

Psalm 130 and Mark 5:21-43

What "healing touches" do you remember? I still remember vividly the feel of my mother's hand when she stroked my hair as a little girl. We went for rides in the car, I would put my head in her lap...this was before seatbelts and car seats...and my mother stroked my hair.

I also remember vividly the feel of my baby Anna's head against my lips when I kissed her... before her hair grew in! Something about a baby's head....

Our stories today are about touch... healing touch and the freedom it brings.

Let us be in prayer: Infinite Love, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts together be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Hopefully you were able to visualize this story within a story in our Gospel reading this morning... Such powerful storytelling of the way Jesus responds to two separate requests for healing.

In one, a powerful leader of the synagogue, whose is named Jairus, advocates for his little 12-year old daughter who is close to death...he is supported by a crowd...he has prestige, he is probably wealthy...yet Jairus had heard of God's healing through this person of Jesus....Jairus falls at Jesus' feet and begs him to come and lay his hands on his daughter at home. They begin to go there with the crowd pressing in all around.

But there is an interruption. One writer said that Jesus was good at "multi-tasking." A woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years... that number 12 comes up a lot....She is a poor woman who has no advocates. But she sees Jesus in the crowd and has faith enough to reach out and just touch the hem of his clothes. Instantly Jesus feels some healing power leave from him and he asks "Who touched me?" The woman comes trembling but he calls her "daughter" and tells her that her faith has made her well....to go in peace.

They continue on even though they have heard that it is now too late for Jairus' daughter...but this time it is Jesus who reaches out...he takes the girl by the hand and says, "Talitha cum"...little girl, get up....in his own Aramaic language.

Two healings. A poor woman who would have been considered unclean...and the daughter of a wealthy religious leader...and *both are treated with the same healing*

and liberating love. What do you think Mark is telling us about Jesus and the power of God's love in these wonderful healing stories?

Reaching out to touch...beyond the borders of convention. God's healing love knows no boundaries. Even at the beginning of the story, it says that Jesus once again "crossed over to the other side"...now the hearers would have known that Gentiles, non-Jews, lived on the other side and Jesus, the Jew, crossed back and forth...between Jews and Gentiles, between the wealthy and the poor...between the well and unwell. God's infinite love, *knows no* boundaries...God, forgive us, when we do.

I cannot hear this story without thinking of immigrant parents who are begging to be reunited with their children. Longing to feel the touch of their young sons and daughters after such egregious separations ... As people of faith, we must demand that every effort be made to unify these families...to try to understand the situations from which these immigrants, who are our neighbors, are fleeing; to practice compassion, and to understand that our immigration "laws" are inconsistent and unjust... even cruel and discriminatory!

Pam Porter, whom many of you know, has a daughter-in-law who is from Thailand. Pam and Brian's son, Tim, met her while working there. They married and have spent 8 years in this country....going through all kinds of hoops and spending hundreds and hundreds of dollars...for her to get U.S. citizenship...which she finally did last year. This is an educated woman with an American husband with some means...imagine a poor family fleeing from violence with only a satchel of belongings, with no advocate, not speaking the language...and simply trying to make a better life....as most of our ancestors also did for us....

In this passage, Jesus gave the shortest sermon ever...and you may wish I would follow suit...Jesus told Jairus, "Do not fear...only believe." How hard is this? Do not fear, only believe.

Now we know that miracles do not always happen...the way we pray. I found something profound in the writing of John Pilch who said that healing is better understood as "the restoration of meaning to people's lives---no matter what their physical outcome." Whoa...think of that. The miracle comes in the restoration of *meaning* to a person's life! How many of us have had health issues...that changed the way we look at our lives? How many of us know the freedom that comes with healing?

Frederick Buechner puts us in the place of the little girl, as Jesus takes our hands to lift us up. He writes, "You who believe, and you who sometimes believe and sometimes don't believe much of anything, and you who would give almost anything to believe if only you could... 'Get up.'... Jesus gives life not only to the dead, but to those of us who are "only partly alive...who much of the time live with our lives closed to the...wild beauty and miracle of every day." "This," Buechner says, "is the power at the heart of this story... the power of new life, new hope, and new being."

Can you feel God's hand reaching to lift us up... to live more fully? To move us to love one another more? Anne Lamott says "I wish grace and healing were more of an abracadabra kind of thing....that delicate silver bells would ring to announce grace's arrival. But no, it's clog and slog and scotch on the floor, in the silence, in the dark....most of the time."

God cannot reach out to lift us up...if our hands are clenched tightly in fear...God cannot free us of all that ails us...if our hearts are closed. So let us open....and experience the miracle of love....that brings new meaning to our lives!

Amen...