

# People of Faith

## Mark 5

In the gospel passage we have just heard, Mark invites us to consider what it means to relate to Jesus as people of faith. This is a lively faith that acknowledges both a need for Jesus and a desire to have Jesus touch our lives so that our faith is deepened and our lives made more whole.

We meet two such people this morning. In many ways they were different from each other. Jairus - a synagogue ruler, a man of status. The woman is unnamed and would have been a societal misfit and outcast because of the disease she had suffered for twelve years. Yet both of them had come to Jesus because they have a need that no one else can cure and they desire His intervention. Let us consider each of them in turn.

Jairus, was a very important person. He was a ruler in a local Synagogue, and he was charged with the correct administration and the due conduct of worship. Jairus had reached the highest post that life could give him in the respect of his fellow men. No doubt he was well to do and had climbed the ladder of earthly ambition and prestige. It seemed as if life for Jairus had given him many lavish things, but it was going to take his most precious thing - his daughter away.

This scene was early in Jesus' ministry, but already the opposition to Jesus is growing. Jairus could have not had any love for Jesus for he must have regarded Jesus as a breaker of the law. Jairus had many reasons NOT to go to Jesus, but he had one overriding reason - his only daughter. It says she was twelve years old - this was significant as Palestinian girls at this age developed more quickly than in the West and she could have been contemplating marriage and her whole future lay ahead of her. Jairus' decision to go to Jesus - fall at his feet and beg him - could not have been an easy one. He goes in desperation and in faith. He implores Jesus to come to his house and heal to his daughter. So moved is Jesus that he went back to Jairus' house, and not only did he heal the young girl but brought her back to life. Jesus was eager to heal, he did not hesitate to make the journey to Jairus' home. Jesus wanted to respond to the faith and trust Jairus had manifested in him - by risking criticism of his fellow Jews for going to Jesus with such a request.

Next we heard the story of a woman in a large crowd suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. This issue of blood had cut her off from life as she was ceremonially unclean. As it says in Leviticus 15: vs. 19 ‘When a woman has a discharge of blood from her body, she shall be in her impurity, and whoever touches her shall be unclean’. “The Law forbid her to be there as any one who came into contact with her would also be considered unclean”. And this was why she did not come openly to Jesus but crept up in the crowd. This poor woman risked the consequences - because her great faith assured her that Jesus would heal her if she trusted Him. Having heard of the stories of Jesus’ power, she declared: “If I but touch His clothes, I will be made well”. She reached out touched Jesus’ garment. Immediately Jesus stopped and said “Who touched my clothes?” The disciples said to him - “With all this crowd pressing up on you, how can you say “Who touched me?” Jesus was immediately aware that power had gone from Him. When Jesus asked “Who touched me” - it was not too embarrass her, he just wanted to point out how great was her faith and trust in Him. Jesus then speaks to this woman as only He and she were there, the crowd seemed forgotten and He said “Daughter”. “Your faith has saved you, go in peace”. Jesus here showed His appreciation of her faith by an endearing title “daughter”.

David Rosage in his book “What the scripture says about healing” says this:  
Be a part of this crowd for a moment. Feel the crowd jostling to get closer to Jesus, to touch Him, to hear what He is saying. You may observe the woman elbowing her way through the crowd. Now let the confusion of this scene fade as we try to get an insight into the mind and heart of Jesus. Try to experience how He felt. Jesus knew the Law,- but He also realized the isolation and persecution which this poor woman endured. - Her desperation melted in the heart of Jesus.

This story of this poor woman is another story of the overwhelming love of Jesus. I can’t imagine the joy that filled Jesus’ heart when He witnessed the great faith of this woman. The woman’s courage and perseverance was increased by her strong faith. Here was a poor, unimportant sufferer, with a trouble that made her unclean, and yet to that one unimportant person, Jesus gave all of himself.

So what do these two stories from the gospel say to us today? The passage talks of healing and faith.

People are still in need of healing today physically, emotionally and spiritually. We are living to day surrounded by wars, famine, terrorism, broken relationships with in

the family, many have lost their faith in God and moved away from the scriptures and live as they want to - many times disregarding others needs, and satisfying their own.

Hospital's are full to overflowing with physical and psychiatric illnesses.

The Scripture tells us God made the earth as a good place; the home where men and women would live peacefully. He made people to live in close relationship with Him - to enjoy God's company and to be free to turn to Him for help. The Old Testament has many things to say about the way God planned life to work on earth. In (psalm 8) 'You have given them (mankind) dominion over the works of Your hands; you have put all things under their feet.'

Jesus says I John 10: 10; "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly".

A Christian is not just someone who does things in a particular way, or believes in particular facts. - A Christian is someone willing to be changed by Jesus Christ. Men and women were to be responsible in using the earths resources, to support each other in the marriage of a man and a woman, in friendship and companionship. In Ecclesiastes 4: 'Two are better than one, because they have good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other'.

However God's plan for the way people should live was ruined when mankind chose to go their own ways. Men and women started to live lives that suited their desires - and fulfilled their own ambitions.

Our rebellion throughout the generations against God is that we have lost touch with our creator. A majority of people today have little awareness of God's existence and have no desire to follow the way of life He designed for us.- Many people might say this is a good thing, that we need to be independent, and free ourselves from restrictive belief in God. But this isn't what the Bible says. It teaches us that God is the one who made us - and He knows exactly how we need to live.

Illness can be the very circumstance that brings us to Jesus - as our stories for today so clearly illustrate.

In Jesus' ministry on earth all those sick and possessed with demons were brought to Him. He drove out the demons of hatred, prejudice, anger and bitterness - and a whole host of evil were taken from the lives of those crippled spiritually and physically.

Our broken human nature is prone to sin, we are vulnerable to the pain and hurts which our own sinfulness and brokenness can cause us as well as the wounds others can inflict on us., - In Proverbs 17: (it reads) A cheerful heart is good medicine, - but a broken spirit saps a persons strength. This verse suggests that there is a connection with a healthy spirit and a Christ centred attitude. Jesus was well aware of our weak human nature and would always be in need of healing. And this is why He established the 'Healing Church'.

If I cut my finger, as long as I keep it clean, - it will heal in time due to the natural powers of healing that are implanted by God. They are part of creation. The medical profession do not heal they assist in the healing that is natural to the body. We do not heal in the Church - God is the one who heals.

God has a plan for healing. Part of our healing takes place when we come to know God through Jesus and in faith receive the Holy Spirit in our life . Paul says in (Ephesians 3: 16) "I pray that, according to the riches of His glory, He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being - with power through His Spirit". Healing continues when we openly share, worship, and pray with each other, and live in faith with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Within the security of a loving Christian family, it ought to be possible for us to share and show our true selves. God uses other members of the Body of Christ to meet our needs, just as He can use us to meet the needs of others. There are times when we will be hurt - and we will need to forgive - because other Christians are far from being perfect. But through our fellow Brothers and sisters in Christ - God can and does bring inner healing.

When Jesus was in the world He brought the kingdom of God, through preaching, teaching and healing, - these were all an integral part of His ministry. Where the kingdom came in, - so the healing came in for spirit, mind and body. As Christians we believe that Christ is risen, alive and ascended in the glory of heaven - and He is continuing His work through those of us who are His body - the Church.

Hans Kung, marvellously summed up the word of God in the world, when he wrote - "The kingdom of God is creation healed.' Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was already here, and so we see something of its healing power now. - People are reconciled to each other; we start to experience something of God's new life; - the sick are healed. But Jesus also said the kingdom is not fully here. There is still some misunderstanding and suspicion, and people remain unhealed. Because we live at a time when the kingdom of God is not yet FULLY here, we see the kingdom only

partly in operation. Our Christian hope is in God,- who has faithfully promised that one day creation will be fully healed.

What we do know is that although one day creation will be fully healed we can in present learn from the stories of Jairus and the anonymous woman Jesus refers to as daughter. - They invite us to live as people of faith who long to see more of Jesus' healing presence at work in the lives of all who call upon Him - who is the healer of our souls, the healer of our bodies, mind and spirits.