

## The Fifth Sunday After Pentecost The Proper 8 Year B; 26 and 27 June 2021

St. James' Episcopal Church, Clinton NY  
By Zoom  
Patricia Kay Jue, lay preacher

### Two healings: interleaved lives



Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24

Psalms 30

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

Mark 5:21-43

The Gospel reading appointed for today is rather long. Part of that is because we are getting a “two-for” —two stories—one of a woman cured by the touch of Jesus’ robe, the other of a girl brought back from death. When I was growing up, I heard these stories of miraculous healing. They were always told as compact, “easy to understand” nuggets: separate. Each one was told as an example of the life and times of Jesus. Each one, separately, pointed to a Jesus miracle, and the offer of hope and new life to those who believe, and of the importance of faith in all things.

We have the story of Jarius and his daughter. Jarius, as one of the leaders of a synagogue, holds great prestige in the religious community. I imagine that this daughter was well known in her village and much loved by her family. And she is twelve years old: twelve, going on thirteen, so in Jewish tradition just at that transformation between child and adulthood. She has the promise of an entire, abundant life before her, except now for the onset of a fatal illness.

Jesus and the disciples have just returned to the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee, after an excursion to the Gentile side. A crowd is waiting for them, no doubt wanting to know more about this miracle worker they have heard so much about, and to see with their own eyes a healing or two.

Jarius also is waiting. He pleads with Jesus to come, to heal his very sick daughter, begging for a miracle for his family. This, then, might be the miracle the crowd is anticipating. And, as we know, Jesus does go to Jarius’ house. In the company of her parents and Jesus’ three closest disciples, the girl brought back to life. She is returned from the mouth of death, alive, to her family. Jesus says, give her something to eat. For parents of a twelve year old, what better way to know that all is well, than to see the child eating, again. Prayers are answered, and, in the healing, the promise of life, and of G-d’s Creation is restored.<sup>1</sup> But this is not the miracle that the crowds see.

Instead, for the crowds, they witness the story of the woman that interrupts the resurrection story of Jarius’ daughter. In contrast with Jarius’ daughter, who is loved and enclosed within a protective family, and caring community, this woman lives at the very fringe. Because of her physical ailment, Jewish religious law would have prevented her working, living, or having any other meaningful interaction with anyone else.

She had sought the advice of various healers, spent all her money, tried everything, but only got worse. This litany of past attempts, each one adding another burden, means this woman is characterized not just by her illness, but as someone completely without any financial or material resources, without social support, and, indeed, not even able to sit down and eat with others. She is no longer a part of the community. An outcast, she is no longer seen nor heard by those around her, because of an illness twelve years long. This woman has been “dead” to all those around her for as many years as the daughter of Jarius has been alive.

Twelve years, and yet she has not lost faith. In the press and chaos of the crowd, this woman angles her way between the many people. In her desperate hope of a new life, she reaches out to Jesus, and is healed. She feels it; she knows and believes. Jesus feels it, and knows. Both she and Jesus know there has been a healing. Jesus opens up an opportunity for this woman to tell her story, to tell her truth. By her boldness of reaching out to Jesus, and in Jesus’s acknowledgment of her, the barrier that kept her out of the community is gone. Jesus proclaims “Your faith had made you well. Go in Peace, and be healed...” This is her testimony, and also her time of jubilee. Through the enfolding Grace and Love of G-d, both she, and the crowd, have been set free.

But the lesson is not yet ended. While the attention has been on the woman, Jarius’ daughter has died. I image the horrid sinking feeling of this father, maybe even rage or despair. His daughter is dead. If that woman had not intruded into the crowd, if that woman had been healed by the touch but Jesus not bothered to make such a big deal about it, if that woman had not been had to tell her story - her whole, long story - Jesus could have arrived at the house while the daughter was still alive.

Yet, Jesus says to Jarius, the father, “Do not fear, only believe.” The Good news of the Gospel keeps reminding us, again and again, that with faith, hope and love, all things are possible. And although in our human impatience we may not understand, G-d works in G-d’s own perfect time.

The close disciples of Christ are witness to both events, the healing restoration of the woman, the resurrection of the child. And we, also, through this Gospel reading, are brought into the interweaving of both stories. So, maybe, arranged as these stories are, Mark is reminding us about Jesus’ teaching of how to be disciplines, the followers of Christ. If we are truly to be a part of Jesus’ community, each of our lives must be interrupted and interleaved with the lives of each other. Full healing, and the ultimate repair of G-d’s good creation can only happen when the whole of Creation is included. At the center of G-d’s promise of new and everlasting life is Jesus, our Savior. But taken up in this interleaved gospel reading are the woman, a father, a daughter, a mother, the disciples, the friends, the mourners, the crowd, and all of us, present today. All of us have been invited to be loosed from the fear of death, from the lock hold of illness and decease, to help bring about the new Creation of G-d’s kin-dom on Earth, interlocked as the community of G-d. G-d’s kin-dom includes, maybe even requires, us all.<sup>2</sup>

**AMEN.**

**IMAGES:** detail from trees Sarcophagus in the Louvre, Paris France, 3rd-4th century marble (left) and Jesus Raises Girl to Life, National Children’s Hospital, Tallaght, Dublin, Ireland, Metal Relief sculpture (right).

<sup>1</sup> This writer used G-d for the written name.

<sup>2</sup> The writer thanks the Rev. Gary Cyr, the 20<sup>th</sup> Rector of St. James’ Episcopal Church, Clinton, for continual insight of the community of God’s as a Kin-dom (faith community as kinship) rather than a Kingdom that perpetuates male hierarchical structure.