

Title: Faith in Desperation

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, we pray for people who find themselves in desperate times and are looking to others for help. We pray for family reunions. Instill in them and us a faith that can move mountains and drain caves that in you we can find healing grace, through our great healer, Christ Jesus, we pray. Amen.

A week ago, yesterday, twelve boys and their soccer coach entered a cave in Thailand. Then the rains came. Water tends to rise in this cave system when it rains. Chambers flood. This is likely what happened to this team. They needed to back up in the cave so they would not drown. They are still there.

As time goes on, the desperation grows. It is hoped that the boys are strong enough to survive this long. The boys are aged from 11 to 16. Thai navy divers have tried to go in, but their oxygen tanks prevent them going through narrow chambers. Others tried to go in, unsuccessfully. Some rescuers were injured and evacuated via ambulance.

The rains have not let up. There are still months to go in Thailand's rainy season. Pumps are running to try to drain the caves. Holes are being drilled to try to help drain the caves. Food and supplies are being dropped through four air shafts in the hope that the boys are below one of those shafts.

Thailand has asked for foreign help. Thirty U.S. military personnel have arrived with the plan that they will rappel down a shaft in hopes of finding the team. U.K. divers have arrived on the scene. Yesterday, Australian rescue teams arrived.

Thailand Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said, "There has to be faith. Faith makes everything a success. Faith in the actions of officials. Faith in our children who are strong and vigorous. Everything will go back to normal." Twelve boys have faith that they will be rescued.

Desperation often provokes panic. Desperation can also provoke ingenuity. "How do I get out of this mess?" And so, our brains discard everything else to concentrate on a solution for our trouble.

For two people on the Sea of Galilee 2,000 years ago, after all else has failed, they decided to put their trust in an itinerate healer, originally from Nazareth.

After Jesus ordered a bunch of demons into pigs who drowned themselves into the lake, Jesus took a boat to go back to the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee. As the boat approached the shore, a large crowd waited for him.

In that crowd, was one of the leaders of the local synagogue. Mark does not identify the town. In rural Galilee, most synagogues could not afford to hire their own rabbi, so the synagogue council ran the synagogue and presided over sabbath services. The president would pick someone to read the Torah and maybe the prophets then someone was picked or moved to speak about what was read.

Mark does name this synagogue leader, Jairus. Jairus was desperate. His daughter was gravely ill. Jairus fell to Jesus's feet, begging Jesus to come heal his daughter. Jesus agreed. In this act, Jairus is publicly transferring his authority and status to Jesus.

Mark interrupts his story about Jairus and his daughter with another story. This new story takes place as Jesus is on his way to Jairus' house. The crowd follows and presses on Jesus. Have you ever seen a soccer game played by small kids? They move around the field like in a scrum, going wherever the ball is going. That may be what this scene of Jesus and the crowd looked like.

We have been to Paris once. While there, we visited the Louvre. The Mona Lisa is on the third floor. We saw other exhibits as we made our way to the Mona Lisa. There was a mini gift shop before we got to the Mona Lisa room. She gets her own room. We joined the line just outside the Mona Lisa room. Other people packed in behind us as we slowly shuffled our feet into the room.

As we turned the corner, we could see her. There were about fifty or more people ahead of us also slowly shuffling their feet to get closer. Museum staff were yelling out near the painting in French and English for people not to take flash photos as flashes of light illuminated the room from cameras.

We eventually made our way in front of the Mona Lisa, paused for a short while, and shuffled off to give the people behind us their turn to gawk. This also might be what this walk Jesus took to Jairus' house looked like. Jairus who is desperate to get Jesus quickly to his home, is slowed down by a shuffling crowd.

Mark introduces us to a woman who suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years. She saw many physicians and none helped. She has spent all her money for a cure and has nothing to lose. Mark implies she would have been better off if she had seen no physicians. Of course, the practice of medicine was very primitive then.

The one thing this woman has in common with Jairus is that she was desperate. If this condition was not cured, she would likely soon die. She felt she could not speak to Jesus directly like Jairus did. Of course, that was not acceptable behavior for a woman in that culture. Instead, she developed a stealth plan. She was convinced that she could be cured if she just touched Jesus' cloak. No one would be the wiser, especially Jesus.

Somehow, she was able to pierce her way through the crowd to get close enough to touch Jesus. Had the crowd known about her condition, they would have parted for her because she was unclean. She was an outcast.

She made it to Jesus and touched his cloak. Immediately, she was cured.

Jesus, though, immediately knew something was amiss. Power had left Jesus. He knew how it happened. "Who touched my clothes?"

The disciples were incredulous. "What do you mean who touched your clothes? Everyone touched your clothes. All we can do is shuffle our feet because of the crowd."

Jesus stopped. Jairus was likely getting more anxious. Jesus is not hurrying to his daughter. Jesus looked around to try to discover who robbed him of energy. Fear and guilt gripped the woman whose wild scheme worked. She fell down before Jesus and confessed her action. After sharing her story of woe and desperation, Jesus credits this daughter of Israel's healing to her faith and bade the outcast to go in peace.

Mark says that power left Jesus to cure the woman. I am also struck that many people touched Jesus, but it was just this woman who received healing. The explanation I have come up with for these two observations is that the power Mark refers to is the Holy Spirit. Remember, Jesus received the Holy Spirit at his baptism. Of all the people who touched Jesus, the Holy Spirit sensed a need in this woman and acted. The woman is no longer socially dead.

Jesus was interrupted with bad news from Jairus' house. Jairus' daughter died. They suggested that Jairus shouldn't bother Jesus any further. Jesus reassures Jairus bidding him to give up fear and have faith. The crowd and the disciples were dismissed, except for Jesus' inner circle of Peter, James, and John.

When they arrived at Jairus' house, mourning was greatly evident. They could hear the wailing before they got to the house. Jesus challenged the mourners. Not very good pastoral care.

They knew the child to be dead and mourned. Jesus either knew the child was not dead but appeared dead or Jesus knew he would bring the child back to life. Jesus only says she was sleeping. It is not clear if Jesus was being literal or metaphoric. Or Jesus may not want it yet known that he can raise the dead. The mourners laughed at Jesus.

Jesus then kicked everyone out except Jairus and his wife. They went to see the child. Mark quotes Jesus' Aramaic telling the little girl to get up. The twelve-year-old girl got up and walked around. Her parents were amazed. Jesus ordered them to tell no one what happened and told them to feed her.

There are three things in common with these two stories. Both Jairus and the woman fall down before Jesus. The length of time of the woman's condition and the age of Jairus' daughter is the same. Jairus and the woman were desperate and placed their faith in Jesus.

Twelve is a strong number for Israel. There are twelve tribes. It is no coincidence that there were twelve apostles. For Israel to be whole there must be twelve. But alas, Israel is no longer whole. Twelve was the age

when a girl may be married. For the woman and the girl, twelve makes them whole. There are twelve boys hoping for rescue.

There is a fourth common theme. Faith. Jairus has faith that Jesus will cure his daughter. The woman literally reaches out in faith that just touching Jesus' clothing will heal her. A leader tells desperate rescuers and families to have faith that a soccer team will be rescued.

Jesus accepts the top of the social ladder, Jairus, and Jesus accepts the bottom of the social ladder, the hemorrhagic woman. Human need is human need no matter where you are in society. Jesus does not use pejoratives for the unclean woman. She is healed and restored and is treated as a human being and not an animal. Jairus receives the same grace.

It is my impression you are not desperate, but there is some anxiety. You are in the midst of a process. The result of this process is the next priest to serve you. Have faith and pray. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be with the candidates who are discerning a call to Trinity and pray for the committee and the vestry that they are open to the Holy Spirit in calling the person who is right for Trinity at this time. Your faith will reward you.

Text: **Mark 5:21–43** (NRSV)

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat^f 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

^f Other ancient authorities lack *in the boat*#

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^g 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.

^g Or *ignoring*; other ancient authorities read *hearing*

¹ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Mk 5:21–43). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.