

God's Work, and Our Hands

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King of Glory Lutheran Church
Year B: Pentecost 6: Mark 5:21-43
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When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. 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 around 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. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

God's power is enough to heal all our deepest wounds and bring us back to the life He offers. The life God offers is hope in the midst of trauma, crisis or despair. Not always healing, but hope. Jesus did it through His very body and we can do it through ours.

Sometimes there is no need for words. All we need is touch.

This is a very physical text. Jairus falls down begging Jesus. Begging with his body and begging with his voice. A crowd presses in on Jesus...we've all been in the midst of a crowd at the airport, holiday shopping, at a concert. We know what that feels like. The woman squeezes in between all the people and reaches out. Can you see her? There are professional wailers at Jairus' house – using their voices to protect the feelings of the family whose grief has just begun. Then Jesus lifts the dead girl. It's a very physical text.

Sometimes there is no need for words. All we need is touch. Touch is a great equalizer. We all walk around insides of our skin. So...I'm giving you advance warning. At the end of the sermon, I'm going to invite us all to hold another person's hand or touch their shoulder – with their permission – just giving you advance warning. And...if this connection is not safe for any reason, you do not have to participate. No guilt, no explanations needed.

Mark loves telling a story within a story. One illuminates the other. And so we have the leader of the synagogue, Jairus, imploring Jesus to come to his dying daughter. The daughter is 12 years old. In ancient Israel, a girl became a woman one day after her 12th birthday.

The story that gets sandwiched in between Jairus and his daughter, is the adult woman, who has been bleeding for 12 years. Being ceremoniously unclean because of her continuous discharge, she has not been able to worship God or be connected to community.

One female is dying literally and another inwardly.

True story from national public radio, June 19th. One day in 1996, Lorrie Paul was at a hospital in Syracuse, N.Y. Her father, who had just had open heart surgery, was in the ICU. Although the operation had gone well, he'd suffered from a seizure soon after, leaving Paul and her family fearful that he might never make it home. "It was just a really rough time. My mom is very fragile, needed a lot of attention, a lot of support. So I was trying to divide my time, talk to the doctors, nurses, make sense of numbers, and it was just getting to be a lot. And I went to take a walk, just the loop around. And I remember walking. The hospital had, like, a sloped hallway, and there were windows on my right side cut in, like big cubes with a big, thick window sill. And I paused there and put my elbows down and just stared out at nothing, and I started to sob. It got to be too much, and I just thought, I'm going to lose my dad. And a woman or a

man - someone - appeared behind me and put their hand on my left shoulder. They didn't try to fix the situation. They didn't try to console me. They didn't try to find out what was going on. It was just presence. They were just there with me.”

“Having someone there and showing that compassion, that love brought me this sense of calm. My breathing slowed. I relaxed, and this person squeezed my shoulder one time and walked away. I have no idea who this person was. I just know that this compassion they shared with me, this sense of humanity that they were sharing my sorrow brought me such a sense of peace that I was able to go back in, refreshed and calm, and help Mom and be there for Dad and get through. It was so incredibly powerful. I mean, it's been a quarter of a century, and it's stuck with me every day because this person just stayed with me, and that made all the difference.” (<https://www.npr.org/2024/06/19/nx-s1-5008825/after-decades-a-woman-still-remembers-comfort-from-a-stranger-in-a-hospital-hallway>)

Both Jairus and the bleeding woman had gotten desperate in their own way. Jairus, as a synagogue leader knew that he ought not be hanging around this Rabbi with unorthodox views. But what parent is not desperate for the sake of their child when that child is in crisis? The bleeding woman didn't have any social power like Jairus. She'd run through her money, she'd tried all the doctors and all the superstitious remedies. But she knew that Jesus was the one healer she hadn't tried.

Both of these characters had to 'get out of their bodies' so to speak, to risk going to God. They were at the end of their rope. They left behind whatever was left of intellectual misgivings, or conscious objections. In essence they got out of their own way because it had come down to this. Either allow God to do the healing, or it would be the end.

The first two steps in AA, NA or ACA are 1. Admit we were powerless and our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Often suffering breaks through the core of all our protections and excuses. We get drawn to God when we finally realize we cannot do anything to make our own lives better. St. Paul said it this way.....***

It might seem that Jesus had to choose between the dying girl and the bleeding woman. Yet the God with skin on had enough time and healing capacity for both. Even in the midst of all the people, Jesus instinctively knew that power

had gone forth from His body. The woman knew instinctively that healing had come. This wounded God of ours, understands injury. Distress. Soreness. Worn-out. Busted. Broken. Despair. Hopelessness. Jesus got it. Because He lived it. Every healing took something from His own body. Yes, He was God. And yes, every time He took on the wounds of humanity, it wounded Him...even slightly. If we're at the end of our rope, broken and in misery...take hope in the fact that Jesus knew His own limits and woundedness.

God's power is enough to heal all our deepest wounds and bring us back to the life He offers. The life God offers is hope in the midst of trauma, crisis or despair. Not always healing, but hope. Jesus did it through His very body and we can do it through ours.

In this day and age, touch has become taboo. We are increasingly substituting social media for human connection. Which is only reason why the Surgeon General issued a report about loneliness becoming an epidemic in America. It's always healthy to ask...may I touch you? Sometimes there is no need for words, only a healthy touch.

A tag-line of our national church, the Evangelical Church in America, is God's Work our Hands. Of course, God's healing touch still happens today in all sorts of ways. Inwardly in our spirits, yes. Outwardly, through your hands and mine too..yes! Because God's touch is the great equalizer. Touch cuts across all classes and races, ethnicities and ages.

Janna Cannady shared that there was a 'church' in Austin, TX who didn't have a building. The clergy couple would spread the word to meet that Sunday in a park, or under a bridge. Thousands showed up. The goal that day would be to feed thousands. Or pick up trash. Or go sit with the homeless.

You and I, with God's help, using our God given gifts can "touch" people with our hands, yes. But also with our hearts and words and presence and resources. People that are forlorn or deemed wretched by others who pass them by. Jesus healed people through his presence and His touch. So can we! That's Gospel – it's great news! We can bring hope – even if we cannot fix their situation – we can bring hope by showing up. What one of us hasn't been blessed by the touch of a kind word, or a timely pat on the shoulder or hug of a friend? God is there!

Are we willing to show up today? Right now? In a moment, I'm going to invite you to get the permission of the person sitting next to you. If you are willing and if

they are willing, reach out and hold their hand or shoulder. If you have a person on either side, then two hands or two shoulders! And...if this connection is not safe for any reason, you do not have to participate. No guilt, no explanations needed. Sometimes there is no need for words. All we need is a little physical contact. Feel another's skin. Feel the warmth. Feel the presence of another precious child of God – one who is on the journey – one who gets desperate – one who feels joy – one who needs you and you need them.

It's always God's hands and ours too! Amen.