

Children's talk – Janice Anderson

Organist plays a hymn while the children leave the church.

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Mark 5.21-43 (NT pages 1007-1008)

Reader: Margaret Peden

Background to the reading

Our text is telling us two different stories at one time both with regard to Jesus' miraculous healing.

As Jesus is attending to one matter another "healing incident" takes place almost out of the blue. But it is not out of the blue. It is a skillful ploy of the writer to convey a very important message namely that Jesus was indeed God who had the power over illness and even death.

There is so much going on in our text. Let start at the beginning.

Jairus was one of the rulers of the synagogue, one of the chief officials in synagogues which were prominent members of their communities. Usually synagogue affairs in Jewish communities were in the hands of a

board of seven. One of the tasks of the rulers of the synagogue was to conduct worship and to apportion functions in it namely to choose those who would recite the “shema” prayer and read and expound the portions of Scripture. He was also responsible for erecting and maintaining the building.

So Jairus was a very important man who fell at the feet of Jesus to beg him to come to his daughter’s aid. This was off course a sign of honour, respect and humiliation. In those days you would fall at the feet of someone of much greater status (like a king) or prostrate oneself before God. He recognized Jesus’ power in a serious way.

The Greek text speaks of a wee girl, later says she was 12 years old which meant that she had been a minor. In the eyes of her society - on account of both her age and her gender she had virtually no social status. But Jesus was prepared to go to her despite the barriers of their society.

And then in the hustle and bustle a “woman” who was subject to severe bleeding for 12 years touched his outer garment and she was healed. If this woman was bleeding every day she would have been continually unclean under the LAW which meant that she was cut off from society. She would have been regarded as an outcast and not

allowed to be in public domain because her touch would make others unclean too. It is no wonder she was frightened when Jesus put her on the spot after she was “healed”. She was not allowed to do such a thing but she did because her faith was greater than her fear which Jesus recognized. And it is as if Jesus do not bother to be regarded as “unclean”. The woman and her faith was more important than the codes and rituals of his society. I am sure that this story shocked the first readers out of their wits because it was something unheard of!

And then some men came to Jairus to report that his daughter had just died. Jesus says to Jairus that he must just believe. So when Jesus and Jairus finally arrives at the home, He sends out all the mourners. Several professional mourners were required even at the funeral of the poorest person; more mourners would assemble at the death of a member of a prominent family like this one. Because bodies decomposed rapidly in Palestine, mourners had to be assembled immediately upon someone’s death, and they had gathered before word even reached Jairus that his daughter had died. Messengers were normally dispatched immediately to bring a parent or spouse the sad news.

But Jesus took her hand which would again make him unclean - after all the mourners have left and spoke in Aramaic. Aramaic was a language related to Hebrew that was the standard international language of the ancient Near East before Alexander the Great's conquests made Greek the standard national language. It was still widely spoken in different forms in Syria-Palestine and farther east in Jesus' day. Most Jewish people in first-century Palestine probably spoke both Greek and Aramaic. Jesus spoke to her in, perhaps her first language, although Greek was widely spoken in Palestine and said to her to stand up and she did. Then Jesus commanded them to give her some food to serve as proof that she truly was alive again.

So what is the message of Mark?

Jesus addressed all the needs of his believers – He even has power over death! It was only later that his disciples would understand that He himself would over power death to make a new future possible for all the believers!

MP 708 To God be the glory

Sermon

It is amazing that in our text there are evidence of action and reaction. It reminds me of a good tennis game like the ones we now see on our tellies.

Faith is all about action, commitment and dedication. In our reading it is all about faith in action. It is interesting to note that faith is never passive.

Jairus the very important man went to Jesus when his daughter fell ill. He had faith and faith made him humble to fall at the feet of Jesus.

And the ill woman went into the crowds just to touch the outer garment of Jesus. Faith in Jesus made her realise that it would be enough to help her in whatever way. Faith made her challenge the rules of her society and ignore the prejudices that existed against her.

And Jesus – well in our reading He is attached to the believers. He is not distant or snobbish or a stickler to rules.

He touches and allow others to touch him too. He acts full of love and compassion. Jesus reacts to the believers acts of faith.

Faith is in many ways like a tennis game like the ones we now see on tellie at Wimbledon. When you hit the ball you do not know where it is going to land – you can plan and aim to the best of your abilities but in the end the ball will land where it must. To believe in God is to trust that the “ball” by ways of speaking will land on the right place where God intended it to be. It is an adventure of up and downs always trusting always hoping.

Faith is not about the “what if’s”. Faith is to be sure of the presence of God. Faith is about the future certainty that God made possible through

the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Faith is all about trusting God and not ourselves. It is not part of an emergency plan – namely when everything else fails to then run to God. Faith must be part of our lives like breathing.

I heard a story the other day about a person who had a lot of contingency plans for their job.

A signalman for the local railroad was asked to meet the inspector at the signal box. The inspector decided to give the signalman a test. He asked him, "What would you do if you realized that two trains were heading towards each other on the same track?" The signalman said, "I would switch one train to another track." "What if the lever broke?" asked the inspector. "Then I'd run down to the tracks and use the manual lever down there", he answered.

"What if that had been struck by lightning?" challenged the inspector. "Then," he said, "I'd run back up here and use the phone to call the next signal box." "What if the phone was busy?" "In that case," said the signalman, "I'd run to the street level and use the public phone near the station". "What if that had been vandalized?" "Well," replied the signalman, "in that case I would run into town and get my Uncle David". This puzzled the inspector, so he asked, "Why would you go and get

your Uncle David ?" "Well, because Uncle David have never seen a train crash."

When we rely upon ourselves instead of God, we are liable to crash like the trains. Let us put our faith in God and allow the miracle working power of Jesus to take over in our lives. Faith is to give God all our needs and wants and allow Him to decide what is best for us.

Maybe we must be like Jairus and the woman in the reading, handing over all our problems, concerns and challenges to God in faith – knowing that God will give us what we need, and awaiting the miracle that can happen.

So by ways of speaking "*Talitha koum!*" – brother and sister Jesus is saying to us to stand up and go in faith because we are alive – made new through his Spirit!

AMEN.

Responding to God's word

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 275 "I heard the voice of Jesus say"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Robert Alexander

MP 760 When we walk with the Lord

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

**May you go in the power of our caring, healing, Lord,
to meet the needs of his children,
wherever he sends you.**

And The blessing of God almighty,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Be with you all

Now and for evermore

Sung Amen