

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

Psalm 30

2nd Cor 8:7-15

Mark 5:21-43 (Parallels Mat 9:18-26 & Luke 8:40-56)

The Hemorrhaging Woman & Jairus

"You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead;
you restored my life as I was going down to the grave!"

(Ps 30:3)

These words pounded in his head
as he jockeyed for position amongst the expectant crowd.
Jesus had barely set foot on dry land
before the people closed in on him, crying out for healing.
But, Jairus, *knew* what he must do.
For the Synagogue leader,
with his daughter's life hanging in the balance,
time was of the essence.

So too, the woman who had suffered for so long,
and had lost so much *knew* what she must do.

"If I only touch his clothes, I will be made well." (Mark 5:28)

The woman and the leader while standing on opposite ends of the social spectrum; are both desperate enough to step across acceptable boundaries, to seek out Jesus.

His name is Jairus. She is unnamed.

His title tells us that he is a righteous man, *very* clean!

She is untouchable, an outcast.

He's got it all: respect, family, wealth and social status with upwardly mobile life style.

His daughter would have had the best health care options available.

The woman's care is nonexistent.

She hemorrhaged not only blood but all of her resources for twelve long years with no improvement.

We are told that in fact, she became worse.

What pushed each beyond convention,
to risk everything; to reach out with fierce courage;
in a last ditch effort for Christ's healing?

Could it be that kernel of faith –

God's life force that we're born with?
Is it simply that when one is at rock bottom,
there's nowhere else to go, but to reach for that hem?

Matthew's version tells us the leader knelt or bowed
before Jesus saying, "My daughter has just died;
but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."
He could do that. He had the power and resources.
But who advocated for the woman?

She was reduced to the posture of a street cat,
creeping up behind Jesus, squeezing past the people,
unseen, in a daring attempt to touch him.
In her stunningly bold move,
she put her life on the line to save it, to be made whole,
healed; to *know* a life worth living, or perhaps
to recover a life she once had,
before her illness made life unbearable.

What did the leader risk? Actually, quite a lot.

In his professional, religious role,
he would have denounced Jesus and his followers.

By asking Jesus for help, his reputation and everything he held dear was on the line. But none of that compared to the great love he had for his daughter.

By prostrating himself at the feet of Jesus, we see that his faith is equal to the woman's faith; they're just flip sides of the same coin.

There's more than healing going on in this story. Walls are being torn down.

Accepted lines drawn in society are smudged.

Does Jesus shows favoritism for one over the other? No. Obviously, there's a parallel lesson for us in our binary, dualistic thinking that plagues us even now!

And religious authorities are still attempting to dictate who can receive God's healing grace.

Don't agree with the politics of pro-life?

No problem say some religious elite, we'll just withhold the body of Christ!

And what is pro-life anyway?

Pro-birth is not pro-life!

The key being, supporting people like the hemorrhaging woman,

who suffer without a helping hand,
condemned by a society that critiques her;
who feels she's unworthy, perhaps just lazy.

These could have been two independently told stories;
neat and tidy:

The Bleeding Woman healed –

free at last from her chronic illness;

The Leader's Daughter Brought Back to Life! –
a dramatic resurrection account.

No!

They must be told the way Jesus wants them told.

Their lives, *our lives* are intertwined,
so must the stories be!

Jesus and his disciples go with Jairus, *without question*,
they just "up and go".

If Jesus had been a *typical* holy man,
he would have walked right by the woman, ignored her,
likely *condemned* her
for her audacious, unacceptable behavior.

But, he makes time for her, seemingly at the expense of the man with a more urgent concern.

C'mon Jesus! My only daughter is on the brink of death, and you're wasting time with her?!

To each of us,
our concerns, desires, deepest needs are urgent. Right?
We don't know for sure what was going on
in the leader's mind, but that *was* standard thinking,
then and *is* now.

Why would anyone waste time on an untouchable?
Better to cross over to the other side of the road.

Jesus was well aware of the his power 'out-age' or surge.
He didn't need to ask who touched his robe.
But he did need to show the crowd, that she was valuable.
And He needed to provide the space for *her* to name her
truth, to claim it, that she too is worthy as a child of God.
He called her, "*Daughter*"!
She no longer needed to grasp for the fringe of his robe.
She no longer had to live on the fringe of the community.
She was part of *the* family.

Jesus is saying everyone has value in God's eyes!

In a crowd pressing in on all sides,
judgment is crowded *out* by Jesus' compassion,
opening up the possibility of solidarity among all people.

Throughout this story,
we hear the words "be made well" and "be healed".
The original Greek word *sozo* used here means "saved".
The woman said, "*I will be saved!*"
The leader said, "My child *will be saved!*" And she was!

But we have to back up a bit,
as we're getting ahead of ourselves.
By now, the onlookers and followers must have realized
that Jesus was *NOT* your average holy man.
He operated a bit differently!

As His entourage continues making their way
to where the sick child lay, the report came,
"Your daughter is dead.
Why trouble the teacher any further?"
Death,
well would seem like the hardest of all line to breach.

But no threshold is too high or too solid for Jesus!
In the same way that Jesus had told the woman
her faith had saved her, he tells Jairus to have faith.
"Do not fear, only believe." (Mark 5:26)
Easier said than done, right?

Could it be that maybe the trip to the leader's home is
interrupted by the healing of the bleeding woman,
to give this anxious, grief stricken dad,
enough space and enough courage *to believe*
that Jesus indeed had the power and desire
to perform miracles, even bring his little girl back to life.

Maybe in that pause,
the leader saw the woman, *really* saw her,
to see his own need reflected in her eyes,
and to recognize her as someone's daughter too.

How long the daughter was ill we don't know.
It might have been 12 days, certainly not 12 years.
But we do know that she was his *only* child.

How tightly we cling to those we love,
beyond our own lives!

When he asked Jesus to go to her, he let go of her,
so that Jesus could hold her.

Even though he was powerful in the Synagogue,
he had no power to hold death at bay for his child.
No human is exempt from these feelings of powerlessness.
The woman was no stranger to powerlessness.

Faith is the miracle amidst powerlessness.
Wasn't it for the crowds sake, that Jesus stated the
obvious, "Daughter, *your faith has made you well*;
go in peace, and be healed of your disease."
Can't you just hear the shocked crowd?
"Ooh!" they might have exclaimed.
His clothes weren't magic.
Her touch didn't do it. It was her faith.

Barbara Brown Taylor, author of *Bread of Angels*,
suggests that the miracle wouldn't be so much
about saving the leader's child, as it would be that
*the leader would still believe and have faith
regardless of what awaited him at home,*

no matter what the outcome of Jesus' visit.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' home,
the mourners and funeral participants were already at work.
If she was dead, she too was now untouchable.
But again, Jesus throws out the holy rule book.
He also throws everyone out of the house
except the parents, Peter, James and John.
No one believed that she was only sleeping.
It didn't matter that they laughed at Him.
We know the nay-sayers, the ones we bump up against,
the ones that tell us that it's too late for miracles.
Jesus took her by the hand, she got up and walked.
Can you imagine?! It might look something like this:
the mother faints...
the father is trying to hold himself and his wife upright.
The child, who probably doesn't have the foggiest clue,
and who may have not eaten for some time, tries to take
the whole scene in.
Jesus very pragmatically directs the parents
to get her something to eat.
But the second part? - not to tell anyone what happened?
Well, there's a lot of people waiting outside!

And I'll bet *none of their lives* were ever the same.

God doesn't delight in death,
as we heard in the Wisdom of Solomon.

Only generative, life-giving power comes from God.
So *when* (not if) we are overshadowed by darkness,
illness, disease, financial burden, depression, despair -
whatever saps our strength, *God is there* to restore us.
May we believe, and stretch out our hands
to graze the hem of Jesus' robe,
wherever we are. *Amen. Amma Susan*