

Mark 5:21-43

Perhaps the woman in our text would have received help sooner had Caesar and their Supreme Court passed a national health care law. But it was not to be. For twelve years this woman suffered. For twelve years her flow of blood would not stop. That's how old Jairus' daughter was. This woman began seeing doctors for her illness when the daughter of Jairus was born. And now, twelve years later, the one is at the point of death, and the other is likely not far behind.

We may be drawn a little more to the second miracle than to the first. Raising a dead girl to life grabs our attention and our emotions more than a woman touching Jesus' garment. But let's not move to the house of Jairus too quickly, even though this is just what he was wishing Jesus would do. Both miracles speak to us. Both are important for us to consider.

Jairus was not the only person that day whose heart was racing and whose emotions were going wild. This poor woman was at the point of despair. She had spent all her money on doctors, and yet her condition only grew worse. If she had a husband, he would have had nothing to do with her. She was considered unclean because of her flow of blood that would not stop. For twelve years she could not be touched by a man. And then this woman comes up and touches Jesus. Just His garment, but she believed that even such a touch would make her well. And she was right. For twelve years she suffered and despaired, and with one touch her body was healed. Imagine her tears of joy. Relief would have swept over her. She had come up to Jesus with a stricken heart. She walked away, passing through the crowd, her heart singing.

But then Jesus' words caused her to freeze in her tracks. "Who touched Me?" He knew. Jesus knew what she had done. Dozens of people, maybe hundreds were milling around Him, touching Him, but Jesus knew what she had done. With fear and trembling she came back to Him. She fell down at His feet and confessed everything. She had dared to touch Him. She did not ask Him to heal her. She touched His garment all on her own. But then Jesus gave her sweet comfort: "*Daughter, go in peace, your faith has made you well.*"

This story continues on even today. Crowds continue to press in around Jesus today. They press in to church buildings. They press in to living rooms to watch "Jesus preachers" on their television sets. Jesus is discussed on radio airwaves and crowds listen. He is discussed on internet sites and in coffee shops. As the crowds of people gathered around Jesus back then, so today those crowds have not dispersed. But of all the people in the crowd, only this poor woman was healed. The only one who was healed, of all the men, and women, and children flocking around Jesus, is this woman who knew and confessed that she was unclean. When Jesus told her that her faith had made her well, He was not referring only to her belief that He could heal her, but also to her acknowledgment of who she was--a poor, unclean woman.

If you do not believe that you are unclean, then you do not have faith. Anyone who comes before Jesus unwilling to admit they are unclean on account of their sin, is just like the crowd of people milling around Jesus who received nothing from Him, no healing whatsoever. To come before Jesus in faith is to come as this woman came--knowing that she did not deserve to come, but she came anyway; knowing that she dare not touch Him, but she touched Him anyway. If you are not a sinner, then Jesus has nothing for you. But if you are burdened with sin; if you cry with David, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God!*" If you come, like this woman, with all of your uncleanness, then you have a Savior, as she did, who makes you well, who makes you clean, who forgives your sins.

As the crowds were touching Jesus but received no healing by their touch, so anyone today who takes His flesh and blood in the Sacrament, who touches Christ to their lips, but does not say, with Paul, "*I am the chief of sinners,*" who does not come as the unclean woman, "*eats and drinks judgment to himself.*" But you who come up to Jesus in the Sacrament like this woman came up to Him, you will depart in peace as she did, for here Jesus gives you the forgiveness of your sins.

When Jesus arrived at the house of Jairus, another crowd met Him--a crowd of people wailing and mourning, for the little girl was dead. But Jesus, again, gives nothing to such a crowd. Only a few does He take in with Him. Five people--Peter, James, and John, and the child's mother and father. These five came in with Him to the room of the little girl, but the crowd He left outside. And that is still where the crowd is today. They're outside. But Jesus has brought you, the few, in here with Him. And you are here to be a part of the same miracle, for the word He spoke to the daughter of Jairus is the word He speaks to you. "*Arise! I say to you arise!*" Jesus lifted this girl up out of death by speaking His word to her. Jesus speaks the same word to you today. "*I forgive you*" He says to each one of you. By His word Jesus lifts you up out of the burden of your sins, and up out of death, sin's consequence.

That girl could not rise by herself, and neither can you. Unless Jesus came to her; unless Jesus released her from the sleep of death, in death is where she would have remained. And so for you. Unless Jesus comes and brings you in, away from all the crowds, away from the world which is perishing; unless Jesus gives you His word of pardon and life, there would be nothing but death for you. But He is here, here for you. What He did for this girl, He does for you. As He told her father, so He tells you today, "*Only believe.*" Believe that His word of life and salvation is true, and that it is for you.

Now think with me...we saw two miracles today in our text...a bleeding woman healed, and a girl who had died raised to life. And these miracles, as all His miracles do, point us to Jesus' cross. What happened to the woman's illness? What happened to the little girl's death? Jesus took them, just as He takes your sin, and your guilt, and your death. On the cross it was Jesus who would not, could not stop bleeding. It was Jesus who became unclean. And it was Jesus who died. Every bit of suffering, every sickness, every sin, every consequence of sin that God's people endure, that you endure, Jesus endured for you, Jesus suffered for you. And that's why you, now, are who you are--God's forgiven people, declared clean and holy, with no punishment set before you, for Jesus took it all for you.

Not that poor woman's blood, but His blood cleanses you of all sin. Not that girl's death, but His death gives you life. Go your way in peace. Your faith--your Savior--has saved you. Amen.