

Mark's Gospel is a Tale of Two Daughters

It was the worst of times.

It was the very worst of times.

Daughter One is an adult female who suffered with a menstrual disorder for over a decade. It has impoverished her. It has made her a societal outcast.

Daughter Two, a child, only 12 years old, born into a wealthy family. Wealth can't buy a cure for the disease that is claiming her life.

What to do?

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Where do you go when your money can't help you? Where do you go when your status can't help you? Where do you go when you despair?

The Psalmist is pretty clear: Go to God. Wait for God. With God there is redemption.

The unnamed woman and the father of the dying daughter go directly to Jesus.

The leader of the synagogue falls at Jesus' feet and asks that he come lay hands on his daughter who was at the point of death. The woman defies community standards and touches the hem of his cloak in order to be healed.

These were not "thoughts and prayers" reactions. These were the carnal, primitive, desperate, and courageous, actions of two people who had nothing to lose.

The father's request is a curious one. As leader of the synagogue, you would have thought that he would go to his own rabbi – not to this itinerant teacher from some backwater village. Does he have some sort of issue with his rabbi? Did his rabbi fail him somehow? Perhaps the stories of Jesus compelled him to go to the Rabbi from Nazareth. What ever the motivation, he knew his daughter was dying and he had to do something. And he does.

He falls at Jesus' feet and begs for help.

As all of this is taking place, a woman sneaks up on Jesus amidst the crowd. She had to be careful. Touching anyone would make them unclean as she. She had to keep her eye on the cloak of the Physician and yet not be discovered in the crowd. I envision her low to the ground, at risk of being trampled, stretching her arm out to reach Jesus. Then, she touches him. Well, she touches the very edge of his garment.

If this were a movie, we'd be in slow motion right now.

One: Jesus' puzzled face as he feels power leaving him. Two: Jairus' face in horror as Jesus' attention turns away from him and to the disciples. Three: the woman realizing that the hemorrhaging has stopped. Four: The disciples looking with incredulity at Jesus, shoulders shrugged, hands in the air. Five: Jesus demanding to know who did this.

Then everything goes back to real time.

The woman falls at the feet of Jesus to admit that she touched him. She touched him...the bleeding outcast...touched him. She tells him the truth, knowing full well the consequences of her confession. She awaits the fall out.

But, there is no fall out! Jesus reaches to her in compassion, calls her Daughter, and sends her on her way saying that her faith made her well. She is restored to her community. There is great rejoicing.

Not for Jairus.

In the moments that Jesus took his attention from Jairus to find the mystery power absorber, Jairus' little girl dies. In the same pattern, Jesus looks to Jairus with compassion, gathers his inner circle, and defying the naysayers, tells the crowd that this daughter is merely sleeping. Arriving at the home, Jesus takes the hand of the girl – a big no no if she really is dead – and tells her to get up. She does!

In a matter of minutes two females are restored to their community, regardless of the fact that Jesus risked his own purity to recognize them.

What can we take away from these stories?

We need to go to God.

It probably wasn't on Jesus' agenda that day to do a couple of miracle healings. He likely had a full schedule of teaching, preaching, and eating with sinners. It took the desperation of two people to turn his attention to the need. And, he didn't disappoint.

We need to be humble.

Jairus' didn't use his position to sidle up to Jesus and say "Hey, I'm a big giver at Synagogue Shalom in Bethesda. You need to come and heal my daughter." He humbled himself and fell at the feet of the Rabbi he was counting on to save his beloved child. The woman with the flow of blood made her way through the crowd stealthily to get close enough to take one last reach for a chance at quality

of life. When she realized that her actions may have harmed Jesus in some way, she made her confession, joining Jairus on the ground at Jesus' feet.

We need to acknowledge that faith goes a long way toward healing.

Jairus and the woman risked their lives, literally and politically, to seek out the healing power of Jesus. They did so believing that healing through Christ was possible, even though it seemed a slim possibility. It is also much easier to make the ask when you have nothing to lose.

We need to remember Christ's compassion for people on the margins.

It was the woman with the flow of blood who Jesus spoke with regarding her disease. Compared to the synagogue leader, she was on society's bottom rung. A gravely ill daughter of a wealthy man, also on the margin betwixt life and death, would have to wait for her healing.

These thoughts are more enlightening as we consider ourselves, a Christian community, the body of Christ in the world.

We need to go to God as Jesus did. In prayer, in quiet, and always when we are in despair. It only takes a touch of the hem of his garment to access the power of healing from the Savior.

We need to be humble. This story proves that the station in life you come from makes no difference to Jesus. In fact, the people who are most marginalized will receive top priority. Sometimes we must wait on the Lord.

We need to have faith that healing happens. We must acknowledge that the young girl's healing was from death to life – something promised to every one of us. We must also understand that the healing Jesus does not only erases disease but does so for the purpose of restoring the healed to their community.

Therefore, we must have faith that healing happens and the open arms to receive those whom we have marginalized back into our collective life.

*We need to **be** Christ to the marginalized.* People who are sick, obviously, but also people who are homeless, unemployed, imprisoned or impoverished. We need to touch them. We need to risk being touched by them. The hem of our garments might be someone's last resort. They long to hear the words, "little ones, arise." Now give them something to eat.

Restore them to the ones they love.