

King of Glory Lutheran Church

June 26/27, 2021

Year B: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost: Mark 5:21-43

Rev. Debra Abbott

**Mark 5:21-43**

*<sup>21</sup> When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. <sup>22</sup> Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet <sup>23</sup> 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.” <sup>24</sup> So he went with him.*

*And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. <sup>25</sup> Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. <sup>26</sup> She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. <sup>27</sup> She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup> for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” <sup>29</sup> Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. <sup>30</sup> Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” <sup>31</sup> And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” <sup>32</sup> He looked all around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup> But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”*

*<sup>35</sup> 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?” <sup>36</sup> But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” <sup>37</sup> He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” <sup>40</sup> 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. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” <sup>42</sup> And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. <sup>43</sup> He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

This past week I met a friend for coffee and we hugged when we met and when we said goodbye. Pre-COVID this would not be a very meaningful statement for me to share with you. But after a year without touching other people you know the power of the hug I shared with my friend.

Of all the many things we missed during the pandemic, touch has to be at the very top of the list for many of us.

We know from personal experience and scientific studies that babies need loving touches in order to thrive. Children reach out for hugs. People of every age need to be touched. My dog needs to be held and petted. Without touch we suffer, even die.

I've learned a term that is new to me this past year and that is "skin hunger." Skin hunger is the biological need for human touch. Maybe you have known skin hunger this past year as we have been deprived of handshakes, pats on the arm and hugs.

Touch is the way we comfort each other, show love, express connection and belonging, and even heal. Now I'm not saying that everyone wants to be touched all the time, some people don't like to be touched much at all and find it uncomfortable. But in our most vulnerable, difficult moments touch has the power to comfort and heal and restore.

Our gospel reading today offers us a story, and a story within a story, about touch, connection and healing.

Jesus is surrounded by a great crowd. A man named Jairus pushes through the crowd and falls at Jesus' feet. He is desperate to find help for his dying daughter.

Now Jairus was a leader of the synagogue. Normally he was probably a pretty composed guy. Wouldn't think of throwing himself at anyone's feet. Would not consider touching a stranger or begging for anything. But today his daughter is dying. And he is past caring what anyone thinks.

Jesus reacts. He sees Jairus, he feels his pain and he goes with Jairus to his daughter.

But on their way the crowds continue to follow Jesus. And we see now another person, a woman who has been bleeding for 12 years, who reaches out and touches Jesus. She is desperate. After 12 years of an illness that has left her alone, kept her out of her community and marked her as unclean, taken all her money with no healing to show for it, she follows Jesus. She is just one person in this great crowd who because of her unclean status is not allowed to touch anyone, especially a man. But sick as she is, this woman does what isn't done. She touches Jesus.

And Jesus knows. Without seeing her he knows that someone who is suffering has touched him and been healed. And so he speaks to her, he calls her daughter. He sees her just as he saw Jairus and responds to her suffering.

When Jesus gets to Jairus' house he goes to Jairus' daughter who he is told is dead. Jesus goes to this child, a girl young and vulnerable in life and who now is dead. She cannot touch Jesus on her own. So in death Jesus reaches out to her, takes her hand and tells her to get up. And she is restored to life. Jesus calls her "daughter" and gives her new life and we know most certainly gives life to the rest of her family as well. Tears of grief become tears of joy.

We meet three people today who each have a powerful encounter and connection with Jesus. People who are vulnerable and suffering, afraid and almost beyond hope.

Do you see yourself in their stories, in their lives, in their faces? Do you know their suffering or their fear?

The Bible is filled with stories of people like the people we meet today: a man, a woman and a child. The powerful, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the insider and the outsider. All people like us. People who need healing and hope.

And today we also meet Jesus once again. Jesus who does not turn away from the outsider, from the unclean, from the rich or the poor, the young or the old, woman or man, friend or stranger.

We may take it for granted, but today we see Jesus act with compassion and love. Touching lives with his feet and hands and heart. Welcoming those who reach out to him and touching those who cannot reach him on their own.

You and I know the power of touch in our lives. Greeting someone you love with a hug. Holding the hand of someone who is hurting when they are afraid. Reaching out to catch someone when they fall. Blessing someone when you say goodbye.

We should never underestimate the power of touch to heal and restore. To touch one who is suffering or in need is an act of recognition and understanding, of compassion and comfort.

This human connection of touch that we long for, that we need, is one of the difficult aspects to our relationship with God. We need to be touched to be comforted and to know that we are not alone.

So how do we reach out to God and how does God reach out to us to heal and restore? How does God touch our lives so that we know that we are seen and known and loved?

God knows that we are people who live through our senses. We see, we smell, we hear, we taste, we touch. And so God uses these gifts to show us compassion and connection and love.

God reaches out to us through the people around us and through the gifts Jesus shared with us and passed on to us.

Why do we spend so much time in Christian community using water to symbolize new life and new beginnings. Because water is something we cannot live without. God uses water to remind us of the promise we know of new life each day through our baptism. Water that is simple and ordinary, something we often take for granted, and yet is essential to our life. Every day we can remember that God is as close to us as the water we can feel, taste and touch. As life-giving for us as the water that refreshes us and keeps us going.

Jesus touched his disciples, washed their feet and blessed them, and ate with them again and again. He asked us to remember him when we gather together sharing bread and wine. Touching and tasting bread and wine so that we might remember through our senses the promise of God's forgiveness and commitment to us forever. As we come to the table Jesus has set for us we hear words of love for us and then we are invited to touch and taste God's grace in this holy meal.

Friends in Christ, know today that Jesus sees you and loves you. Know that he is always with you, reaching out to you and holding you in love in ways that you expect and in ways that will surprise you. May you know and feel the touch, the presence and the power of Jesus who is our healer and our hope.

Amen.