

SERMON
 First Lutheran Church
 Aitkin, Minnesota

Mark 5:21-43
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
 June 28, 2015

ADULT MESSAGE

Jesus, in our Gospel text for today, performs **two miraculous healings**. In the first account, **Jairus**, a leader of the synagogue, came to Jesus for help. Jairus was respected, important in the community. **In the eyes of the people – Jairus was close to God**. His **daughter was deathly ill** and he begged Jesus to come to his house and save her. He believed that Jesus could help. Jesus went with him.

In the second healing account, **a woman, unnamed**, came to Jesus for help. She had been suffering from a hemorrhage for **twelve years**, bleeding. She had spent all of her money trying to find a cure and only continued to grow worse. **In the eyes of the people, she was far from God**, unclean because of her bleeding. She must have done something wrong to bring this upon herself. She **wouldn't even have been allowed to attend worship**. She wasn't even allowed to **come close to people**.

Jairus approached Jesus directly and asked for his help. The **unnamed women** snuck up behind Jesus as he and the crowd moved toward Jairus' house. The woman quickly reached out her hand and, **even though it was against Jewish law**, she **touched Jesus' robe**. Power went out of Jesus and into her. Immediately she was healed without Jesus even knowing what had happened.

Jairus' daughter, on the other hand, **died** before Jesus was able to get there. People told Jairus that there was no use in having Jesus come anymore. Jesus told Jairus, **Do not fear, only believe**." When Jesus got to the house a whole crowd of mourners had already gathered – weeping and wailing loudly. Jesus said, **The child is not dead but sleeping**." And they **laughed at him**. To humans, many things seem impossible...

When the nameless woman touched Jesus' robe, he felt power go out from him. **Who touched my clothes?** "... The woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before Jesus, and told him the whole truth." And Jesus said to her, **Daughter,** **not unnamed woman**, but **Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.**"

“Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” This nobody, ostracized, wounded, near hopeless woman came to Jesus for help and received it. Thank the Lord that her faith brought her to the source of life and healing – Jesus. Healing happened.

And the **little girl was dead** but Jesus came to her and **took her by the hand**. It was **against the law to touch dead people too**. And Jesus said, **“Little girl, get up!”** And she did! She was dead. Thank the Lord that her father had the good sense to go to Jesus for help. **Have you ever noticed how many times Jesus sticks his nose and his healing hands into places where the world says no one should go?** (Repeat.)

Today, now. As human beings, we look sin, brokenness and death in the face every day. Many times in our lives and world, we may be driven to hopelessness. Our faith falters and at times even vanishes. God sometimes seems uncaring, unmoved or non-existent. Yet, then somehow God comes again. Maybe we look for God. Maybe we just stumble into God. Maybe God has been there the whole time and we just didn’t see. Then patiently, faithfully, lovingly, Jesus picks us up and carries us, even through death.

Did you see it in our Gospel lesson? Jesus brings **healing and life** to **both** the **known** and the **unknown**, to both the **faithful person** and the person who appears to have **no faith**. Both to the one with **little hope** and to the one with **no hope**. Both to the one who **believes the right stuff** and to the one who **doesn’t know what to believe**.

Do you think that God **approves of slavery?** **No!** Many good Christians used the Bible to support slavery. Remember the **Civil War**. God was on both sides of the battle lines during the Civil War. Do you not think that God grieved every **Union** and every **Confederate** soldier who fell? And **every slave** who suffered and often died as well. All through the civil rights era, **Ku Klux Clansmen** thought God was on their side. To this very day, many people who practice discrimination think that God is on their side. A **foolish, deluded young man** with a Confederate flag thought that the **shooting of nine faithful Christian people** would help to **save our nation**. And now our whole nation listens as Jesus says, **“Get up!”** And Jesus, even in the face of death says, **“Do not fear, only believe.”** Jesus says, **“Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of**

your disease. **And God grieves both** for the **victims** and for the **shooter!** And did you hear, the family members of those innocent victims have, **to the shooter's very face,** announced that they **forgive him.** How could they possibly do that **without God's help?**

Do you think that God approved of the **killing of six million Jews** by the Nazis during World War II? But **do you not think** that **God was on both sides** of those battle lines too – grieving every **Allied** soldier who fell and every **Axis** soldier that fell? So often the people in the trenches are helpless pawns in the movement of giants. The **people of Germany** were **starving after the harsh reparations** that the Allies put on them after World War I. **Hitler** told the German people, **Follow me and I will give you bread.** They followed him. He gave them **bread** and **tanks** and **artillery** and **gas chambers.** And God grieved for everyone. And things looked **pretty hopeless** for a while there. And lots of people asked for Jesus to help. And Jesus said, **Do not fear, only believe.** **Get up!** And Jesus said, **Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.** And when WW II ended, our Lutheran churches united into the **Lutheran World Federation.** They then started **Lutheran World Relief** which helped to resettle tens of thousands of refugees from all over Europe. Today LWR is seen to be among the most trusted and effective **relief organizations in the world. Our world hunger dollars go there.** Roughly **93%** of every dollar goes directly to the need – short term rescue and long term restarting of lives. **God is a part of that.**

Do you think that God approved of **Apartheid in South Africa?** Good Christian people used the Bible to support that inhumane treatment of African people by a small minority of whites who came in and took over their country. **Was God not there grieving the torture,** the **hatred,** the **violence** and the **losses on both sides?** The Blacks finally came to power in their own country. And was God not a part of the amazing fact that **Nelson Mandela** led his nation to offer **forgiveness** for any of the whites who would admit their offenses and apologize? **God is a part of that. Little hope?** Another alternative to violence? **Do not fear, only believe.** **Get up! Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.**

When the **communists** took over Russia, China, Poland, etc., God's people went underground and kept on worshiping. And **God loved them all,** faithful followers and ruthless tyrants. **But, did God agree with what**

was happening? No! “Do not fear, only believe.” “Get up!” “Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” And now the church in Russia and China and Poland is alive and well and meeting publically.

And what about **polio**, the **measles**, **malaria**, **AIDS**, **cancer** – at one time in my life, each and all of these **appeared to be unstoppable, death-dealing enemies**. And is God moving in the face of a **polluted planet**, **homelessness**, **refugee camps**, **South American children** forced to leave their parents and travel hundreds of miles alone seeking safety and refuge, **wars without stopping**. **God is there too**.

My grandparents and great grandparents came here from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. They brought their languages, their pastors and their customs with them. They were all looking for a better life in this free land, a good place to raise their children. I am here amongst you this day to say that that is exactly what they found. I thank God again and again for the **privilege of living in the United States of America**. **I thank God** for every time **our great nation** has been able to **help bring about God’s good and gracious will for this world**. And I **ask God’s forgiveness** for every time that our nation has been a **part of things that were surely far from God’s will for the world**.

Is God not still moving among us to **heal the wounds known to generations of Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans and other minorities**? Does God not grieve all of the young men of color who are unemployed or even behind bars in this country? Or all of the native kids who lag far behind their classmates at school? Or all of the people who struggle with various kinds of addictions? Or all of the people who are struggling in their family relationships?

Jesus ran into two women in need. Or maybe better, Jesus found two women in need. Or maybe better, **Jesus came looking for anybody and everybody in need**. And Jesus went past all of the boundaries and barriers to help them. There is still **lots of healing work to do** in our community, nation and world. **Don’t give up**. Jesus says, **“Do not fear, only believe. Get up. Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”** **It sounds to me like “God’s Work. Our Hands.”** Thanks be to God. Amen.