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St. Luke Lutheran Church, ABQ
(2021) Pentecost 5 June 27, 2021

Lamentations 3:22-33

Psalm 30

Mark 5:21-43

COURAGE TO CONNECT

I heard a story this week:

A man, down on his luck, went into a big brick church we'll call "First church" – stained glass windows, massive choir, super audio-visual system, a church which catered to the "well-mannered & well off" (you know the kind of church I mean?)

An usher eyed the guy's grubby clothes.

Frowning, he went over asked "*Can we help you... ?*"

The man said, "*I was praying and the Lord told me to come to this Church.*"

The usher thought quickly and said quietly,

"maybe you should pray some more... you might get a different answer about which church to go to."

The next Sunday the guy didn't come back. The usher - breathed a sigh of relief. But on Monday, he ran into that very same guy at Walmart. The usher was curious and couldn't resist asking

"So, did you pray & get a different answer for a church that's a -- better fit for you?"

The man replied, "*Yes I did. I told the Lord that they don't seem to want me at First church and the Lord said, 'Don't worry about it son; I've been trying to get into that church for years and haven't made it yet.'*"

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ at St. Luke Church, Albuquerque

today in the Gospel of Mark

We see Jesus walking around on this earth, connecting people of all kinds to God's grace and presence.

Remember Groucho Marx, who once said:

"I don't want to belong to any club that would have me as a member."

Jesus' Church SHOULD BE - the opposite of that. There's no minimum entry requirements as to clothes, job, the politeness of your children - Just the courage & maybe the *need* to reach out and be connected with God, with us other schmucks in the pews or in the chairs.

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My friend Josie is going to foster a horse. I asked her why since she already has two horses. she said well, horses are herd animals. If she takes one horse off to the vet or takes it riding, the other horse gets all anxious ... So Josie needs a buddy for the horse that's left behind...

So when they called me this past week to ask about her qualifications, I gave her all high ratings dependability, caring, knowledge of horses. At the end of the conversation, the caller said, *here's our most important question, if she runs into trouble, will she reach out for help in caring for the horse?*

Will she reach out for help?

Is church a place where we can reach out for help and reassurance, we are not left alone in life.

Today in Mark chapter 5, we again see Jesus, pressed in by a crowd, people have been hearing about this Jesus, & people of all kinds want to know more...

Suddenly a middle aged man comes over... the kind of guy everybody knows his name: That's Jairus, he's the president of the synagogue, he's got money, he's well-educated, If you could have googled him, you'd have seen he's got a *long* list of accomplishments.

Oh God, but his daughter is sick, and what use is all your prestige - with your 12 year dying. And even though Jairus surely was sceptical about this new, roving preacher, Jesus,

Oh God ,when the apple of your eye is fading away in front of you, you reach out - and you do exactly what Jairus did here in Mark 5:

Jairus throws himself down at Jesus' feet (that's what you did in those days, to show you're serious. You need to connect...)

She's twelve years old. On the cusp of woman hood... "My little girl", says Jairus. You parents may know what that's like – or you will know it one day... My kid. Twelve years old. Still – just barely -- thinks Dad's great. It's not going to last much longer. Jairus sees men are beginning to notice her... he's so protective. And then, it's not the looming threat of dating that's going to carry her away, she's sick; she's deathly sick.

Jesus, *-come* - heal her? Jairus Mr. Important Man Jairus, begs.

So Jesus goes with him.,

Jairus is no longer alone.

But There's still this crowd. Pressing in. And suddenly here's another character ... a *woman* who's been bleeding with a [*grimace*] woman's sickness. For twelve years. And this woman's about as different from Jairus as could be. Nobody knows *her* name. She's probably nobody's mother with a sickness like hers. nobody's wife, nobody to go to Jesus to drop at his feet *for her*.

She's not the apple of anybody's eye. Technically, according to the law, she's not supposed to be out in the crowd at all, much LESS touch a holy man! Inappropriate and illegal (Leviticus 15 goes into the details if you care to look it up)!

And the woman either is too uneducated to know, or too desperate to care. when she thinks nobody will notice she reaches out and just touches Jesus' robe.

OH MY GOD.

The worst thing ... and the best thing happens.

Jesus stops in his tracks.

Who touched me? He asks. He wants... to see her, face to face. Connect with her. This is why Jesus the Son of God came to earth, not to heal from afar [with some spiritual gamma-rays], but to connect. Person to person to person.

Some say there are two parts to this woman's faith

1) she had faith to reach out and touch Jesus' robe.

2) maybe the greater act of faith, is that when Jesus stopped, and asked, *Who touched me?* she came forward. *I will be known by God.*

She trusted, Jesus would lift her up, and not bring her down.

People of St. Luke, we have a personal God who wants to know us, *and* wants us to know each other.

She, who was no one's daughter, is now called *daughter* by Jesus who was probably – humanly speaking, years younger than she ... but it's okay. In the mystical KIN-dom of God, age doesn't matter. In God's eyes this middle aged woman, is a precious daughter, on the cusp of full womanhood. Finally ready to stand, free.

There are those who say pride is the biggest sin. And the cure for that is healthy humility.

BUT

for some people, maybe women of a certain upbringing, or men of a certain shyness ... undereducated, or with an accent, or living in a most modest home...

it might be the opposite - the root of sinfulness may be *too much* humility, and the cure is healthy pride.

this woman, comes forward: *I'm the one who touched you. I needed healing; I took what I needed.* And Jesus called her action: "FAITH."

Only now does the attention of the story go back to Jairus, and his daughter.

And yes, Jairus' daughter, this poor little rich girl, Jesus heals her too, from death itself.

In Wisconsin, where Wayne & I were pastors long ago, our mission statement used to say, that God calls church members to [quote]

“SERVICE ADVENTURES WITH THE POOR AND POOR IN SPIRIT.”

There is nothing poorer than a parent at risk of losing his child. And there's no one richer than a person for whom God has turned tears into dancing.

In this congregation, God willing, we are becoming ever more a mixture of rich and poor, old AND young, hurting, and healthy, too proud AND too humble. And those roles can change at the drop of a hat, with the results of a medical test, with a phone call in the night. With an infidelity. With a job change. In every case, Jesus comes among us to teach, to heal, to change us. In confession and absolution. In silly song AND solemnity, In word and prayer, in a crumb of bread and yes, a plastic cup of grape juice.

St Luke Church,

Let's US receive joy & healing and community together, as we

exercise the courage to reach out and be connected, in loving God, in loving our neighbour.

Amen.
