

Pastor Kevin Garman

Theme: Healing

Scripture: Mark 5:21-43

June 27th, 2021

Last week, we looked at the Gospel message of Mark and looked at the parable of the mustard seed. We learned the Kingdom of God is not some mighty empire coming to take over the world, but the Kingdom of God is bursting forth from the muck, the grime, the dirt, and rust of the world to build and see something new within each of ourselves and one another. This week we continue with the Gospel of Mark, but we talk about a familiar story of Jesus healing two people. He heals a woman who has exhausted every avenue crying for help and heals a young girl who is thought to have died.

The point of healing is not to only see the miracles of the story, nor is it a call to heal everyone or everything, but when we heal each other, we heal through our presence, we heal through our embrace, we heal through our food and drink, we heal by seeing the Divine in you and you seeing the Divine in me. In one of my favorite moments of the J.R.R. Tolkien's, Lord of the Rings, Frodo Baggins, the young hobbit, taken away from everything he has know in this world reflects on the weight and the heaviness he feels with the burden carrying the Ring, which is the epitome of all evil. Frodo says, "I wish it need not have happened in my time." His dearest friend and mentor, Gandalf the Gray, pensively and compassionately looks to his friend whom he has called to vanquish all evil and says this, "So do I, and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us." Our question for today is this. What do we need to do with the time that is given to us in a moment in life where deep healing and reconciliation need to take place in our country and the world around us?

Today I share with you a story of a modern-day miracle; a story of a friend from graduate school, who we will call, Anna. Anna and I met during my internship at Iliff School of Theology, as she was one of several dedicated college students who spent their Thursday evenings putting together over 75 bagged lunches for the homeless community in Denver, and she was one of the dedicated members who also joined us each Friday to deliver those sandwiches in Civic Center Park. Anna and I were also in the same friends' circles since she was good friends with a few friends of mine who also attended our worship service on Sundays.

One day my colleague who was the United Methodist campus minister at the University of Denver and colleague at University Park UMC received a call that Anna was in the hospital. Anna had an underlying health condition she was not aware of and was rushed to the ICU. After a couple days of waiting, we heard the terrible news. Anna had gone into a coma, her body was not responding to anything the doctors were doing, she was hooked up to an Ecmo machine, and the doctors had told her parents and

family she had less than a 5% chance of survival. They said it was time to prepare for her death.

The campus minister held a vigil for healing and prayer where we shared stories, prayers, and songs of Anna hoping she would somehow pull through this. There were tears, lamentations, and pain shared all throughout the room. We even had our hysteria moments, like they do in the gospel reading, where we laughed to express our grief and pain. Yet by miracle unbeknownst to any of us, Anna continued to fight for her life and miraculously recovered walking out of the hospital just weeks later. She is now happily married and still spreading her love and justice throughout the world.

My Aunt Christina, who is more like an older sister to me than my aunt, has always shared her understanding of the miracle stories from her perspective as a nurse. She and I share many interests ranging from movies, politics, music, and much more, but I always love our conversations about theology. As a nurse, she has encountered several moments where patients should not have lived, but somehow, somehow, they have defied all odds, all barriers, and have pulled out even when no one believed in them. Quite literally, her job is healing people, and today's gospel stories reflect that same ethos of healing, just like Anna who was healed and Christina who is a healer for a living, we see Christ is the healer of the world.

Jesus' ministry has began to spread all throughout the Mediterranean region by this point in the Gospel of Mark. He started his early ministry in healing people, and he continues on in these stories today with healing people. He was crossing over the Sea of Galilee in the story where he calms the storm, and in this section of the story, he and his disciples have just sailed across the Sea of Galilee again returning back region of Galilee, which is now North Israel, North Palestine, and Southern Lebanon. The region of Galilee was predominantly Jewish, which gives important context to today's story as we see many people approach Jesus as if they already know him. This is where Jesus grew up and where Jesus chose to begin his ministry. These are Jesus' people whom he has come to heal and save.

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat^[a] to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ 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." ²⁴ So he went with him. (NRSV)

We are first introduced to the character named, Jairus, a leader in the local synagogue. Jairus does not ask, nor demand Jesus come with him to heal his daughter, but he pleads Jesus to help. There is a great dichotomy at play here. Jesus and his caring response represents the heart, seeing compassion and feeling that pain of the father pleading for his daughter's life, and it is juxtaposed to the legalistic law which refuses to allow him to touch a dead person due to Levitical law. Regardless of what the law says, verse 24 says Jesus, "went with him." They participated together in the presence of one

another, and Jesus didn't ponder on whether it was beneficial, he didn't means test the effectiveness of past healings, but Jesus left immediately with this pleading father.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." (NRSV)

What stands out to me in this passage is the description of the crowd. "A swarm of people" (CEB) and the "crowd pressed on him" drawing a parallel to the storm Jesus just calmed as they crossed the Sea of Galilee. The description of the place this sick woman must have been in is heartbreaking. She is suffering, she has spent all she had, gone to the best physicians, and no help was there as her condition continues to get worse. She had only heard about the healing powers of this man named, Jesus, but all she could think of doing was finding him and touching his cloak. She finds her moment, reaches out in this swarm of people surrounding Jesus and hopes her effort will at most give her a moment of peace. Immediately, she is healed. Immediately just like when Jesus says, "Silence. Be still!"

Jesus has enough presence in the midst of this chaos to be mindful and present enough to know someone touched his cloak. So, he poses the question, "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30 CEB). I love the disciples' response, because I imagine it was sarcastic as they turn and look at the swarm of people around them. However, Jesus begins searching for the person who touched him.

The sick woman comes forward and is described as, "full of fear and trembling." I imagine this is how Peter felt as he stepped out from the boat to take Jesus' hand. Jesus, being a teacher and student of the law, would have immediately known that he would have been unclean because this sick woman who bleeding touched him. Yet, Jesus defies the Levitical law, getting himself into some good trouble, and not only liberates her status as an unclean person, but Jesus liberates her from the stereotypes surrounding her womanhood. He acknowledges the hard work, the pain, the endurance, and the suffering she must have undergone to get to the place she was standing now, and Jesus does the unthinkable by touching this woman who has fallen to his feet and acknowledging her humanity. In both these stories shared today and the parallel story I am comparing to with Jesus calming the storm, Jesus' touch heals and comforts the

people he is healing and challenging. Let us not forget about one of the main characters in this story, Jairus, who's daughter is still thought to be dead.

Other leaders from the synagogue have made their way to Jesus and are now questioning why Jesus is playing with this poor man's heart as he comes to heal this dead girl. Jesus responds with peace once again by looking to Jairus saying, "Do not be afraid, just keep trusting" (Mark 5:36 CEB). Taking with him his most trusted friends and followers, Peter, James, and John, Jesus and the three arrive at the home greeted by weeping, wailing, crying, and lamenting. Although this is different than many of the funerals we have most likely experienced in this church, it was a common, and still is today in various cultures and regions of our country and the world, to lament at one's death by expressing your emotions in a mournful, sorrowful way as you literally scream your pain out into the world. Jesus asks, what's going on, the child is only asleep.

Now, I confess, I would have laughed at Jesus in this moment too, and may have let the little bit of Florida Man I have in my blood say a few choice words to Jesus as my family and friends are grieving the death of a child and he tells me, "she's just sleeping." Everyone's lamenting turns into laughter as they must have been hysterical and confused by this statement. Jesus calming walks over and touches the child's hand. He recites the words in ancient Aramaic, *Talitha koum* or translated into English as, "Little girl, get up!" (5:41 CEB). This is not a suggestion, but a commandment. Just as Jesus commands the seas and the winds of creation, Jesus commands all life to be healed.

What did we learn from today's gospel stories? Where do we need to heal? Are you in need of Jesus telling you, "_____, get up!" Our country needs healing all the way from the redwoods of California to the gulfs of Florida, from the plains of Nebraska to the rolling hills of Tennessee, from the lakes in Minnesota to the pine forests of Maine. Our world needs healing from our Palestinian siblings to our Russian siblings, from our neighbors in Mexico to our neighbors in Canada, from the people of Australia to the people of Taiwan, our world needs healing and will always need healing. Our suffering is inevitable. But just as the Buddha and Jesus tell us that suffering is inevitable, they also tell us our suffering will one day end as well. Let us be a part of the healing of this world instead of the destruction of it. Let us build bridges to create the Kingdom of God. Let us do all the good we can, with all the time we have, with as little harm as we can, to do our part in the healing of our world. Amen.

The message is understood in deeper, different ways through the power of music. Here are the lyrics to "Wounded World that Cries for Healing" The Faith We Sing 2177.

*"Wounded world that cries for healing, here we hold each other's pain,
wounded systems, bruised and bleeding bear the load, the scars of strain;
dollars ration out compassion, hard decisions rule the day,
Jesus of the healing Spirit, free us to another way!"*

*Through our nation's spent frustration, through the corridors of stress
may there move a kindlier wisdom all may feel, and all may bless;*

*tax and tithes are for a purpose shared to shield the poor and weak:
past the symptoms of our sickness let the voice of justice speak.*

*Honor those whose loving spirit nurses hope, restores and heals,
towel and basin used in service like the Christ who comes and kneels;
in the tending, in the mending may we see the right and fair,
in our common quest for wholeness heal each other by our care.”*

If you would like to like to listen to the song, then here is a link to a version posted on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5pdNp2oGLA>

This version was performed on January 29th, 2021 by a women’s quintet and the organist at First United Methodist Church at Chicago Temple.