

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 7/1/2024
Breaking Cultural Boundaries Because of Faith

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, July 2 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for not just tolerance, but acceptance in our world. Ask that the HOLY SPIRIT help us to look past differences and to see everyone as a beloved child of GOD. Pray for all who work to bring equality to all people in our world.*

Yesterday's gospel text from Mark was the two stories of the raising of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the woman with bleeding (Mark 5:21-43). My sermon focused on the message of resurrection, that both females were raised back to life. Obviously, the daughter who died was. But the woman, who was unclean because of her bleeding and prevented from normal societal relationships and even marriage was, for all practical purposes, dead. The healing she received from touching JESUS' robe restored her to life among the people of her community and to worship in the synagogue. There is another part of this story that is so important but I, at best, made only passing reference to it.

I talked about the similarities in the story:

- they are both daughters; Jairus' and the woman whom JESUS calls, "Daughter;"
- one had been bleeding for twelve years, while the girl who died was twelve years old;
- JESUS touches both of them;
- both the woman and Jairus are desperate for help;
- both females are healed;
- Jairus and the woman both have great faith.

I also talked about the differences between the two stories, and this leads to the other significant message I want to share here:

- Jairus is a synagogue leader, while the woman could not go to synagogue for being unclean because of bleeding;
- Jairus was a man while she was a woman (women were lesser than men in that society);
- Jairus pleaded for his daughter, while the woman had no one to speak up for her;
- Jairus was wealthy, but she had spent all she had on doctors who did nothing for her;
- Jairus is the head of his community, but she has to avoid people and crawl on the ground to even touch JESUS' robe;
- if you remember my recent article about the Purity Code, Jairus was at the top and considered loved by GOD while she was at the very bottom and believed to be punished by GOD for her own or her parents' sin.

So, here's the thing that is so vital for us to understand from this story. It was normal, even expected, that JESUS would respond to the request of Jairus. He is a religious leader, a leader in the community, a Jewish man, wealthy, and has a family. He is all that anyone might hope to be. She, on the other hand, is an outcast, ritually unclean, a woman, and alone. No one wants to be her or even cares for or about her. Yet the healing JESUS offered was for both. Granted, JESUS didn't stop to heal her; she kind of took it from HIM. But then JESUS stopped. JESUS took time from this important mission for Jairus to talk to this woman, even calling her, "Daughter," a daughter of Israel, just as Jairus was a son of Israel, just as his daughter was a daughter of Israel, and a daughter of GOD, just as all were children of GOD. By calling her daughter, JESUS elevates her. And HIS healing restores her to life, just as it does for Jairus' daughter.

These two main characters are at opposite extremes in that society. One deserving of GOD's attention; one completely undeserving. Yet JESUS grants healing to both. JESUS makes no distinction between the

two. Both are healed and only based on faith. She has the faith to reach out for JESUS' help. He has the faith to come to JESUS and ask for help. Healing comes from JESUS based on faith alone.

The word "healed" in Hebrew is the same as "saved." To be healed is to be saved. The girl is saved from death. The woman is saved from isolation from people and from GOD. But both are saved. And it is only because of faith.

Who do we revere in our world today and why? Who are the ones we admire because of faith today? Who are the ones we might wish to be around? And who are the ones who are outcast and ostracized? Who are the ones no one wants around, much less touch? Yet what does the example of JESUS in this narrative tell us? How does GOD see each person in the story? To whom does JESUS offer healing, salvation today? And on what basis is it offered?

If the grace of GOD shown through the actions of JESUS is available to all. Can we do no less to offer that grace? Rather than looking for those to be kept out, should we not seek to bring all to CHRIST and GOD's compassion? There are many today who condemn or shun others because of their behavior, personal history, or cultural standards. JESUS' example calls us to invite and welcome all based on one thing alone—faith.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey