



What defines you? When asked to introduce yourself in a group setting, what do you say? Many years ago when I was in CPE- Clinical Pastoral Education- we had a meeting of about 20 of us gathered to hear from the Chief Ethicist. We were there to learn about the types of issues that came before the Ethics Panel and how the hospitals responded. But before we got into the nitty-gritty of that work, we were asked to go around the room and introduce ourselves, telling a little bit about who we were and why we were in CPE. Sounds easy, right? You’ve done this a few times in your life, I bet.

Well, my eyes were opened by how people chose to identify themselves. This was really the first time in a business setting where I heard people identify themselves as children of God. For a lawyer and banker, that was pretty astounding and a bit intimidating. Here I was studying to become ordained and it didn’t dawn on me to move “child of god” to the top of the list when asked to define and identify myself. Today we have several stories of how people are identified as children of God and how Jesus restores them to health and community.

Jesus is once again on the move back from across the waters. He is surrounded by people when Jairus, leader of the synagogue, approaches Jesus and asks for help for his daughter who is sick unto death. Jairus in the normal time is a leader, someone that others look up to. He has power and authority as a leader in the synagogue. As such, he might have approached Jesus and ordered him to come and help. But he didn’t. At least at this point, Jairus knew who had the real power and authority and it wasn’t him. Jairus in today’s reading is first and foremost a father who cares for and loves his daughter – and he recognizes that he can’t help her. Jairus needs Jesus to heal her.

And in the midst of Jesus accepting the request and moving toward Jairus’s house, a woman who all considered unclean because of her illness, finds a way to get close enough to Jesus to reach out and touch the hem of his cloak. And immediately Jesus feels the power go out of him and she is healed. She is no longer considered unclean. She can return to her community as someone who has value – because she believed in Jesus and was willing to take action to be healed.

Jesus feels the power go out of him and in the midst of all the people pushing and shoving against him, he stops and asks “who touched me?” Who had the courage to reach out to me and seek healing? The women, in fear and trembling antes up and tell Jesus the whole story. The

whole story. Of her fear, of her shame, of her efforts to be healed, of her failures over 12 years to find relief, of spending all her money on this or that remedy – none of which worked. Jesus was her last hope. And so she went forth, braving the crowd, hoping that Jesus could do for her what no one else had been able to. Her faith in Jesus gave her the courage to reach out. Her telling of the whole story – not just the parts that made her look good – helped her connect with Jesus and the power and authority that he had. Her hope, her faith, her willingness to risk, told Jesus that here was someone that was a true disciple. “Your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.” Nothing more needs to be done. Her faith and God’s grace evidenced through the healing of Jesus accomplish all that was needed.

Having finished with the healing of the woman, Jesus turns to resume his journey towards the home of Jairus. But before he can move, messengers come and say the daughter has died. Not to bother Jesus anymore because it is too late. He healed the woman but failed the daughter, I’m sure some thought. Some resentment, perhaps, at why Jesus would focus on the woman who was poor having spent all her money on medical treatments and not putting her aside until the daughter of the leader of the synagogue has been healed.

Jesus probably looked with some sorrow at those messengers. They didn’t understand who Jesus was or what Jesus was capable of doing. They were rooted in the here-and-now rather than understanding Jesus to be the Son of God and capable of more than they could imagine. Jesus was a mystery to them and their focus on what could be touched and seen led them to miss Jesus as a conduit of God’s grace and mercy. Their disbelief closed their hearts and minds to all that Jesus was and all that Jesus could do.

Jesus knew, though, that the girl was not dead. “Do not fear, only believe” Jesus says. He took some trusted disciples and the parents and went in to see the girl. And he ordered her to rise- to get up- and she did. Miracles don’t have to be performed in front of a large audience. Miracles don’t have to be performed in a loud voice. Miracles are seen, though, by those who believe. By those who open their ears and their eyes and their hearts to the wonder of God who is all around us.

Too many times we “often brush shoulders with Jesus without any awareness of the fact” writes Ryan Jordan.¹ We are so focused on ourselves and our own needs that we fail to see how God is working in our world. We fail to see the healing and the grace that is extended to us, all for the taking. Jordan reminds us that “when we touch him with faith and eager expectation, the power and life that are in his glorified body are made available for the healing and transformation of our humanity and the world. We as Christians become conduits for Jesus’ power and grace to a world alienated from God’s presence.”

This week I encourage you to think about the Gospel reading for today. Consider where you might have need of God’s grace and healing. Jesus is waiting for you to reach out in faith and touch the hem of his cloak. When you do reach out in faith for whatever needs healing in your life, listen for the words: Go in peace. Your faith has made you whole. **Amen.**

¹ Ryan Jordan in “Bible Studies That Work” for Pentecost 6, Proper 8 (The Episcopal Church, 2018)