

“The Promise of Healing”

Salado UMC—1 July 2018: Sixth after Pentecost

Preaching Text: Mark 5:21-43—Year B

Salado, Texas 76571

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“To the soul, there is hardly anything more healing than friendship”

—(Thomas Moore).

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If following Mark’s Gospel, as our worship schedule offers, then we see Mark’s story of Jesus. The master stills a natural storm (4:35-41) and casts out demons (5:1-20). These accounts show Jesus’ ability and power over nature and unclean spirits. Yet, for many, a pertinent question remains. Does Jesus care about our human problems? Our text addresses this question in remarkable ways. So, hear the day’s lesson.

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat 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. 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.”

³⁵ 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?” ³⁶ But overhearing ^[b] what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” ⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,”

which means, “Little girl, get up!”⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat (Mark 5:21-43).

Jesus traveled by boat, as Mark writes, “to the other side.” Jairus, a synagogue leader, falls at Jesus’ feet, begging: “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.” As we expect Jesus goes with Jairus. But . . . a funny thing happens on the way to Jairus’ house.

In a crowd was an unspecified woman. She “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.” About Jesus she said to herself, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” Thus, when she touched Jesus’ garment, immediately her bleeding stopped. After the disciples discussed who touched Jesus, this woman makes herself known. She confesses that she touched Jesus’ robe. Then Jesus said to her: “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease.”

As this astonishing scene plays out, can you imagine Jairus’ anxiety, who after all, was first in line for Jesus’ healing ministry? While people marveled over the woman, “some people came from the leader’s house to say, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’ ” But Jesus said: “Do not fear, only believe.” We all know the rest of the story. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with him. When they arrive at Jairus’ house there is pandemonium. People weep and wail. This should not surprise us, for if death is the final enemy, then death of a child is completely beyond our human comprehension.

Jesus informs those gathered that the child is not dead, but simply sleeping. As we might expect, “they laughed at him.” But Jesus understood his mission. Putting everyone outside, Jesus went and said to the child: “ ‘*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).” Believe it or not, twelve years numbered both the woman’s misery, and the child’s age.

Intriguingly, Mark uses the Greek word “*sozo*” here. It is a word that means not only healing, but is also a New Testament word for “salvation” or “being saved.” Thus, Mark shrewdly wishes readers to recognize that healing and salvation are in concert. A Jewish word we sometimes hear, “Shalom” means “Peace.” Shalom is the Hebrew equivalent to wholeness and salvation. Real peace means that people live wholly with God. This is what authentic peace or salvation or health or healing means.

Consequently, we find the answer to our original question, “Does Jesus care about our common problems?” We see Jesus prove his care for us in the healing and salvation of both individuals who have no one else with whom to turn. As Mark’s Jesus later pleads to the religious leaders: “Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember” (Mark 8:18)?

Practically speaking, however, Jesus also helps us understand in what way to deal with interruptions. Notice how Mark handles the woman's interruption of Jesus—who is, after all, on a serious mission. Jesus addresses the most critical calamity as he comes to each. Without discounting the little girl's peril, we may guess that Jesus knows what he is doing. Not only that, but Jesus does what he can at the time.

Mark often uses a technique of inserting one story into another as he reveals here. If you would like to see other places where Mark writes in this way, then look up the story of Peter's interruption of Jesus at prayer (1:35-39), or when a leper interrupts Jesus as he preaches (1:40-45). When Jesus is "speaking the word" a paralytic interrupts as well (2:2). Despite the anxious Jairus standing by, Jesus does what he can when he can for those who encounter him.

I like what the Roman Catholic priest and scholar Henry Nouwen once wrote about interruptions: "You know . . . my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work."

If Jesus is not too busy for a life and death situation, such as the circumstance that called him to Jairus' house to interrupt him, then what would be the implications for our lives as disciples? Sometimes we simply do not hear the cry of those who need whatever little bit of healing and salvation we might offer to people in Jesus' name.

So, the next time someone interrupts us, perhaps we can take a page from Mark. Have we ever considered that our ministry may be summarized by our interruptions?

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