

Today we hear the story of two miraculous healings –the story of the grace of God as it meets the faith of desperate people. In our lives today as then, God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Jesus has just crossed back over the lake and is immediately surrounded by people seeking help, wanting to catch a glimpse of this person they have heard so much about. He is approached by a leader from the synagogue whose daughter is sick. He is desperate to save his daughter. So desperate he seeks out the renegade preacher from Galilee. He will use whatever means is available. Jairus throws himself at Jesus' feet and then begs him to come and save his daughter. Jesus agrees and sets on his way.

The crowd pushes in on him. There is jostling and pushing and shoving – who knows if this man will return again and he's really something – he heals people, he teaches – he is like no one ever before and these people are hungering for one such as him.

In the crowd there is one who has been sick for years. She probably looks sickly, unclean, blood all over her garments. She has spent all her money on physicians and she has not been made well. She is using the cover of the crowd to get close to Jesus. She just wants to touch the hem of Jesus' garment; she thinks this will help her. She does and she and Jesus feel it instantly.

Jesus asks who touched him. The disciples think it will be impossible to tell, but when Jesus asks the crowd, this woman comes to him and tells him her story. She had been physically healed, and Jesus publicly announces her healing and sends her on her way.

A group from Jairus' house arrives saying it's no use, the little girl has died. Jesus tells Jairus to not fear, but only believe. They continue on their journey to the house. Jesus is ridiculed and scoffed at when he says that the girl is only sleeping. He takes the mother and father and 3 disciples into the little girl's room and touching her says, "talitha cum" Little girl, get up. She does and they are amazed, but Jesus says don't tell anyone about this.

This is the story of God doing for us what we can not do for ourselves.

Mark makes a big point of telling us how hopeless and desperate this woman was. She had gone to many physicians. She probably spent a fair amount of money; probably endured some fairly radical, and perhaps painful "cures" for her blood flow. She was cut off from society because she was seen as unclean and according to the Leviticus laws/codes. It was at great risk that she was even in the crowd, let alone touch someone with a reputation as a faith healer in her condition.

And, Jairus, we don't know what the illness was that his daughter had, but in one place I remember reading that at least 50% of the children born did not reach adulthood in that day. Jairus, as synagogue leader, would have had access to the best care and resources and options for his daughter. And, who can blame those who came to tell Jairus that it

was too late. As much as Jesus was widely known to be a healer, no one – no one expected that he could raise anyone from the dead.

For these two, nothing they tried had been able to cure them, to heal them. They could not pay enough money, endure enough treatments, pray hard enough or long enough, or ask others to pray for them enough.

In their desperation, they reached out for Jesus and encountered God. In Jesus, faith met grace and they were healed.

This text isn't about how much faith we have. God does not take time to measure our faith when we ask to be healed. It's about what happens when we realize that we, of our own accord, cannot make ourselves well, can not heal our loved one, can not bring health to those who are dying. In the same way we cannot earn salvation with our good works, we do not earn healing by the amount of our faith. Faith isn't certainty, but hope and trust. It's about remembering God's promise to be there for us. It's about reaching out in our own hopelessness and helplessness. Reaching for the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

This text shows us that God does what we cannot do for ourselves. And if you have been there, on your knees in despair and hopelessness like these people in our reading today then you know what I mean. This text shows us that it's not about God promising a miracle, though sometimes it will happen, but about God promising to walk with us as Jesus walked with Jairus; it's about God turning toward us in our time of need as Jesus turned toward the woman who touched him.

Reaching for Jesus, faith met grace and the hemorrhaging woman was physically cured and healed through restoration with the community. Reaching for Jesus, God did what they could not do for themselves and Jairus' daughter was restored to life, restored to her family; the community spared grieving the loss of a child.

Praying in the wake of a diagnosis of cancer, faith meets grace when someone is miraculously cured of cancer.

Praying for those whose bodies will succumb to an illness, faith meets grace as they find peace and wholeness in the face of death.

Reaching for Jesus and asking God to do what we can not do, faith meets grace as estranged relationships are healed and friendships, family and marriages are restored.

Reaching for Jesus and asking God to do what we can not do, faith meets grace as resentment is released and a heart is opened to love and joy once again.

Reaching for Jesus and asking God to do what we can not do, faith meets grace in the support families receive when their loved ones are fighting for peace and security around the world.

4th Sunday of Pentecost
Mark 5:21-43
Pastor Wendy Moen

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First Trinity Lutheran Church

Reaching for Jesus and asking God to do what we can not do, faith meets grace when those searching for a better life in this independent country, find work, education, healthcare and safety.

Reaching for Jesus and asking God to do what we can not do, faith meets grace when a family moves into transitional housing and the children have a complete turn around in school performance the next year.

Reaching for Jesus, faith meets grace as we make a cross with our hands to receive the body of Jesus who died for us. Thanks be to God. Amen.