

## HEALING MORE THAN JUST THE BODY

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Today's passage is truly one healing story wrapped around another healing story. This is similar to a passage a few weeks ago that I referred to as a Markan sandwich. We have the healing of Jairus' daughter that is interrupted by the healing of the woman who was bleeding. Then we return to Jairus and his daughter. So the healing of his daughter makes up the bread and the bleeding woman is the meat of the sandwich. Both stories have some remarkable features, but there is a possible twist that ties them I want to talk about after a little background.

First of all you need to know that we have skipped one entire healing story. Last week we left Jesus crossing over to the other side. A man possessed by evil spirits meets him there. This is the territory of the Gerasenes a Gentile group and he is no longer in Israel. He heals the man yet the Gerasenes tell him to go away after he sends the evil spirits into a herd of pigs who run off a cliff. So now he is back in Jewish territory.

Let us begin today's passage with Jairus. He is a leader of the synagogue. This means he is obviously an important person probably with money. He is certainly highly respected and socially way above Jesus who at best is a poor carpenter and a young prophet. This important man falls at Jesus' feet and begs him to come heal his daughter. Without a word Jesus went with him.

As they are walking along, the crowd presses in on him, Jesus feels power flowing out from him. Someone has touched him! When Jesus asks who touched him, a woman comes in fear and trembling, and falls in the dust at Jesus feet. A woman who has been bleeding for 12 years has touched Jesus. This woman had no business touching Jesus; she should not even have been in the crowd around him. According to the Jewish purity laws found in Lev. 15, *If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. Whoever touches [anything that she has touched] shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening.*

According to the purity laws, the woman is an outcast of society and should be calling Jesus from a distance, not pushing through a crowd and touching him! The only thing worse would be if Jesus touches a dead person. No wonder she came in fear and trembling before Jesus. She is living the words of the psalmist, *Out of the depths have I called to you, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.* Jesus instead of condemning her gives her his peace, his love and tells her that her faith in God has healed her of her disease. The woman is made whole in body, mind and spirit and returned to her community. As in our psalm this morning,

the woman *waited for the LORD; my soul waits for him; in his word is my hope*. Her hope was in the Lord and Jesus perceived her trust and faith in Him.

Now Jesus is ritually unclean yet Jairus continues to take him to his house when they are told “the child has died, do not bother the teacher anymore.” That makes Jairus’ house unclean, but he doesn’t care. At the house he tells the mourners to leave for the child is not dead, but asleep. The words he used for dead and asleep mean the same thing. However death in Jesus’ world, the world of the kingdom, is something we awake from to a new life in Christ. In words that are reminiscent of the prophet Elijah with the widow’s son, he tells her “little girl, get up.” She gets up and he tells the parents to give her something to eat, just as they will give Jesus a piece of broiled fish after his resurrection.

Now the twist I want to throw into this comes from long before I went to seminary. My wife Wendy was working on her Master’s in Theology at John Carroll University. One of her classmates was an OB/GYN who happened to be Moslem. He was taking a course in the gospels because he knew faith was important to his patients and he wanted to understand their Christian faith. When they came to this story he told them that there was a condition where after a woman gave birth sometimes the bleeding didn’t stop. He said it is a real problem today in some parts of Africa, which still exclude women from the community if they are bleeding. He also said it could go on for years. So he said, the woman with the bleeding could have also been Jairus’ wife and the girl’s mother! The girl is 12 and the woman has been bleeding for 12 years. Let that sink in for a few moments.

She would have been ostracized from the family and her community for 12 years. They would have spent a lot of money trying to heal her, but Jairus as a leader in the synagogue would have felt obligated to set her aside. A child and her mother separated for 12 years because of laws and customs. Jesus has done more than just heal two people; there is a third and even greater healing and that is the healing and reuniting of a family that had been torn apart by the law.

Healings and healing ministries are interesting and at times challenging. This is because sometimes the healings that happen are quite different from what we may have expected or what we have prayed for. Healings can be other than just physical. All of us are in need of healing and our world is certainly in need of healing. I have seen when a serious illness sets in, possibly leading to death, there is often the chance for healing in a family or in relationships. Sometimes that healing brings the peace, the shalom that Jesus gives us; the peace of restored relationships and broken down barriers.

I think the most important point of all of this is that we need to be open to Jesus’ healing, even if we do not know how, when or in what form that healing may take place. Both Jairus and the woman were desperate for healing, but they were also incredibly open and humble before Jesus. They sought healing but did not dictate how they wanted that to happen. They just said heal me, heal my daughter and Jesus did.

Yes pray with all your might for what you hope for, but then also pray that you will be open to the healing that God will give you. For that healing may be even more than you could have hoped for. Remember Jesus tells us that God will give us what we need if we ask in prayer, but we always need to be ready to listen and follow. In the traditional blessing at the end of the service, we are promised “The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Ultimately it all comes down to the love of God for us, his beloved children and disciples.