

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We have a story within a story this morning, faith sandwiched in faith. Desperate circumstances and two daughters are healed, one from death, the other from 12 years of bleeding. They seem to be stories about shadows. Now we ourselves know that a sick child is a priority for us, whether our son or daughter, or a grandson or granddaughter. Some of us also know what it's like to come to the end of our rope, hoping against hope for a cure or healing to a chronic, debilitating, sometimes fatal, illness.

Two different stories, two different people, an official of the synagogue named Jairus, and a woman not named, a woman, bleeding, and unclean, two people from very different levels of society. Desperate diverse individuals both hoping against hope come to the last and greatest hope of all, who ignores the conventions of his society, and turns the world upside down once again.

Jairus is an important individual, but to Jesus it matters not what he ranks in the hierarchy of the synagogue or who he is. His story sandwiches that of the bleeding woman, nameless, powerless who has spent every penny she has and is worse off than when she started. This woman, unnoticed by most, someone who would probably prefer to remain unnoticed, is highlighted by Mark our gospel author.

But she has faith in Jesus, and it's not that she has a hold on faith, but that faith has a hold of her, faith by the grace of God. In the middle of an honor based, personal purity and holiness society, as her faith clings to her, so she clings to Jesus, wanting to touch only a garment, probably the fringe of his prayer shawl, which of course Jesus as a pious Jewish male would wear. And notice how Jesus does not leave her in the shadows, a ritually unclean woman who has touched, and spoken to a pious Jewish male isn't rebuked but instead addressed as "daughter" and she is made well and Jesus bids her go in peace. The faith that clings to her allows her to cling to Jesus and to move beyond the restrictions of her world and her culture.

And in the same way faith clings to Jairus, a loving parent, who receiving the worse news a parent can hear is told by Jesus, "Do not fear, only believe." This is where our gospel writer connects the dots, a woman who has suffered for 12 years is called "daughter" by Jesus and a 12 year old daughter of a man who on the face of it is unlikely to have believed in Jesus, are connected when Jesus calls to his daughter "Talitha cum" and brings Jairus' daughter back into the light out of shadows.

Brothers and sisters, you and I live in a world, a society that celebrates wealth, strength, power, a world where much is made of self-righteousness although seldom by that name. A world that celebrates the results of sin, and insists it's right, even though we exist in the shadows. We occasionally hear that we are to grab hold of Jesus, trusting in our grasp to hold on tight, in our ability to believe, that if we only do so with enough fervency and power we will be restored, healed, made new.

But that's not how it is. Once again, in our gospel stories, Jesus does the unexpected, defying the conventions of his society, not all that different from our own. Jesus reaches out again to the marginalized, a woman and a girl, one unclean and dead to society, the other literally dead, an unclean woman has touched Jesus and spoke to him and he has taken the hand of a dead girl, now ritually unclean as well.

Jesus knew everything and was equal to the task of turning the world upside down. We don't know everything, and we cannot turn the world upside down. We can't rely on our own strength to hold tight to Jesus, Jesus instead through the faith that holds us, has us in his hand and elsewhere tells us that nothing can take us out of his hand. We don't trust in our strength, we trust in Jesus' strength.

Jesus who makes us whole and calls us out of darkness with the gift of faith, with the gift of himself. AMEN