

I come to you in the name of one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We have two stories today. It might seem odd at first glance that Mark would choose to insert a full story and illustration into the middle of what appears to be a perhaps entirely unrelated different story. But, upon closer inspection it is clear that these stories share a question at their core: what is the power of faith?

The two stories today, Jairus' daughter and the hemorrhaging woman, are both comments on the centrality of faith in experiencing the fullest expression of God's power as available through the man of Jesus Christ. In the first story, we have a religious leader who in using his position and power to gain access, puts aside his position and power to beg Christ for his help in healing his sick daughter. This is the act of a loving father who is not prepared for the grief that will come with his daughter's death. This is the act of a humbled man who knows the truth that is in front of him, knows that Christ can perform this healing, has faith that his request will be fulfilled, because he has faith that Christ can fulfill it. In the second story we have a woman that has exhausted everything at her disposal, money, time, social standing, and the result has been nothing, except financial ruin and ostracization from her community because there is no answer for her condition. She comes to Christ with the faith that all it will take is a brush of his clothes in order to make her well. This is the act of a broken woman who nonetheless will not let her opportunity, her faith, pass her by.

Both of these stories ask questions about the utility of faith, about the scope and range of faith. They also in their requests and actions ask questions about the

nature of Christ's power, about the extent to which he can perform what is being asked. This question, of the power of faith, of the nature of Christ's ability in this moment, echoes throughout this story and continues to echo for us today. Do we not wonder what the true power of faith is? Do we not wonder what the nature of Christ's ability is, here and now? I think we can find our answers in the follow through of these interconnected stories.

"Your faith has made you well."

"Little girl, get up!"

With a crowd pressing in around him, clogging his path, impeding his journey, crying out for a healing touch, crying out for Christ to look upon them, one woman pushes through to touch his cloak. And this woman is immediately healed. And Jesus knows. He feels the power go forth from him. A surge leaving his body to make another whole. But, he isn't angry. He applauds her. Daughter, he says, your faith has made you well, go in peace. The woman has expressed her faith in the purest way, by acting on it, by fully believing that all she needed was a simple brush with the Lord and the disease that had impacted her for years would immediately be remedied. This woman claims her healing through her faith. She claims her right to be whole. She claims her right to be made whole.

And while this story speaks to the power of faith, to owning one's faith, there is also the element of this story taking place in the middle of a much more traditional story. A powerful man has pushed his way through the crowds to claim his faith and have Christ heal his daughter. This woman than, knowing her place,

must claim her faith secretly, sneakily, because there is to be no private audience for her. And, we've faltered to this day in creating a system and structure of power that forces those who are on the margins to claim their healing in faith through simply brushing the cloak of Christ as he passes by, as he is hurried into a private audience with someone who is an authority, someone who has power. We take these two stories today, and, rather than being impacted by the audacity of faith that this woman had, we relegate her to an addendum, and allow our systems and structures that support the powerful to continue while those on the margins are forced to act from within the crowd as they fight to catch a small part of the savior.

When we create false barriers to the Lord, we do a disservice to ourselves, and in particular to those who need healing. And yet, even with these false barriers in place, those on the margin are claiming their faith, claiming their right to healing. This week we begin the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, and one of the very first things that will happen at this General Convention is a listening liturgy in the House of Bishops for those who have stood up and said #MeToo, but not only #MeToo, but #MeToo and it was my priest, it was my colleague, it was my bishop, it was my camp counselor, it was the Church. This is an official statement from the Church hierarchy that these voices must be heard, must be honored. And, this is important.

But it also leaves one wondering what is to come of this? Because these voices are already claiming, have already claimed, their right to healing through faith. They have brushed the cloak, it's why they're still with us, why they're still

here to have their voices heard. We are seeing that those who are able to claim the power of faith for themselves will do so, and will be rewarded for it, but too many have been made so broken that the concept of faith carries with it hurt, carries with it distrust, carries with it a trigger to moments in time that should never have happened. What of their voices? How do we heal those who have already died, spiritually if not also physically? How do we not laugh in our grief when Christ says, she is only sleeping?

First, our response cannot begin and end with a listening liturgy with anonymous stories at General Convention. Second, we must again turn to scripture and the truth of power in faith as expressed in the other story today.

Jesus raises the dead today. He may say to those gathered that she is only sleeping, that he can rouse her with a simply command, but let's be honest for a minute, she's dead. And it's been more than a minute or two. Now, she has not been laid in the tomb yet, but she is very much dead. And yet, for Christ, this appears to be no concern. The reach of death cannot stand against the power of Christ, the power of faith as found in the belief that Christ can make things whole. Christ says to her, "Little girl, get up!" and she immediately got up and walked around. All who witness this are amazed and are also ordered by Christ to not say a word of what they have seen. The faith that has facilitated this healing is not a faith of experience, but rather a true faith that in asking what has been asked for will be received. And, it's about time we take Jairus' lead and start asking for the healing of the wounded, that we ask for the healing of the dead.

In her comedy special *Nanette*, Australian comedian Hannah Gadsby made the following comments about the announcement that she needs to quit comedy:

“Do you understand what self-deprecation means when it comes from someone who already exists in the margins?” she says. “It’s not humility. It’s humiliation. I put myself down in order to speak, in order to seek permission to speak, and I simply will not do that anymore...You learn from the part of the story you focus on...I need to tell my story properly.”

The power in claiming her story, of taking her story back, even from herself, of owning her right to healing, of owning her right to being raised from the dead, strikes me as exactly what Christ is trying to teach us in these two interconnected stories. That when those who can, do, we must honor their right to claim their healing, to claim their right of access, to acknowledge that we have put barriers up that Christ never did. And, when we know of those who cannot, who are too wounded, who are already dead, we must go to Christ and humble ourselves, we must know that in our faith they too can be healed right now if we’re unselfish enough to seek it because we love them, because they are our siblings, our family in Christ.

I want to make it clear too, that I do not think that someone’s access point to Christ is through me, through those who are in power. But, the church in particular taught for far too long that it is through the hierarchy that we are drawn closer to God, to Christ. And in order to seek healing for those who have been so hurt that they feel the message of God and Christ is one of a hurtful, corrupt, abusive church,

we, those who are in and of the hierarchy, have to be willing to humble ourselves, to acknowledge our sins, to interject and ask Christ to kneel beside their bed and make them whole again. To ask Christ not just to heal those we've irreparably harmed, but to also heal us, heal our systems that created the harm in the first place.

The gospel today contains two stories about the power of faith. Together they teach us a lot about not just who and how we are healed through Christ, but how and who we have harmed, and continue to harm. When we live into the fullest reality that these stories lay bare, we begin to see and know the power of Christ, the power of our faith, to honor those who can claim it for themselves, to use our power and privilege to gain access and then humble ourselves and risk it all for faith that through Christ, all things are possible.

Amen.