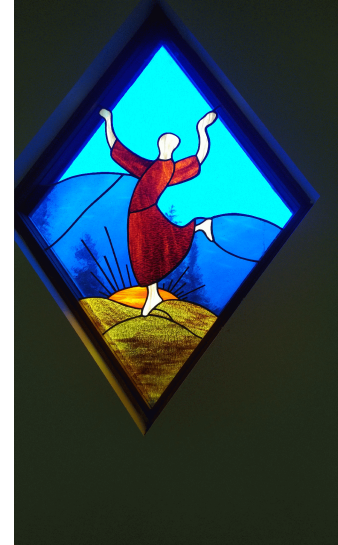


Mark 5:21-43

Don't be afraid to ask

“When Jesus had crossed ... to the other side, a great crowd gathered ... Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and when he saw him, fell at his feet ...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.’ So [Jesus] went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now ... a woman who had been suffering ... for 12 years ... had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him ... and touched his cloak, for she said, ‘If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.’” [Mark 5:21-28]



The story tells us that both the little daughter and the woman are healed, given life and made whole. A miracle – two in fact!

Let's look at this Marcan passage and wonder together what these 2 stories show us about the kind of lives Jesus longs for us to live – lives that are full and rich, meaningful and vibrant, abundant and eternal.

First, we observe the man Jairus – leader in the synagogue, father of a little 12-year-old girl who is dying. Where does he find the courage to come to Jesus, to the one of whom most of his peers speak negatively, angrily? We can imagine that he is desperate, that his heart is breaking, that he aches to do something – even if it goes against the accepted norms and values of the day – something to save his little girl. Clearly, Jairus has heard about Jesus, his power, his compassion, his miracles of healing. And Jairus decides to take a chance, that just maybe what others have been saying about Jesus is true. Jairus decides to risk everything, reputation, credibility, social standing on the chance that Jesus can do, will do, what they say he can.

Then we see a woman – just a woman – an unnamed woman – no one who would stand out in the crowd – a woman who has bled for 12 years, who according to the custom and laws of her day has been labelled “unclean” by her community, her family, her husband for 12 years. Where does she find the courage to come to Jesus, to touch this man who is designated by some to be “holy”? Surely it is a kind of desperation that drives her to do the unthinkable, the unacceptable, the punishable if she's caught. So, having been a “non-person” for so long, how could she dare to presume to take up Jesus' time, attention? No wonder she strives for anonymity.

How their hearts must have pounded as they approached Jesus with their hunger, their need, their hope!

For Jairus, there is no instant cure, no quick fix! Anguish and anxiety must surely have threatened to suffocate him, as he stands by watching precious minutes pass while Jesus stops to determine who amongst the pressing crowd has touched him, as Jesus talks with the confessing woman. Utter defeat must have crushed him as he receives the news, “It's too late! your daughter is dead.”

In that moment, surely Jairus experiences that which most often keeps us from having the courage to ask for what we need. With fear and trembling, he has risked everything. His hopes had soared when Jesus first responds to his request. And now, his daughter is dead.

Now, what? Would it not have been better if he had accepted the seemingly inevitable in the first place? Would it not have been better never to hope – never to experience that plunge from the heights of hope to the depths of despair?

And what about the woman in the crowd? For a host of reasons, she doesn't want anyone to know that she's even in the crowd, much less what she's done. So, she merely reaches out to touch Jesus' clothing and she gets caught. Jesus feels her presence and calls her to identify herself. Surely her legs tremble beneath her, her breath catches in her chest as she confesses what she has done.

It's important that we hear what's happening here in Mark's gospel. He's introducing us to Jesus, showing us that Jesus is willing and able to bring new life and wholeness to those who call upon him, that he has the power to change and alter the lives of those who trust him, that he is the saviour of all humanity, that he longs to bring abundant and eternal life to all who hunger, to all who ask.. Mark's gospel introduces us to Jesus who can and does touch people into life; who hears the fears and prayers of human hearts; who knows what cripples and disables; who sees beyond facades, masks, bravado; who knows when we're burdened, tired, overwhelmed, ashamed, just getting by, making do. Mark introduces us to this Jesus so that we might have the courage to come to him and ask for healing, for life, for wholeness – for ourselves; for others.

And, there's more that these stories can show us. For the sake of time, I'll touch on this briefly and leave it with you to sort out in your daily walk and talks with Jesus. As Jairus came to Jesus on behalf of his daughter, so we are to come to Jesus on behalf of those around us who do not know him, who have not been touched to life by him. As Jesus touched the woman and the child to wholeness, to life, so we are called to touch those around us into healing and fullness.

We have heard it said, "he has no hands now, but our hands; no feet, but our feet ..." As we are loved, so we are to love one another. Thus, we are to pay attention to others in our world, to every one whom God brings along or across our path, day by day. Some will be bleeding, hurting, struggling, lonely. Some will need to lean on, learn from, be touched by us. These stories in Mark's gospel urge us not to shy away from any other one. As we have been healed, are being touched into life and wholeness, so we are to reach out, to let others draw on our power of faith – or as Jesus says, after blessing Jairus' daughter with life – "give her something to eat." We are to give to those whom God has brought alongside us, to those whose lives intersect with ours, no matter how briefly – we are to give them the sustenance and nourishment, the support and love, the stories and experiences they need to live the gift God gives.