

Proper 8, Year B
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From out of the crowd that surrounded Jesus emerges a man with a desperate heart, and a wild faith that Jesus can heal his 12 year old daughter who is near death. Mark tells us that he is Jarius, a member of the religious establishment – an establishment suspicious of Jesus. But Jarius breaks rank with that establishment for love of his child, and proclaims his faith in Jesus as a channel of God's healing power. Jesus responds to faith in those around him. Expressed faith is a doorway through which Jesus can enter, so Jesus goes with Jarius to see his daughter, and the crowds follow.

Among the crowd that day is another person whose faith has drawn her to Jesus - the hemorrhaging woman. No doctor has been able to help her and her bleeding deemed her ritually unclean by the purity codes of that day, so she was an outcast of her faith community.

Lest we think these events unrelated, Mark has left a clue meant to signal to us that these two stories of faith and healing are intimately bound to one another. The clue is the number 12 – Jarius daughter was 12 years old and the woman had hemorrhaged for 12 years. Biblical scholars assure

us that this is no coincidence. Jesus is confronted by two people in desperate need - one, a powerful, male leader of the religious establishment; the other a marginalized woman, whose uncontrollable ailment excludes her from the faith community that establishment oversees. Both have faith in Jesus and Jesus responds to the faith of both with miraculous acts of healing for two very different daughters of Israel.

One biblical commentator reflecting on this passage put it this way:

The author of Mark seems to be suggesting that one 'daughter' represents the privileged and the other the impoverished within the family of Israel. Because of such inequity, the body politic of the synagogue is on 'the verge of death', something Jarius acknowledges when he comes to Jesus and says "My little daughter is at the point of death". The healing journey that Jesus takes on behalf of the first, privileged, establishment daughter of Israel must however take a necessary detour that stops to listen to the pain of the crowd, embodied in the second, excluded, impoverished and ill daughter of Israel. Only when the excluded woman is restored to true daughterhood can the whole body be made well and alive. That is the faith that the privileged must learn from the poor." (Proclamation, 1995, p.57)

That is the faith we must learn. We, first world, middle and upper class Christians, living in one corner of a globe so besieged by inequalities of power and resources. We need a faith that tells us that God cares deeply for us, as he did for Jarius. But our faith must never end there. To be alive and moving, our faith must be intertwined and be bound to the truth that God equally values those who are not privileged as we are - those living in

poverty and sickness, here in our own backyard and around the globe.

That is an alive and moving faith.

Over the last year and a half, just this sort of alive and moving faith has been increasing among us. For many years we have been strong on local outreach through our Among Friends meal ministry, and we are now beginning to vision how we can strengthen that ministry in exciting ways. And we are involved in several regional ministries through partnerships in our diocese, such as the B-Safe crazy 8's day, and through agencies like Pettengill House, Emmaus House and the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center. But since the partnership with Haiti that this parish maintained until the mid 1990's, we have been without a global partnership.

Through the Lenten series about the Millennium Development goals (MDG's) 2 Lents past now, an Outreach Committee formed. That group was charged with discerning a global partnership for our parish. El Salvador was identified as our country to form this partnership with and contacts have been made there through an organization called Christosal to arrange for our first trip, to take place in January of 2010. We currently have 12 or so people discerning the call to be part of that trip.

You may wonder how we chose El Salvador. For one thing it is a country that needs work done on all 8 of the MDGs. It is also within a range of travel that is manageable with regard to our traveling there and with regard to a contingent from there traveling to us (which is one of our hopes for the future). Additionally, we have a personal connection through one of our members, Joyce Cejka, whose two daughters were adopted from there. Recently Joyce wrote these words about her commitment to being part of our trip to El Salvador:

"My children were and incredible gift for which I will forever be thankful, but I've always been very aware that they came to me out of the terrible suffering in El Salvador. It's been very hard for me that my own country contributed to that suffering by supporting the Civil War... When I first went to El Salvador in 1980 to get Kristen, I very much wanted to go to a church service, but I was told that I could not, that it was too dangerous, that the priests were communists. I never believed that but also have never forgotten it. The most precious aspect for me of going to El Salvador will be to have the opportunity to have a relationship with a parish there."

At a recent Outreach Committee meeting, we discussed how we will finance this trip. One third (or more where possible) will be provided by each individual. A bit less than a third will be provided by a line item in our parish budget specifically for this trip. And a bit less than one half (about \$8000, if all 12 travelers make the trip) will need to be raised by the group in the next several months. We are each in the process of writing

letters to friends and family whom we think might like to support us in this venture. We will be holding several fundraisers also. And we will welcome gifts to this venture, of any amount from members of the congregation as well.

I suspect some may be wondering *“Why spend all that money and effort to send 12 people to El Salvador when you could send the money instead and have it do such good there?”* This is a fair question. The best way I can explain is to hark back to the Gospel passage of this morning. Jesus did not go heal Jarius’s daughter and then go tend to the woman with the hemorrhages. Rather, he bound those two healings together. Jarius was made to observe the pain and suffering of the other daughter of Israel up close, and to be there when her healing occurred. Jesus knew the power of being there, of seeing things first hand. That is part of what the incarnation is all about.

I’ve known that power in my life also. When I was in 10th grade I went to Haiti on a parish mission trip. It changed my life. I had never had an up close and personal experience of suffering and poverty on that level before. The day I returned to school after that trip I broke down crying in the cafeteria because I could not bear to see how much food we students were throwing away without even thinking about it, when just the week

before I had met starving people in Haiti. A teacher whisked me from the cafeteria to the school nurse and I was sent home early. Needless to say, it was not an easy reentry for me into the “first world”, and I have never really recovered. Indeed that is the healing I received from that trip to Haiti – to not ever be able to forget the pain and suffering of so many in our world as I reside in this land of abundance.

In thinking about our El Salvador trip, Carole Bishop, one of the intended travelers wrote:

“With each step we take the reality of what we are embarking upon becomes clearer and the conviction that we can make a difference in people’s lives becomes surer. We believe that the people of this troubled country can offer us as much or more than we can offer them.”

Carole’s words bring us back to the scriptures of the day. Above and beyond the miracles of restored health and life, Jesus greatest miracle of that particular day of his ministry, described in our Gospel, was the miracle of linking people to one another - showing rich that they need the poor, and poor that they need the rich. As St. Paul so eloquently put it in our lesson from II Corinthians:

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich...I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that

their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little." (2 Cor. 8: 9, 13-15)

May our partnership with our yet unknown friends in Christ in El Salvador lead us more deeply as a parish into such living and healing connections.

In Christ's name. Amen+