

Do not be Afraid to Touch Jesus

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“THE RAISING OF JAIRUS’ DAUGHTER” (DETAIL) BY REPIN

The Gospel for the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B) comes from Mark 5:21-43 and consists of the accounts of two miracles Jesus performed.

Jairus, a synagogue official desperate to save the life of his daughter, seeks out Jesus. On His way with Jairus to restore his daughter, Jesus encounters the woman with a hemorrhage.

Mark frequently interrupts one story to tell another, before completing the first story. So, when the story of Jesus, Jairus and his daughter is momentarily interrupted by the story of Jesus and the woman with a hemorrhage, one has to wonder why Mark did that. What does he want us to understand?

There are many ways these two stories complement each other:

- Jairus’ daughter was twelve-years-young; the woman with the chronic bleeding had suffered for twelve years.
- In one case, we see the prayer of intercession; the prayer of petition in the other.

- The daughter was “supported” by many who mourned for her; the woman was all alone, even though she was in the midst of a crowd.
- The need of each person was urgent and their conditions life-threatening.
- In the first story, Jairus, a synagogue official, was afraid for his daughter’s life and asked Jesus to save her life.
- In the other story, the woman with a hemorrhage, who was also afraid, hoped that her life could be saved by going to Jesus.
- In both cases, Jesus heals and restores to life. He tells the official not to be afraid but to believe. He tells the woman to be at peace.
- The two who approached the Lord, did so with great faith, hope and humility.

At the heart of these miracle stories is much more than simply a restoration to physical health.

What mother or father cannot relate to the plight of Jairus who feared for his daughter’s life? I hope every parent wants the very best for their child; to be well in health, yes, but also to be a happy part of the family and to grow and enjoy all the good that this life offers. I imagine that Jairus wanted all of that for his child.

And who among us cannot relate to all that this poor woman suffered? Yes, we want to be healthy. But, we also want to belong and to be accepted. This woman was not accepted; she did not belong. Because of her condition and Jewish law, she could not participate in the life of the community as she was considered unclean. She could not even enter the Temple to worship. Quite possibly, she was all alone in the world.

Each of us knows someone who has suffered in this way. Maybe you are or have been that someone.

This life can be difficult, but Jesus tells us not to be afraid. He wants us to be at peace. He wants to comfort and console us. Most of all, He wants to be our friend. Yes, this is our God, the One who created all that exists, the one who created you. He desires to be in a relationship with each of us. He wants each of us to belong to His family.

Deep within us we know, even when we have forgotten it, that there is a desire to be all that God envisioned us to be; to experience and live all God wanted for us.

In both these stories of miraculous healings there is a hint of this deeper desire to be saved from not just physical death, but the spiritual death as well. It is to this end—to defeat death—Jesus died for us.

So, let me ask. Knowing all that God desires for us, what is holding us back?

Jairus, an important official in the synagogue system that was opposed to Jesus, fell at the feet of Jesus in a very public setting for his daughter, without regard to how his action would negatively affect his standing.

The hemorrhaging woman who was an outcast, made her way through chaotic crowds with the certain belief that just to touch Jesus' clothes would save her. Maybe that is why Mark place her story in the center... it does not matter who you are or what your social standing is; Jesus wants to be in relationship with you, heal you, comfort you, and save you

So again, what holds us back from such humble faith? Here is the simple truth.

Jesus is still among us. He ascended to the Father so that the Holy Spirit would come to us. He left us His Church as the teacher through whom He speaks. He instituted the Sacraments as the ordinary means of communicating His grace to us. He left us His Church as the Family of God—we are the Father's sons and daughters.

Through Mark, Jesus wants you to know that He is with you today in this time and place; that you should not worry about what other people think of you; that you should make your relationship with Him your first priority.

The humility of Jairus and the faith and hope of the hemorrhaging woman show us the way to surrender and trust in the Lord.

Do you need a miracle? Is there some deep need in your life that is lacking? Do you just need someone to turn to? Cast aside pride and fear, don't be one of the faceless crowd who bumps into the Lord without regard; approach the Lord humbly, expectantly and personally in prayer and sacrament—particularly today during Holy Communion. Reach out and touch Him, allow Him to transform you, and then be Christ to others in their need.