

Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."

So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

(In church on Sunday we did not actually read the story but rather I narrated the story while people from the congregation acted it out. I was very interesting to not just hear the story but also see and feel the story. After having acted out the story I took some time to ask the reactions of those who participated in the action. Then, I gave a short message to reiterate the gospel. Since I cannot really do the play justice in written form perhaps you can try to visualize the story as you read it again. Place yourself in the shoes of the different characters. Ask yourself what they might be feeling. I found that each character has one line they speak and each of those really portray the feeling of the character. See if you can create the story in your mind and then read the sermon.)

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You know... this my favorite story in the Bible right now. I wish that I could preach on this story three four five times in a row just so that I could cover all the bases. I could focus on healing and how healing is more than just the healing of the body but also restoration back into community; I could focus on the ministry of Jesus and how he breaks down all our barriers (he speaks to a woman in public, acknowledges an unclean woman touched him, he touches a dead body, he even breaks down the barrier of death); I could focus on the story of the father and how he loses trust in Jesus because he takes too long; But I want to Focus on the Story in the middle, the story of the woman and How Jesus creates space for her.

Very similar sentiments come out from the women who acted out the part of the sick woman. One said that she felt like she didn't want to make a big scene, she just wanted to sneak in, touch him, and go on her way. Another woman expressed that she felt like she wasn't worthy to be a part of the crowd around Jesus. She knew that she didn't belong with them, especially being labeled unclean. Upon my asking what they felt when Jesus called them out, they both acknowledged feeling "put on the spot". They felt singled out at first and uncomfortable, but then both felt like they were being given the attention that they deserved; being called out to share their story became freeing, liberating, healing.

Jesus stops in the middle of going to save another girl, and opens up the space for the unclean woman to come forward. He doesn't just let her come in, touch him, and leave. Jesus stops, and makes the space for her to come forward. He makes the space to hear her story; the space to let her know that she is valued and important' the space to heal the Person, not just the body. Jesus stops and asks, "Who touched me?" To which the disciples respond, "What do you mean 'who touch me?', lots of people are touching you! There must be 5,6..7 people touching you right now! How can you ask 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus wasn't asking to find out... he was opening the space for the woman to come forward and share her story with him.

And this is not the first time that God uses this tactic. It goes all the way back to the beginning. It says that God walked through the garden after Adam and Eve realized their nakedness. He walked through the garden and called out "Where are you?" because they were hiding. Now... God must have known where they were, I mean... It's GOD, but he calls out to them and opens up the space for them to come forward and share their story, name their sorrow, name their pain, so that they might be set free and begin to heal. Just allowing the space, holy space, for a person for a person to let their story be heard, appreciated, honored, can have great healing affects.

This is one of the reasons that I loved my experience as chaplain in a hospital. As a part of seminary education we all have to work at least 400 hours as a chaplain in a hospital or nursing home. I absolutely loved it. People would often ask me, "So... what do you DO?" To which I would have to answer..."nothing". As Pastor Fred has mentioned before, there is not much we can DO. We walk in with a little red book, perhaps some communion, but we don't really DO much. We walk in there and create that space, that holy space for a person to come

out and “tell the whole truth”, bear their heart. Doctors have medicines and nurses have lots of equipment, but we have something that they don’t have... time. We can walk into a room and let a person know that their story matters and maybe just because the space was opened... healing can happen; the healing of a person, not just a body. That woman’s story needed to be heard, needed to be acknowledged, needed to be told, before healing could take place.

When we open up the space to hear someone’s story, we open up the possibility for healing... but that’s easier said than done (especially in American culture). When you see someone you know on the street you might say “Hey, how are ya?” To which they will respond, “Good. You?” as they walk by and then as you walk away you will shout, “Good”. It doesn’t really matter how you feel... it’s an automatic response. Could you imagine if you said “Hey, how are ya?”, and the person stepped in front of you, stopping you in your tracks, and proceeded to actually tell you how they were? You might think to yourself... “I didn’t ask for this”, but you did. And what if they really needed to tell someone about their day, week, year... life? What if they needed to share their story with someone and you were able to open that space for healing to happen?

This is my challenge to you this week... see if you can create some space for someone this week. Who knows what healing might just happen. You don’t have to DO anything, just create the space, give an invitation, listen. Someone might just be at their wits end, just like the woman in the story. Someone might really need a space to share their sorrow, share their pain, so that they might begin their healing process. Sometimes healing begins with a simple story, and a safe place. Perhaps you can open up a space, and just maybe true healing might happen.