

Thus far in the Gospel of St. Mark, we have seen Jesus' complete mastery over sickness and disease, including the dreaded leprosy, over the demons, and over a violent storm. Today His mastery is seen over the "*last enemy to be destroyed:*" death.

St. Mark presents to us two females. The first is a woman who has been suffering from a discharge of blood for twelve years. Since our life is in our blood, this woman has been bleeding to death, her body slowly dying for the last twelve years.

The second female is a girl twelve years of age. For her, death has come quickly, and all too soon.

Our Gospel account this morning is permeated with death. But the One who is greater than death has come. And not just to these two females. Jesus has come to us. And not a moment too soon, for our lives, too, are permeated with death. It is able to master us. But in these words before us, we rejoice to see death meeting its Master.

Death is not the only thing these two females have in common. Both are considered unclean. In Numbers chapter 5, God's command through Moses to the people of Israel was that they put out of the camp everyone who was unclean because of leprosy, or through a discharge of bodily fluid, or through contact with dead body.

And thus, this woman, because of her discharge of blood, has no place with God's people, no place in the gathering together for worship, and she has no legal right to enter the crowd who gathers around Jesus. She is like a leper, shunned and avoided. She is death walking.

The girl is unclean because she is dead. And yet, Jesus touches her dead body, and He is not angry that the woman touches Him. Anyone else would have shuddered in horror. But not Jesus. He has come for this very reason. To associate with those who are despised. To eat with sinners. To touch the lepers and those who are unclean.

And consider this, that Jesus does not just embrace those who are unclean; He embraces their uncleanness. Jesus embraces this woman's discharge of blood, for on the cross, His own blood would flow out of His body. And Jesus embraces this girl's death, for He who is death's Master will give Himself up to death on the cross.

These two females represent all of humanity, both past and present. Everyone in the past is represented by the girl who is dead. And everyone in the present by the woman who is dying. Everyone is either dead, or is dying and will be dead. We cannot avoid death. Death comes to all because all have sinned.

The only one who could have avoided death is Jesus, for He alone is without sin. But thanks be to God that Jesus chose to enter our world which is permeated with death. He chose to do what the people of Israel were forbidden to do – to touch death and embrace it, to touch the unclean and embrace our uncleanness, and to make our sin His own.

These two females before us also present to us the Christian life. We who live now in the present are like this woman. She suffers much. There is no one who can help her. But one thing she does, she comes to Jesus believing that she will be healed. And in the Greek, the word here is *saved*.

This is you each and every Sunday morning. We are dying, for we are full of sin. We are unclean, our sin defiling us. And no one can help us, except Jesus. And so, you are here again today. This woman crept up to Jesus from behind. She blew no trumpet before her. No shouting and singing of her goodness. Rather, she came with all her uncleanness. She came bringing death in her body. And touching Jesus, she was made well. She was saved.

And so are you. Never think that you are too sinful for Jesus. That you are too unclean, too defiled. And never think that Jesus will turn you away. He came to this world for you! To take your sin, your uncleanness.

“*Daughter,*” He calls this woman. And so with you. Jesus calls you His son and His daughter. This woman for twelve years, had no family. But now she is part of Jesus’ family. His daughter.

And you are too. This is what your baptism has done for you. It brought you into Jesus’ family. It made you His son and His daughter. And even more, in your baptism Jesus took all your uncleanness to Himself. And in its place, He declares you to be clean, cleansed of all sin, of all defilement, completely forgiven.

Your entire life as a Christian is right here portrayed by this woman. Always dying, and yet always coming to Jesus for healing and forgiveness, for life and salvation.

And then, in this girl we are given a preview, a foretaste of what is coming. Jesus comes to her. And Jesus, with a word, raises her to life. She is only sleeping, He says. It is as St. Paul says in First Thessalonians: “*Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep...for the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, and the dead in Christ will rise.*”

And so, your loved ones who lived and died in Christ, whose bodies now dwell out in the cemetery, they are only sleeping. And you, my friend, and I, will sleep with them. Death is able to master us, and we will sleep the sleep of death.

But by His death and resurrection, Jesus became death’s Master. And as He called the little girl to life, awakening her from sleep, so the day is coming when He will call to us, and we will rise from our sleep to be forever with the Lord. Amen.