

6th Sunday after Pentecost
June 30, 2024

Lam. 3:22-33; Ps. 30; 2 Cor.8:1-9, 13-15
Mark 5:21-43

Grace, Mercy and Peace from Christ our Lord be with you Always. Amen.

Have you ever reached the end of your ability to cope? “I’m at my wit’s end.” “I just don’t know what I’m going to do.” “If one more thing goes wrong, I’m just going to ...”

It’s the rest of that last statement that can lead us to make horrible choices. “I’m going to hit the bottle again.” Or “There’s no use even trying to fix this, so I give up!” Or “Nobody can help me. There’s just no hope anymore.” Or “What’s the use?”

You may come to the point where you are pushed beyond the limits of what you think you can endure. One of the ways we describe this is “finding yourself at the end of your rope.” Maybe you’ve been there, or maybe you’re headed that way. Our scripture today tells us about two people who were very familiar with these feelings — of hopelessness and despair — and who were at the end of their ropes.

Two desperate people with very different backgrounds each heard that Jesus was nearby. Both made their way to Jesus and saw him as their last, best hope. Jairus was one of the leaders of the synagogue. He came to Jesus and fell at his feet, repeatedly pleading with Jesus to come and heal his 12-year-old daughter. “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so she may be made well and live.” Jesus agreed and went with him.

As they went toward Jairus’ house, the crowd pressed in on Jesus and he felt power go out from him. Mark tells us a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for years went up to Jesus. Her illness made her “unclean,” so that she was an outcast. She should not have been in the crowd. She should not have approached Jesus, or anyone for that matter. She had been suffering with this condition for twelve years and the “off limits woman” had reached her limit. It was now or never, so she approached Jesus thinking it would be enough if she just touched the hem of his clothing. So, approaching Jesus from behind, she reached out and touched his cloak. Immediately, her issue of blood stopped, and she was healed.

Jesus felt the transfer of power from his body and turned to the crowd and asked who touched him. With the crowd pressing in, it seemed like a silly question. Well, everyone was touching (or trying to touch) him. But Jesus was asking because the woman had reached out to him in faith. She admitted to Jesus and told him the truth. Jesus responded, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

“While [Jesus] was still speaking, some people came from the synagogue leader’s house to say, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’”

You know the rest of this story, don’t you? “Do not be afraid; only believe,” Jesus said. Then he, along with Peter, James and John went to Jairus’ house and saw all the commotion of people weeping and mourning. Jesus said, “The child is not dead but sleeping.” And the people laughed at Jesus.

Then Jesus took his companions and the child’s parents into where the child was and said, “Little girl, get up!” Immediately this girl stood up and began to walk around the room.

“What’s the use?” Two people at the end of their rope found hope. That is no small matter. Oh sure, the woman could have lived out the rest of her days the same as she had lived the last twelve years — always sick, always an outcast, always at the mercy of others and never quite knowing how long she could keep on doing this. More than once, no doubt, she sighed and asked herself, “What’s the use?”

Was there anything at all she could do? No, but Jesus ...

Jairus knew his daughter was dying. An important man like him could get the best care available. One physician after another shook their heads in sadness and told him the bad news. What’s the use? There was no hope.

Was there anything at all he could do? No, but Jesus ...

Who is Jesus and why are people always talking about him? Word had already begun to circulate throughout Israel. Mark tells us (after Jesus healed a man with a skin disease), “But he [the man who was healed] went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly but stayed in the country, and people came to him from every quarter.”

As word spread about Jesus and what he could do, people began to wonder if he could help them, too. “I know the physician said there was no hope, but Jesus ...”

Lewis Galloway, a biblical scholar, said that when Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter, God was about to prove [those who doubted] “dead wrong.”

A couple more things of interest for us in today’s scripture: First, the number 12, which occurs many times in the Bible, here is mentioned twice. Jairus’ daughter is 12 years old and the unnamed woman had been suffering from a flow of blood for 12 years. That number occurs 187 times in the Bible, often meaning perfection or authority. For it to be mentioned here just adds significance and specificity to this incredible narrative.

Second, both Jairus’ daughter and the woman now face the future as “daughters of God;” whereas before, neither of them had any future. Both had reached the end of their ability to do anything to improve their situation until Jesus entered their lives and went beyond their abilities with the power of God. It would be wonderful to know “the rest of the story” for both women, but we can be sure it changed forever the day they met Jesus.

Most of us don’t have to look long or hard to see now, or remember when we were up against a situation that was beyond our ability. When there is nothing we can do to alleviate the pain or disease or threat or situation, we can throw up our hands in despair and say, “What’s the use?” Indeed, that is often exactly what we do. Or we blame someone else. Or we blame God.

But there is, of course, another option. Rather than despair or blame, we can choose faith. One of the hard parts of faith, of course, is timing. Jairus must have been beside himself when he and Jesus were walking toward his home and Jesus *stopped* to ask, “Who touched me?” and then wasted precious time (in Jairus’ estimation) dealing with this other “daughter of God.” We, too, often struggle with timing and we often are sure God missed a great opportunity to heal or to do good.

Nevertheless, we are called to be people of faith. Even allowing for the fact that *God’s timing* is not always *our timing*, we are still people of faith. We trust God in all of life.

Harvey and Meredith had three healthy children, two boys and a girl in the middle. When their youngest son, John, was just over a year old, he was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis. He spent a week and a half in the ICU and a total of

three weeks in the hospital. When he finally went home, he was healthy again. But along with his discharge came a warning from the doctors who had cared for him. He could end up being mentally deficient, or physically deficient or any number of other possibilities that were not good. Nonetheless, Harvey and Meredith watched him grow up into an active, intelligent and energetic boy who is now an active, intelligent and energetic man in his 40's, with a wife and four kids of his own.

All three of Harvey's and Meredith's children, in fact, grew into adulthood without any serious illnesses apart from John's stint in the hospital at 13 months. Both boys had a wife and kids.

The oldest son, Franklin, moved to the west coast after serving in the Air Force. He was married with one son and then divorced and married a second time and had four more children.

When Franklin was 49 years old, with four kids still at home, and in the prime of his life, he went to work one day and died in his office from an aortic aneurysm. No symptoms nor warning signs appeared before this. He was active and a runner and a good husband and dad who loved his family.

Harvey and Meredith were people of faith, as were many in their extended family. In the year and a half since Franklin's death, the whole family remains shaken, and their faith has been tested. But slowly they are coming out of this as people of faith. Do they wish they had another 40 or 50 years with Franklin? Of course. But they also know that in the economy of God's time, they will get to spend eternity together as a family once again. They can't explain why one son was healed and another died far too soon. But they know God is in their lives and to lose their faith would be to lose their only real hope.

When things happen that are beyond our ability to control or change, being people of faith is the best choice.

Amen.