I can remember kneeling at a child's bedside and praying for her recovery, but there was no truth to tell the Lord, except that I was powerless.

It's pretty hard for us to imagine the whole scene of the woman falling down, telling the whole embarrassing truth, while fearful and trembling. But I daresay many a woman fell down weeping in fear and trembling before our civil servants when her children were taken from her in these past weeks. Such stories are not uncommon in places of war and famine, nor on our own southern border.

If you remember times of struggle and heartache, times of existential sorrow or fear, you can perhaps imagine the relief and joy of Jesus' words, "Go in peace." I remember the relief of finding a place to escape the professor's anger. I remember the blessing of the friend saying, "That's what forgiveness is for." I remember the sense of well-being when the car pulled into the driveway and the son or daughter came through the front door. I remember the joy of childhood fevers finally breaking. And I pray and hope for the relief of an asylum seeker being reunited with family.

Week after week, Jesus offers the words when we leave his table, "Go in peace."

So let's put ourselves into today's Gospel story of powerless people: a bleeding woman and a girl child – not named, but both sick unto death. The woman had been ostracized from her community, considered unclean because of her bleeding. Her life has been lonely and out of control for twelve long years – as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive. As leader of the synagogue, Jairus never saw the bleeding woman there. Although to most people, children were only important if they were male, Jairus loved his little girl. He ignored the saying, "When a boy comes, peace comes. When a girl comes, nothing comes." Notice that only the men in the story are named; the women remain nameless...to the writers, but not to Jesus!

Jesus ignored many so-called norms of society! Jesus had recovery in mind for both of these powerless daughters of God. Jesus didn't wave his arms over all of Palestine and heal every man, woman and child. But he did choose these two vulnerable souls and showed his deep compassion.

Imagine the chaos – almost like the storm on the sea last week. A socially powerful father feeling powerless, rushing Jesus to his home. A frightened woman on her knees who has broken society's taboos. Disciples trying to both reason with Jesus and shield him, crowds still pushing forward for healing.

One of my former confirmation students said he thought that God reaches best the people who are out of control. People who have everything perfect and in control lose sight of God, he said. Well, the people in today's Gospel – and sometimes we too -- are sure out of control.

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Jesus takes his time. He is the ultimate non-anxious presence. He knows his hurry will not make a difference to the little girl. He looks at the woman and sees the possibilities for her life that she has long given up. He meets her eyes, establishing a connection. "Daughter, go in peace!" he says, knowing she is healed. Power! A sign! God's love in the flesh.

Jesus turns then to go with Jairus. They are met on the road by people who tell them there is no hope, the little girl has died. Like last week,

when Jesus slept through the storm, Jairus may have wondered, “do you not care that we are perishing?”

Once again, Jesus sees possibilities that the others do not see. Jesus says the girl is just sleeping and presses on. Some laugh, mocking his faith and his divinity. Jairus rushes into the house, finds his wife kneeling beside the little girl’s bed. Jesus enters the room behind the desperate father. Peter, James and John watch from the shadows.

“Little one, get up!” And she does! Another lightning flash of power! Another sign of the reign of God on earth! Another reminder of God’s intention for the world!

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If only all our prayers could be answered like this.

Well, they are and they aren’t. We have lost children. The life blood of our loved ones or ourselves ebbs away in long illnesses. We don’t usually receive people back to life when they die. People in twelve-step programs work hard with daily challenges.

Jesus knew the vulnerabilities and sufferings of this life as well as its possibilities. He lived them all. He accepted the unclean touching of the bleeding woman and he broke the taboo to touch a dead child. He takes on our uncleanness – and gives back life and healing in return.

We might not find those we pray for cured of their illnesses. But we can all be healed.

When Jesus offers faith in God, power within our powerlessness, he also offers healing and wholeness. Faith . . . a gift, not something we can wrestle away from God or create in ourselves by sheer effort, but something we CAN pray for when we are out of possibilities, when we find ourselves hopeless over against our diseases, addictions, bereavements and sins.

When we receive the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, it’s like the healing of the woman and the family in today’s story. “Little one, get up!” . . . “daughter, go in peace!”

Imagine the woman standing up straight, slowly realizing she can walk home without hemorrhaging, throw away the useless medicines and painful cures she had tried for 12 long years, and return to her community of faith. She might have even broken into song, hurrying to tell her girl friend.

Imagine Jairus and his wife! How they hugged that little girl! How they brought her favorite meal to her. How they talked about this day all their lives. I wonder if the healed woman ever met Jairus' daughter at the synagogue – and what kind of friendship they might have shared.

When hopelessness is healed by Jesus, everything is different. Like walking along a street and turning around and walking the other way. What was on your left is now on your right. What you used to fear, now you learn to accept or to work for change. What you used to ignore, you now seek with all your heart.

Jesus touched Jairus' daughter. The desperate woman touched Jesus' robe. The Holy Spirit touches you in worship, and in other ways you may not even recognize. You touch one another sharing the peace, talking over coffee, working together.

Today we don't have to sneak up behind Jesus and try to touch the edge of his coat. We can come up to the Communion table with our hearts and hands open and receive the BODY and BLOOD of Christ himself – given For US. To forgive us, to restore us, to heal us.

We return to the illnesses and stresses of our lives. To the broken relationships, the difficult family situations, the loneliness, the challenge of overcoming addictions, the feeling of wanting to escape. But we go back IN PEACE, in the peace the world cannot give. Changed in attitude, mindset, and spirit. Healed to be healers. Touched to touch those in need.

People at home, people inside these doors and people outside. People we never expected to interrupt our conversations with Jesus – a conversation no longer private! Jesus sees possibilities in our congregation's life that we may not yet see ourselves! Possibilities of healing for those closest to us. Those with mature faith and those seeking faith.

“Little one, get up! . . . go in peace.” . . . There IS hope, my dear brothers and sisters. We are all invited to interrupt the king of the universe and share Jesus’ time and healing power. You are touched today and you are made whole, to GO in PEACE and touch others.

May God also be with our brothers and sisters around the world and in our refugee detention centers, in our prisons, in our meeting rooms, and here at home this morning and bless them with wholeness and healing, recovery, justice, reunion with family, and with peace. Amen.