

Proper 8 YB 2024

Women who Hemorrhaged

Be Healed of Your Dis-ease

By the Rev. Salying Wong

It was as if he had all the time in the world. When he laid eyes on her in the thick crowd, she came in fear and trembling and kneeled down before him. She kept murmuring, "I didn't mean to cause a bother. I didn't mean to get in the way." For she had heard the desperate exchange between Jairus and Jesus. Jairus repeatedly begged Jesus to hurry and come along. His 12 year old daughter was gravely ill. Would he please come and touch her and heal her? Please! She knew that desperation. Yes, she did. For as long as Jairus' daughter had been alive, she had hemorrhaged blood. She had spent all her money on doctors. But instead of getting better, she got worse. She was so tired of being sick. She had suffered so long and so hard. She thought, "While Jesus and Jairus are passing by, I'll just touch his clothes, and I'll be cured. No one will be the wiser."

But her desperate act drew the attention she had wished to avoid. After he felt power go out of him, Jesus yelled out, "Who touched me?" She tried to escape. But he laid eyes on her and she began to tremble. She had to come clean. "I'm so sorry, Jesus. I...I've been so sick...I know that Jairus' daughter is more important and I didn't think I'd get in the way." But he interrupted her, saying, "Daughter. Let's go sit in the shade on that rock over there." They sat under the shade of a fig tree and she told him the whole truth. At first, she just kept apologizing. But he didn't want to hear that. He wanted to know her truth. Her whole truth. Would she be willing to tell him?

No one had ever wanted to hear her whole truth. In fact, her disease made her an outcast. Her family did not acknowledge her. They said it was because she had sinned, that's why she was bleeding. He shook his head with compassion and said, "O Daughter." What a strange thing that he called her, "Daughter." She was almost

as old as he was. But, hearing him call her that—well, some old sorrow burst forth. She wept with all the years of pent-up grief and anger. She had no family, really. Those who should have been her family shunned her. She was so alone. And here, now, he was calling her daughter, as if she belonged to him. Now, she wept with relief, as if walking into the sunshine after years of living in a cave and feeling the warmth on her skin.

He said to her, “Your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your dis-ease.” And immediately, he got up and went to Jairus, leaving the woman’s question dangling on her lips, “What faith?” Faith? What was Jesus talking about? If he was referring to what motivated her to touch his robes, well, that wasn’t faith. She would have called it desperation. She would have touched the robes of any purveyor with the goods she was looking for—any quack on the street corner, she’d pay. Indeed, she had spent all her money on “physicians” who said they could make her better. No, that act of touching his robes, it was not faith, but desperation.

If there had been faith present, it was the way she came to him in fear and trembling, risking to trust in him to listen to her, to know her, to care about her story. If faith had been present, it was the courage she mustered to tell her whole story. It was this faith that led to the feeling of peace. He had said, “Go in peace and be healed of your dis-ease.” He said it that way, “Be healed of your dis-ease,” emphasizing each syllable, like it meant something other than her bleeding-illness. It pointed to the un-ease within her that no cure could fix. A lifetime of unease, anxiety and loneliness had melted away when she spoke her whole truth, when he called her, “Daughter.” Yes, Jesus had cured her bleeding. But, the healing he gave her after the cure, that was for things that cannot be fixed, for clocks that cannot be turned back, for losses that cannot be retrieved.

Mark’s gospel is full of miracle cures, and it would be tempting to wish that our own cure is only one muscled-faith prayer away. If we could only find the access point, merge our desperation with religious fervor, the fix will appear. But that would be the wrong way to understand the miracles. Yes, there were miracles and

cures, but they were always in service to Jesus' proclamation of the gospel, which was the good news that God sent him to free us from the forces that hold the human soul captive. This is why Jesus didn't cure every leper in every town. This is why everyone who was cured still died. No, the miracles were arrows pointing to a deeper need for the healing of the human heart—by forgiveness, by repentance, by love. This is why, when Jesus was presented with the paralytic man from the rooftop, he gave him first his great need, saying, "Your sins are forgiven you."

Those who worked so hard to get their friend down the rooftop were truly disappointed in Jesus. Admit it, it would be disappointing to us, too. How many of us would choose forgiveness over a good fix for our problems. We're only human. And yet, the gospel is divine. The divine healing Jesus announced to the world was for things that can't always be fixed. You can perceive the healing by a certain kind of courage to acknowledge the whole truth of your life, by the risk of belonging to Jesus as "daughter" and "son", by a certain acceptance of reality as it is, not as we would have it, with a certain ability to release what we cannot fix for a future that is still being born. This is when a peace that is beyond understanding might fall upon us. This peace is independent of a cure; it is beyond our everyday reasoning. And yet, the peace that is beyond understanding is a sign of this divine healing and you know it by this: for, even though the world might look exactly the same—all that is broken, all that is ill—you find that you can be made whole within.