

Healing in Trouble; Trouble in Healing

Did you notice a connection in the woman & girl? The woman had been bleeding for 12 years, the entire life of the girl who was sick and ultimately who died. It is hard to wrap our heads around the idea of hemorrhaging 12 years, especially given our modern conveniences that may take for granted. If that was not enough because she was bleeding she was unclean. That meant that she could not enter the synagogue, the temple and no one would choose to be near her because if they touched they would be made unclean. We know how hard it was not to gather for 28 weeks, a little over 6 months. Imagine then what it was like not to gather for worship for 624 weeks. If that was not already hard, imagine no one willing to touch because it would cut them off as well.

If we are honest this story may be a little more real for us after living through the last 16 months. A time when we turned nearly everything upside down. We had to figure out how much and what kind of risks we were willing to take, not just for our own sake but for our families and the beloved community. The woman in our Gospel reading was at the point she was willing to take any risk. She was at her wits end. She had tried everything. She says that she did not even need to ask Jesus of anything but

simply to touch something he was touching. “²⁹Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’” It’s easy for us to understand what the disciples were saying but as much as we understand them we do not understand Jesus. Jesus healed those who came to him. Jesus did not deny healing to anyone that asked. If we carry this to a logical end – Jesus even healed those who didn’t ask but simply touched.

We don’t know why the woman did not ask to be healed. Perhaps she had been told by the expert doctors there was nothing more they could do. Perhaps she could not survive being told no by Jesus. And when Jesus realized he had healed someone and asked who it was she came in fear, confessing to Jesus what had happened! This woman, who is not named had had trouble being healed and when she was healed thought she was in trouble for being healed. And yet Jesus was not mad. Quite the opposite, he compliments her on her faith and sends her out in peace healed. But it is here that we come with some tough questions. Because we know people who have reached out to Jesus and yet they have died. Does that mean that their faith was not sufficient to heal them? Does that mean that God only heals those he wants to?

Our reading continues tough questions because we follow this healing with the story of the a sick 12 year old girl who dies before Jesus can get to her. We can share stories of children who have died and the pain that brings to all of us. When Jesus gets there many are gathered and do not believe anything can be done. Jesus sends them away and only brings in a few disciples and her parents. He raises the little girl and tells those in the room to tell no one what has happened. Why does Jesus say to tell no one?

Illness and death are hard. Some believe that everything happens for a reason. But we've looked and scripture and know that is not true. We know that we live in a broken world and that brokenness brings illness, pain and death. We have a hard time with death. We do not know what to say. There is always a dance do we say someone has died? Do we say passed on as a way to say we believe in the resurrection and eternal life? Do we say they are in a better place? It is important to say a life, as we know it has ended. Someone has died. It is important for us to grieve so that we can move into the hope. But if we do not acknowledge the death how can we begin to get up and live a new life, one that is different now.

We do not have the answers as to why one person responds to treatment and lives and another dies. We do not know and it is the not knowing and not understanding that makes hard. We

want a neat and tidy answer. But answers are not the same is faith. We do not know exactly what happens and when and how. But we do know that Jesus died so that we may live.

Our funeral liturgy begins “Dying, Christ destroyed our death. Rising, Christ restored our life. Christ will come again in glory...What we shall be has not yet been revealed; but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Those who have this hope purify themselves as Christ is pure.” It is a mystery and yet we believe. Does that mean that what happens here means little? On the contrary, we are called to bring healing in times of trouble. Think about those times in our lives when we experienced moments of healing and hope. What are the ways in which we can offer true words of hope in times of darkness?

When my mom died, I remember being overwhelmed with all the things that had to be done. I wondered how to even put one foot in front of the other. I could find myself working one moment and crying the next. I cried not because I was without hope but because I was doing something I had never done before and it was overwhelming. The words of encouragement I received from those who had this experience before me were what got me through. The ones who knew what it meant, good and bad and promised they would be there. We could fill hours sharing stories

of the times in our lives that others brought healing and wholeness.

Can we, as believers in Jesus bring healing into trouble circumstances. Can we offering hope and companionship for those who struggle? Are we willing to cause trouble when those who need healing most are not receiving it? Faith is not just for ourselves. Jesus calls us to share the good news, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned – not for our benefit but for those who have no other help or hope! We are to be servants of the one who gives us life and hope and faith. To share the love of God with every one so that we may get tastes of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.