

*When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. 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 he went with him.*

*And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?"' He looked all round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'*

*While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

What we have here are two healing stories involving two women. I say two women because the little girl at 12 years old was the age of womanhood in those days. The two women would both have been labelled unclean or impure according to the law: the girl because of death, and the woman because of her blood issue for 12 years. Twelve is a very symbolic number in Jewish history: the 12 tribes and 12 the number of Jesus' first disciples. There are many other symbols, similarities and parallels in this sandwiched text.

We'll look at the parallels for our own time and place and how this speaks to our Vital Mark for today: Outward Incarnational Focus (or how we offer God's grace to others). We are told the long-suffering woman spent all her money on doctors and cures. There was no

universal health care in those days and a lot of the healing was attributed to magic or superstition. One of the eleven cures suggested for the woman in the Talmud of Jewish laws and beliefs was to carry the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in summer. Medicine has come a long way. Praise God for vaccines and that we don't have to carry ostrich eggs around. I'm sure the suffering woman tried that too. She was at her wits end: sick, anemic, and isolated from worship and fellowship with her friends and family. Such was the purity code in place and she had to stay away until cured.

At the other end of the spectrum we have the powerful, wealthy ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, who would be the equivalent of a CEO. He was also desperate, desperate to save the life of his little girl who was sick and dying. She had just come into womanhood with her whole future before her. Jairus throws caution to the wind and throws himself at the feet of Jesus begging him to help. Jairus believes Jesus can save her.

The suffering woman in desperate need of help seized her last hope for healing. She too believes Jesus can save her. She pushed through the crowds to touch Jesus' cloak. Needs must and she threw caution and the purity code to the wind. Desperation drives us to do desperate things. However we never want our desperation to cause harm to ourselves or others.

A recent article in Christian Century (June 2, 2021) by Caitlin Kandil describes a group called Tacoma Housing Now. We all know housing is and will become an ever growing problem for those in desperate circumstances. Desperate times call for desperate measures and this movement began in 2019 called Moms 4 Housing where people without housing wanting to save their children decided to do something about it and took over empty buildings in Oakland. They were subsequently removed but it raised awareness.

When you read those headlines, our first reaction is these squatters are breaking the law, causing chaos and disorder and damage. When you see the situation with Jesus' eyes and read that two unhoused, unnamed people had died of exposure in Tacoma, including a 68-year-old-man in a wheelchair, we see the human face of this desperate situation.

Unhoused people are tired of waiting! Tired of getting in line and being given a voucher when only one quarter of the vouchers are honored and government owned buildings sit empty. So similar groups like Tacoma Housing Now are pushing through and with CARES grant money they have offered to rent vacant hotels, until the numbers of homeless people became so great that they all had to be evicted. Yet awareness has been raised.

The point of this movement to end homelessness is that the number of vacant properties are greater than the number of homeless people in most cities. The good news is that groups around the country are partnering to share ideas to present solutions.

The myth that homelessness is a choice or simply the result of bad behaviour has been dispelled in this time of pandemic. The pandemic has stopped us in our tracks and increased the number of people who are desperate for shelter and help, healing and wholeness.

There are times when desperation or a crisis in life drives us to God. So be it, if that's the only way God can get your attention. Our healing stories today teach us that it was their faith that made them well: the faith of the woman who needed only to touch Jesus' garment, the faith of the synagogue leader who believed that Jesus could lay hands on his daughter and she would be well.

On the way to Jairus' home when Jesus' journey is interrupted by the suffering woman. Immediately Jesus felt power leave him and he stopped in his tracks to find out who touched him. The disciples don't understand why that would matter because there are so many people pressing in on him.

In Romans 10:17 Paul writes, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God". Jesus seeks out the unnamed woman to hear her story. She has a *mega phobia* when in fear and trembling she confesses and knows she has broken the law by being in contact with people while unclean. Yet she hears a word of love from God. Jesus who is the Word Incarnate speaks to her compassionately, not judgmentally, "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your disease". Jesus restored her to health and to community and has given her a new identity as daughter who is welcomed into God's kin-dom as a child of God.

She has received physical health and spiritual salvation through the power of God in Jesus Christ. She is as worthy as the wealthy daughter of Jairus. In fact Jesus takes care of the woman in poverty first before moving on to heal the little girl who in the intervening time had died.

Jesus as ruler of law and life restores the little girl to life also.

A healing miracle for sure and raises the question for us, "What does it mean to be healed?" Many of us pray fervently for healings and faith healings do happen. James 5:16 reads, "confess your sins to one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective". Does it mean if our prayers are not answered our faith is not strong enough? - No! God wants to hear from us, every prayer brings us closer to the heartbeat of God. God knows what we need before we ask. Again from Romans 8:26 Paul writes, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God".

Healing will look different in each miracle healing and each healing is a miracle even today. When we step out in faith with Jesus we see with God-shaped eyes. We see in Jesus his outward incarnational focus, the gift of God's Word made flesh who saves us in more ways than one, more ways than we even can count or know.

Jesus leads the way for us to have more faith, more power, to heal the world's diseases, injustices and wrongs, one healing at a time.

Healing and restoration for us may be partnering with other agencies and our government to advocate for vaccines, for the unhoused, offering food boxes or emergency rent relief. It's not that we as a small chapel have the financial resources to fix the world's ills but in relationship with one another, relationship with our community we bring not a fear factor, but a faith factor.

We bring Christ's peace and an outward incarnational focus of God's love to our neighbors in need. In deed and word they will see and hear from you. Have faith not fear because faith heals.

And be in prayer, even when our prayers are not answered the way we think or expect. A Parkinson's patient, man of faith, was asked if he was bitter or angry at God because his prayers for healing seemed to be falling on deaf ears and he said in all sincerity, "I have been healed, not of Parkinson's disease, but I have been healed of my *fear* of Parkinson's disease" (Feasting on The Word Year B Vol. II p190).

As we grow in faith, prayer is central to our relationship with God. Growing in our relationship with the triune God and others heals us. As one Scottish philosopher, John Macmurray, wrote "I need you to in order to be myself".

Jesus is a miracle worker and sought relationship as he restored health and identity in God's kin-dom. Because of Him we can claim wholeness in Christ too. Love God, Love Self, Love Others, Love enemies. Amen.

Sources: Feasting on the Word, Year B, Vol. 2  
Christian Century June 2, 2021  
The Gospel of Mark by William Barclay  
New Interpreter's Bible Vol IIX