

*“Out of the Depths”*

*Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43*

*July 1, 2018*

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*Sing: “In my distress I cry to the Lord, deliver me O Lord.”*

In preparing for today, this choral response from the Psalter, known as *De Profundis* -or “Out of the depths” has been running through my head. Previously, I have shared with the congregation how music has played and continues to play a role in my own spiritual formation and my self-care. In addition, music plays a major role in how I prepare and design a worship service, even before sitting down to write a sermon.

*Sing: “In my distress I cry to the Lord, deliver me O Lord.”*

In this morning’s Gospel lesson, we hear the story of two distressing circumstances. The first one we encounter is that of Jairus. Jairus, a leader of the synagogue- a position of importance, respect, and wealth, is distressed because his daughter is quite ill. Jesus’ reputation as a healer is well known throughout the region, and precedes him on his journey.

Jairus fell to the ground and asked Jesus, “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.” In Jairus’ distress, not only did he ask for his daughter’s healing, scripture tells us that at Jesus’ feet, Jairus begged, repeatedly. Jairus asked for deliverance from his daughter’s illness.

*Sing: “In my distress I cry to the Lord, deliver me O Lord.”*

The second story we hear interrupts Jairus’ story. As Jesus was travelling to Jairus’ home to heal the girl, there is a large crowd pushing in on him. Everyone wanted to be close to Jesus. In the crowd, a woman, who had spent twelve years with uncontrollable bleeding. No physician could help her, she spent all the money she had and she spent all the energy she could muster trying to be healed.

According to Levitical law, which is what governed the Jewish people in the time of Jesus, this woman with this constant blood flow would have been considered “ritually unclean.” She would have been restricted in terms of her travel among the people and her ability to be a “normal member of society.” The discomfort and the frustration with her physical ailment aside, the fact that she would be a social outcast, where no person would be permitted to come into

contact with her, the social alienation must have been so distressing. It would have taken a major toll on her emotionally and spiritually... I can hear her now...

*Sing:* "In my distress I cry to the Lord, deliver me O Lord."

Faith is a powerful thing. Faith, scripture tells us, can move mountains. Faith, can cause the blind to see and the lame to walk, the mute to speak and demons to be cast out. Faith is what this woman had. Faith enough to believe that merely touching the hem of Jesus' garment- not even his body, not even in Jesus knowing what was happening, this woman knew that if only she could graze her fingers on the edge of his cloak, she would be made well. She would be delivered from her ailment and would be able to go about her life. So, among a crowd pressing in on Jesus, this woman reached out in faith, and was healed.

It is in this time that Jesus pauses on his journey to address the healing power that passed from him, which is a whole different sermon opportunity, in itself. As Jesus is addressing this woman, members of Jairus' house come to inform Jairus, ever so delicately, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" They tell Jairus to just give up. Jairus has a new reason to be distressed. I can almost hear him now...

*Sing:* "In my distress I cry to the Lord, deliver me O Lord."

Beloved, isn't it amazing to serve a God of miracles? (*more emphasis*) Beloved, isn't it amazing to serve a God of miracles? This update on the status of Jairus' daughter presents a challenge for the readers of Mark, and would have presented an impossibility in the eyes of those gathered around Jesus. The child is dead, as the members of Jairus' house stated. There was no healing to be done... or was there.

Jesus comforted Jairus, saying, "Do not fear, only believe." Jesus takes with him only three disciples- Peter, James, and John. They continued, leaving the crowd and the other nine disciples behind. Jairus' home was in mourning- people wailing and carrying on, they laugh at Jesus when he tells them that the girl is only asleep. I can almost hear the snickering... "How naïve that Jesus must be... don't you think we would have checked to make sure she wasn't just asleep?"

Imagine their surprise as Jesus took her hand and told her to get up, "Talitha cum"... and she did. Amazement. No "healer" had brought someone back from death before. No "holy man" had power over life like this. Jesus' command to get her something to eat would prove to them that she was in fact, alive- if she could eat, she was living. This man... this Jesus had done something that was impossible.

This world is filled with “impossible.” We live in a cynical society where people laugh when we say that we believe in this book (*hold up the Bible*); where people laugh, as the mourner’s a Jairus’ home did, when we say Jesus was resurrected; where people laugh because what we know as Christians to be true, a cynical society says, “that is impossible.”

The name of my home church is **FAITH** United Methodist Church. One day, I will share with you why that community named the church “Faith,” in 1956, but I can tell you now, that it is a story of hope and trust. Hebrews 11:1 defines this word, saying, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is conviction. Faith is more than belief, faith is knowledge. The woman in the crowd had faith- she had conviction that, if only she could touch Jesus’ clothes, she would be well. Jairus sought out Jesus in faith, convicted that if only, Jesus could make it to his daughter she would be well.

We each go through low points in our lives, our own depths- different for each of us, where we find ourselves feeling helpless, and hopeless. Many times, it is in these places, which we find ourselves turning to God and asking for mercy and deliverance from our distress. It is in those times, where our faith can grow, as we experience mercy and love.

***Talk about the closing hymn, following the locations of the “places” in the hymn.***