

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time - B

Today's Gospel is put together like a miracle archway. The two columns are the synagogue official's request that Jesus heal his daughter and the actual healing itself. The peak of the arch is the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage.

In between the father's request and the girl's arising St. Mark describes both meaningless and healing touch. Meaningless touch is what happens when a group becomes a crowd and tries to move—sort of like when the doors open for a concert and everyone tries to get in at once.

Their attention is focused on their goal and who bumps into whom is not something we give a lot of thought to.

That's how the disciples saw this walk with Jesus; they were on the way to the official's house and their intention was stay close and see what was going to happen. Jostling was as inconsequential as the breeze as long as they could maintain a good viewing position.

But the crux of the story is focused on the woman they didn't even notice, the one who had suffered for such a long time—so long that not only was she not healed, but physicians had spent all she had in vain.

Mark leads us through the steps of her journey of faith:

- First, she heard about Jesus. What she heard

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sparked her hope and kindled her faith.

- Like someone who approached God based on God's merciful reputation rather than personal knowledge, she sneaks up behind Jesus, believing that simply touching his cloak would save her.
- She was right. Just coming into contact with Jesus' clothes healed her of her infirmity.
- But for Jesus that was not enough. He was not satisfied with people thinking that, every now and then, God allows for a miracle to occur. He wants to bring people into God's kingdom, where God, for whom all things are possible, is really present.
- Jesus perceived that someone had touched him as who he was, not just another body in the crowd.
- So, he turned to look for the person who had recognized him for who he was.
- The woman, comprehending what had happened to her and seeing Jesus looking around, presented herself before him, in effect allowing him to enter into personal relationship with her. She not just one of the crowd anymore. She comes clean before him and tells him everything.
- Jesus reciprocates by calling her "daughter", assuring her that her faith had saved her and

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that she could go in peace, healed of her affliction.

Let's consider this to be a perfect lesson in the school of faith. We are the woman. Jesus is in our midst, and he is in the midst of everyone else, too.

We can allow ourselves to get lost in the crowd, thinking that we don't really matter to him all that much, that he's too busy with important things to care about us, or we can let hope spur us on with the thought that if we just draw near, healing can happen.

And it does. And in the midst of that, we discover that Jesus is looking for us in particular. He's detected our hope and wants to affirm it and build it into the relationship with God that we are designed for.

Then comes a choice: The woman is healed. When she sees Jesus looking for her, she's filled with fear and trembling. This is after all, the one with uncanny divine power over the forces of sickness and health. She can choose to fade back into the crowd, to take her winnings and go home as it were.

Or she can choose to go for broke. She can come forward in spite of the fear and trembling, and lay her life before its author.

She chooses to come forward. She chooses life. Even though she has already been healed, and her

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original motivation has been resolved, she chooses the relationship Jesus offers by coming forward and telling him the whole truth, her whole truth, by becoming transparent to him.

Because of that transparency, there's nothing to keep Jesus from recognizing kinship with her. She has chosen the way he has chosen—letting nothing get in the way of his relationship with God, letting nothing cloud it.

Whatever is happening in our life, there is healing present. It may not be complete, but healing is taking place. It may not be the cancer that is healed, but maybe we no longer feel isolated and alone. Perhaps it's not the diabetes that goes away so much as our sense of entitlement to do what we want without suffering any consequences.

Just as a scratch scabs over and heals itself, it's in our spiritual DNA to be healed. Hope makes that healing possible. It activates it—moving us to draw near to God, it's source.

And if we accept the risk to reach out in hope, the results go beyond what we intended. We find ourselves being invited into life beyond healing, life in union with God where we become our true selves, sons and daughters of the Most High.

In many cases coming into contact with others is nothing more than a jostling about. But we have in our midst the One who can heal, wants to heal, can tell when healing occurs, and is intent on

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completing that process until it comes to fulfillment—let's call it healing plus.

Again today, we are encouraged to live in hope, to work on being transparent with God so that his healing power can come to full effect in us. In spite of the fear and trembling that coming into contact with the living God entails, life is waiting for all who take the risk to hope for it.

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1. A story embedded within the story. The middle part could hold the most promise. Think of an arch.

2. Between the pillars for the synagogue leader's daughter is the arch, the peak. There meaningless touch is contrasted to a touch made in hope.

a. meaningless touch: when a group becomes a crowd; the focus is on some goal they are moving toward. Jostling against others is inconsequential. How the disciples saw their walk with Jesus to Jairus's house.

b. Overlooked is the woman suffering for so long; that's the crux of the story.

3. The elements:

- She knows Jesus by reputation only, but has formed an opinion: Even if I only touch the hem of his garment, I can be healed.
- She's right! She's healed.
- Not enough for Jesus. He wants for her to have more—entry into relationship with him and his Father, entry into the kingdom.
- He looks for her—she's not just a face in the crowd. Her healing has formed an opening.
- She realizes it; is filled with fear and trembling and is confronted with a choice: Do I go forward? Or take my healing and fade into the crowd.

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- She chooses to come clean, to tell him everything.
- Jesus' response: "daughter," her faith and hope has lead to her healing.

4. We are invited to place ourselves in her position in the story.

Jesus is in our midst. He is the presence of healing for us.

We can refuse to believe, let ourselves remain just a face in the crowd. The safer option.

OR

We can let hope spur us forward: If we just draw near, healing can happen.

And it does, and more. A moment of healing becomes a moment of discovery. Jesus detects our hope and seeks to build it into a relationship.

5. A choice must be made. The woman is healed. And she's discovered. The discovery leads to fear and trembling. What to do? Hide in the crowd or come forward?

She comes forward in spite of the fear and trembling to lay her life before its author in all transparency. Now it's not about healing but about belonging: "daughter!" Jesus proclaims their kinship.

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6. Whatever is happening in our life, healing is present. It may not be complete, but it is taking place:

Maybe not the cancer, but the isolation and loneliness

Maybe not the hypertension, but the sense of entitlement that tells us we should be able to do what we want when we want it.

Hope makes healing possible. If we accept the risk to reach out in hope, the results go beyond what we intended: an invitation into life beyond healing, where we become our true selves.

7. In many cases coming into contact is no more than a jostling about.

But we have in our midst One who can heal, wants to heal, can tell when there's an opening, and is intent on sticking with the process until it comes to fulfillment. Healing+

Again today we are encouraged to take the risk to live in hope, to work on being transparent with God, to refuse to be overcome by fear and trembling so that we can come into contact with the living God and the life that entails.