

Power to Heal

Mark 5:21-43

Last week, Scott Minks told us how Jesus demonstrated authority over the elements as he calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee with the words “Peace, be still!”

This week, we watch as Jesus gently demonstrates authority over

- sickness and health,
- life and death,
- ... on behalf of those who believe.

Mark does this by showing us a healing within a healing ...

- in which a wealthy religious leader asks Jesus to heal his daughter,
- but has to wait as Jesus heals a destitute woman ...

Jesus shuttles across the lake and gets off the boat ... crowds are all around him...

A wealthy religious leader approaches Jesus...

- Shows unusual respect for such a leader (which tells us that he perceives correctly who Jesus is) ...
- Begs Jesus to come to his house and lay your hands on his sick twelve-year-old daughter, “so that she may be made well, and live.”
 - Laying on of hands in the Jewish context: means blessing ...

- Jesus agrees to go, but is interrupted by a destitute woman ...
 - her twelve-year search has left her poor ...
 - it has excluded her from the religious community because she is regarded as “unclean”
 - it has also made her invisible ... a nobody ...
 - it has made her so invisible that she is able to come close to Jesus in crowd and secretly touch his coat ...
 - and is privately made whole ...
 - but is “outed” by Jesus as he asks ...

“Who touched me?”

The disciples react – “Who *hasn't* touched you, Jesus?”

She is already healed, but now Jesus relates to her ...

- He addresses her as “daughter,” and sends her on her way, saying, “Your faith has saved you/made you whole. Go and be healed.”
- The word Jesus uses can mean either “salvation” or “wholeness.”
- Not only has she been healed physically ...
 - she has been saved from social isolation ...
 - and she has been restored to the religious community because she has also been made clean because her bleeding has stopped.
- Like I said earlier, Mark is showing us that Jesus has authority over sickness and health ...

Just then, the ruler’s servants arrive ...

- his little girl has died ...
- Jesus hears the news and responds ... “Do not fear, only believe.”
- And they go towards the house ...

When they arrive, professional mourners are already at work ...

- These are people who deal with death regularly ... and they know death when they see it.
- Remember that child mortality was high in the ancient world ...
- So they laugh when Jesus says that she is just “sleeping”
 - Which ... by the way ... is a euphemism we often use to soften the blow when someone close to us dies ...

Jesus leads the parents and his disciples to the room where the dead girl is laid out ...

- Takes her hand ...
 - The scene is so vivid that Mark transmits the very Aramaic words that Jesus used ...
 - “*Talitha cum.*” “Little girl, get up.”
- Although everyone is stunned, Jesus orders them not to tell anyone, and to give her something to eat.
- Like I said earlier, Mark is showing us that Jesus has authority over life and death ...

As we turn this healing-within-a-healing over in our minds, we get the idea that healing and salvation are connected

- The woman who has suffered for twelve years and the twelve-year-old girl are both restored physically and socially ...
 - The woman to the religious community ...
 - The girl to her parents ...
- They both receive physical restoration and spiritual salvation.

What does it mean to be healed?

- These two examples are obvious and dramatic ...
- but healing also comes as peace and acceptance in the face of disappointment ...
- and as awareness of God's faithfulness in times of despair
 - as we see in the reading from Lamentations ... which is a pretty grim book that grieves over the destruction of Jerusalem ... but there is a remarkably hopeful passage in the middle of the book. We read it earlier ...

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in him.”

- The hymn “Great is Thy Faithfulness” comes from these verses ... blessing generations of Christians.

This awareness of God's faithfulness gave faith ...

- to the woman who reached out to touch Jesus ...
- and to the father who came to Jesus seeking healing for his dying daughter.

And Jesus, who has authority over the elements, as well as sickness and health, life and death, responded to their faith in amazing ways.

To the Lord our God, Alpha and Omega, be all glory and honor forever. Amen.