

Pastor T.C. Arnold
24th Sunday after Trinity
Matthew 9:18-26
November 11th, 2018

In the Gospel text for today, Jesus was offering a two for one special on miracles. He was on His way to visit the dead daughter of a ruler when a woman who was bleeding... for twelve years... found her way into the midst of the crowd in order to covertly touch the fringe of His garment. We might think, at first glance, that this two for one special on miracles are so very different. But with Jesus, just like at Walmart, the two for one special includes products of the same kind. At Walmart, when you buy one stick of deodorant, you might get the second free. That's how two for one works. You can't buy deodorant and then get a free TV. It must be two products that are the same, or almost the same. And by comparison, the two for one special Jesus was offering on miracles was very much alike even though, when we first look at these two miracles, we might think they are so different. Let's see how they compare.

First, both ladies were called daughters. The ruler calls the girl, "my daughter," and Jesus tells the woman who touched the bottom part of his garment in the crowd daughter when He says, "*Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.*" Second, both the girl and the woman are unclean. The girl because she was dead... which made her ritually unclean... and then the woman who was bleeding for twelve years was also ritually unclean. Finally, the child was already dead and the woman was thought to be slowly dying because the life-blood within her would not stop coming out of her. So, both were associated in some way with death. Jesus hands out a true two for one miracle that was actually much more alike than different. So now, let's take a closer look at these three similarities because each takes on a special hope and promise for you and me today as well.

First, both females are referred to as "daughters." Now, we get it for the daughter of the ruler (who was Jairus, by the way), but the woman being called daughter is a little more peculiar. Relationally, we often speak of Jesus as our brother... like a sibling and not like a father... to whom we often reserve the term, "father," for THE Heavenly Father. Jesus says, "my daughter." Is this because he is on his way to heal the daughter of the ruler and wanted to connect what had just happened with what "will" happen? I think so. Our Lord is very good at tying things together... unifying what He does in the Scriptures you can see similarities. And that is the purpose for us as well. It all comes back to putting us in the same story.... Our God who says to you today... daughter... or son... your faith has made you well. And by the way, the word for "making well" is the same word used in other parts of the New Testament which means "to save." So instead of saying your faith has made you well, rather, we can say, "your faith has *saved* you." This is much better for us who might not think of ourselves as being physically sick. However, we are sick – sin sick. And your faith has saved you.

Regarding the second and the third points... about uncleanness and about death... is this: both the girl and the woman are ritually and ceremonially unclean because dead bodies are unclean and the discharge of blood, according to the Old Testament ceremonial laws, makes a person unclean. One was unclean because she was dead. The other was bleeding and thought to be dying. A couple of things come to mind here. First, think of the woman. She sneaks up on Jesus. She had to. If she would have been recognized, she would have been disposed of. The penalty for intentionally ignoring purification laws could be expulsion from the homeland or even death. She was taking a huge risk by weaving her way through the crowd – covertly – and touching Jesus. Also, think of what 12 years of being unclean meant for her. She would have to remain separate from that which is clean. She couldn't come near others without causing them to be unclean. She

couldn't go to the temple like everyone else. She was taken out of society to live alone in her own "uncleanliness."

Yet, she is willing to risk everything. And why not, she has nothing to really lose except her uncleanliness. She has no life otherwise. She has no community to call her own. She's not even fit to come before the Lord to hear the public reading of the Word or to make sacrifice in the temple. She risks her life to touch Jesus. There was no other way to be clean. Touching what was purely clean was what made her completely clean.

And then there is this girl – this dead girl. As soon as she dies she's untouchable. Dead bodies are unclean. But then here is Jesus and what does He do? Jesus told those people there to mourn her death to go away because she was not dead. They laughed and we would have, too. Yet here comes Jesus, approaching the dead unclean girl – and taking her by the hand. Jesus touched her... again there is touch. Jesus touched the girl and she became clean... more than clean... she became alive.

It's remarkable that Jesus touches her. She's dead. No one is to touch her... lest they become unclean too. Let this serve as a commentary for our lives. Many of us think of ourselves as unclean... too imperfect to be touched and purified... that is, forgiven by Jesus. But there is no such thing. I know, but your sins are extra bad. How could he touch you and make you whole... you're too broken. You're too sin-stained and dirty.

Let me go one step further for those who think this way... You are sinning when you think your sins are too big for Jesus. For some reason you think you can outdo God. You think you have done enough to go beyond God's mercy... even though God says this is not even close to being possible. This demonstrates a lack of trust that God said that He forgives all your sins. Yet, we doubt. Stop doubting and believe. Repent and know that Jesus cleanses you from all unrighteousness... all uncleanness. You can't outdo God. You cannot out-dead Him. He comes to take your hand... to touch you back to life.

Here's another takeaway from the story. This "two for one" miracle tells us something very important about Jesus. He listened to the call of a synagogue ruler who risked everything for the sake of his daughter. He risked his relationships, he risked his status in the Jewish community, he risked his very livelihood... and I think any of us would have done the same. Jesus hears his call to Him and He goes. At the beckoning of those who call out to Him, Jesus is there. For us too. And then while He is on His way, He is also with the crowd... and even this woman who was supposed to be nowhere near Him. But He was with her as well.

It doesn't matter where we are, the Lord is with us. He tells us to call to Him in the day of trouble. For sure we are. Yet, even when we are floundering through life and we forget to come to Him in that day of trouble, God is still there for you. The blood from Calvary's holy mount does not just flow when you remember to pray. His baptism does not cease to live within you when you stop thinking about it for a moment. And, when life challenges you the most, and you call out to God with questions like – "Why, Lord?" Fear not... He is with you always to the very end of the age. You see, He has already healed you. "Take heart, daughter... son... for your faith has 'saved' you."

Jesus offers a two for one deal in the text. But all you need is a one for one deal. Jesus' life for yours. And that deal has already been done. Thanks be to God. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.