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St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
6th Sunday after Pentecost/Year B/Proper 8
July 1, 2018
Text: Mark 5:21-43

“Healed”

In Mark’s Gospel, it is rare for Jesus to get much rest. He seemed to go from one thing to the other and from place to place. If he was not walking along the Sea of Galilee he can be found in a synagogue. If he was not in a synagogue he was spotted in someone’s village or town. If not in a village or town then he could be found making his way through grain fields and then back to the sea and up a mountain and then home (wherever home was) and back along the sea shore. And never was he alone. Always sought after and found again and again for crowds had heard of him. Many had seen him. And many followed him because of the miracles he could accomplish.

In today’s gospel Jesus has once again crossed the sea and as he began teaching, a man whose name is Jairus finds Jesus and kneels at his feet. The poor and destitute often assumed this position but not a man in Jairus’ position. Jairus was a man of wealth and importance. He had a reputation to uphold because he was one of the leaders of the synagogue and generally speaking that group didn’t particularly care for Jesus. But Jairus was different and he was desperate. His baby girl was sick and at the brink of death. ‘Please Jesus. Come and lay your hands on her and heal her!’ Jesus agrees and they began to walk toward Jairus’ house. Of course, they are not alone because as always, the crowd was hoping to witness a miracle. This man’s child was dying. Would Jesus be able to save her? Would she live or die? The curious wanted to know. And in the midst of this story, another story began.

We don’t know her name, how old she was or where she came from. She could have come from anywhere. But what we do know is that she has been bleeding for twelve long years and no one has been able to help her. She has taken every tonic and chewed every herb imaginable to stop the bleeding. She has seen doctor after doctor and not one of them could help her. Her money was depleted. She had no family and no friends and no community to speak of because she was shunned, considered an outcast. Her condition was as bad as or more so than folks living with leprosy. Anyone who touched her would be considered ritually unclean according to Jewish Law. Unclean as was she.

After twelve years the woman was just a shell of her former self. And her self-worth was pitiful. That was-until she heard that Jesus had come near. Maybe she heard about his teaching, about him healing Peter's mother-in-law, about him healing the sick in nearby towns and along roadsides, about him calming the storm, or about the demons he just recently had cast out of a man and into swine gathered in the nearby country of the Gerasenes. Whatever it was she heard, it was enough to make her believe he could do something for her. She had had enough of the blood flow and of being desperate and alone. And so she risked what little life she had left and clawed her way forward through the crowd. Her faith told her, "*If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.*" And she reached out and touched the hem of his garment and immediately she felt a surge of healing race throughout her body. She was healed!

Jesus also knew that something miraculous had happened. He stopped in his tracks. "*Who touched me?*" His disciples thought this was one of the most ridiculous questions ever asked because it would have been hard NOT to be touched or brushed on! Dozens and dozens in the crowd may have touched him as he walked along. But Jesus was certain that someone *needed* to touch him. Someone needed his healing power. The woman must have felt some kind of guilt. What she did was both right and yet wrong but no one needed to turn her in, to rat her out. Mark tells us that in fear and trembling the woman fessed up to what she had done. She told him the whole truth.

Jesus could have gotten angry at the unnamed woman for she had defiled him just by touching his clothes. 'Do not touch anyone or anything unclean. Do not touch a dead person. Just don't. Or you will be considered unclean too' so said the law. But that didn't matter to Jesus. Most of his ministry has been about breaking down barriers. By touching him, the woman's bleeding stopped and she was no longer unclean or an outcast, a nobody. He had healed the woman just as he had healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law. He had healed the woman just as he had healed the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue and more like him. He had healed the woman just as he had healed the leper along a roadside. He healed the woman just as he had healed countless others. He healed the woman just as he would heal Jairus' daughter. "*Talitha cum!*" "*Little girl, get up!*"

Jesus helped her to her feet without a second thought, and with a look of compassion he said gently, "*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.*" He called her 'daughter.' When was the last time she heard that word spoken to her- "*Daughter*"? Sister? Wife? Mother?" Or even Friend? Daughter! By his words, her healing was complete. "...*go in peace and*

be healed...” She would no longer be ‘the bleeding woman.’ She is a daughter. God’s beloved daughter. And she has been healed, made whole, and restored in her relationships to others. Sent out in peace.

This is the wonderful life that Jesus offers to each and every one of us, indeed to the whole world. For her story is our story. We were not meant for any of us to be shunned or ignored, hated on, or corralled into any one box that others build for us or that we sometimes build for ourselves. Hasn’t there been enough hate? Enough division and separation? Enough bloodshed? Enough walls? Enough tears? We were not made to be people who live without hope or joy or to be but a portion of all that we can be, who we are meant to be as individuals and as members of the same human race. God meant for us, all of us, to live fully alive in God’s love, grace and mercy. To extend the same...

Again and again throughout the gospels, Jesus reminds us that he is present to heal us, to make us whole and restore us to the fullness of life. To lift us up when we are not sure if we are up or down. To be the peace we need in times of conflict and uncertainty. To be the breaker of every yoke and chain that holds us back and keeps us all from being free.

Jesus reminds us that we are God’s children, sons and daughters, meant to be loved and in turn, to love others. To be like a Balm in Gilead that helps heal what is broken and bleeding in our city, nation, and the world. To make the wounded whole. To show compassion. To embrace the other.

We only need to reach out and touch the hem of his garment with faith even if it is no larger than that of a tiny mustard seed. Touch and be healed. Touch and be made whole. Touch and go in peace.

Amen!