

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading

1st July 2018

Mark 5: 21-43

Jesus heals a woman afflicted with a hemorrhage and raises Jairus's daughter from death.

Background on the Gospel Reading

For today's Gospel, we continue to read from the Gospel of Mark. Last Sunday we heard about Jesus calming the storm, the first of four miracles that Jesus performs in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. Each of these four miracle stories offers us a glimpse at Jesus' power. This week we hear about the third and fourth miracles, skipping the second miracle, the healing of a man from Gerasene who was possessed by a demon.

Today's Gospel reports two stories of healing. One story tells us about a father's great love for his dying daughter. The other story tells us about a desperate woman who risks much as she seeks healing from Jesus. In each story, the request for healing is itself a courageous act of faith, and yet very different circumstances are represented by the lives of each suffering person.

Jairus is described as a synagogue official, a man of considerable standing in the Jewish community. Distraught over his daughter's poor health, he approaches Jesus and asks him to heal her. Although Mark doesn't provide many details, we can imagine that his daughter has been ill for some time and that her condition is deteriorating.

As Jesus leaves with Jairus, Mark describes a second person who seeks healing from Jesus, a woman with a hemorrhage. This woman secretly touches Jesus from behind and is immediately cured. In response, Jesus turns and asks who touched him. Jesus' disciples, always a little clueless in Mark's Gospel, help us envision the scene. The crowds are pushing in on Jesus, and yet he, knowing that power has gone out of him, asks who touched him. The woman could have remained anonymous, yet at Jesus' question she steps forward and acknowledges what she has done. Jesus responds by acknowledging her as a model of faith and sends her away in peace.

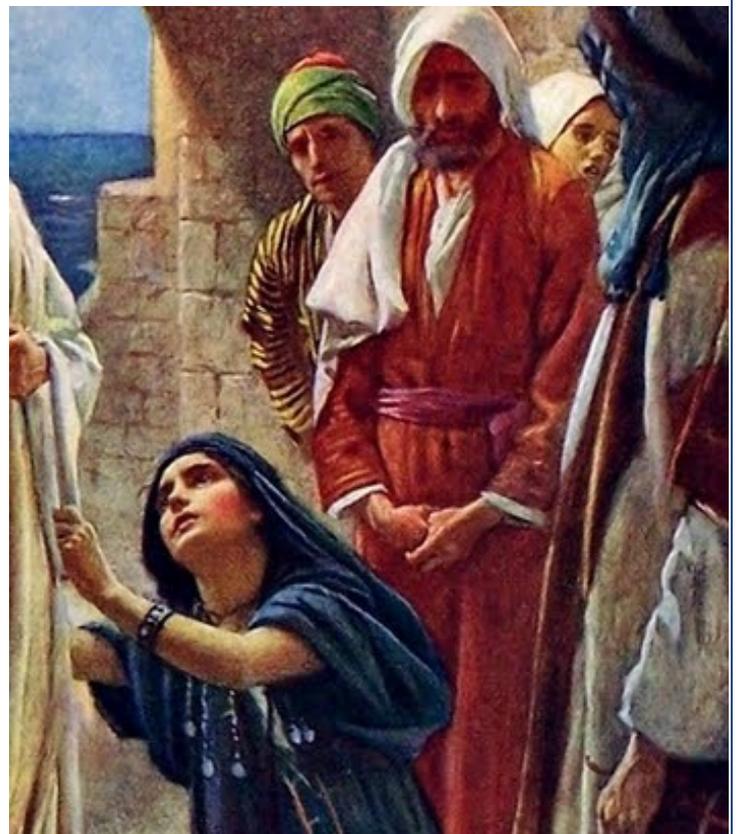
At this point, we can imagine Jairus's impatience with Jesus; his daughter is dying and Jesus hasn't helped him yet. As if to build a sense of urgency, messengers suddenly arrive and confirm Jairus's worst fear: his daughter has died. Jesus curiously ignores their message and reassures Jairus. When they arrive at

Jairus's home, they find family and friends mourning the girl's death. Jesus enters the room of the dead girl, takes her by the hand, and instructs her to arise. Jairus's faith in Jesus has not been in vain; his daughter is restored to life.

The contrasts between Jairus and the woman with the hemorrhage are stark and revealing. One is a man, the other is a woman. One is a public official, an important person in the community. The other is a woman who has lost everything to find a cure to a condition that separated her from the community. One approaches Jesus publicly. The other approaches Jesus secretly. Yet in each case, faith leads them to seek out Jesus in their time of need.

The Gospel concludes with Jesus' instructions to remain silent about this miracle. This is typical of Mark's Gospel and is sometimes referred to as the messianic secret. Repeatedly, those who witness Jesus' power and authority are instructed to not speak of what they have witnessed. These instructions appear impossible to obey, and it is difficult to understand the purpose of these instructions. But in each case, they seem to emphasize the fact that each individual, including the reader of Mark's Gospel, must, in the end, make his or her own judgment about Jesus' identity. Each individual must make his or her own act of faith in affirming Jesus as God's Son.

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