

TITLE: "No Greater Hope than That"

TEXT: Mark 5:21-43 (NT pp. 39-40)

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So [Jesus] went with him. And a large crowd followed [Jesus] and pressed in on him.

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."

Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'"

[Jesus] looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. [Jesus] said to her, "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 leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?"

But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." [Jesus] allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at [Jesus].

Then [Jesus] put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. [Jesus] strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Introduction – The focus of healing

For years, Steve had been trying to get his wife Tammy to go camping with him, but she steadfastly refused. Finally, after regaling her with the glories of nature that they would see, she finally agreed. After a meal cooked over an open fire, they lay down for the night to sleep.

Some hours later, Tammy awoke and nudged her husband. “Steve,” she said, “look up at the sky and tell me what you see.”

Steve said, “I see millions and millions of stars.”

“What does that tell you, Steve?”

Steve pondered a moment and said: “Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Horologically, I deduce the time is about 3:00 a.m. Meteorologically, I suspect we will have a sunny day. Theologically, I guess it tells me that God is all powerful and his creation is amazing. ...What does it tell you?”

Tammy was silent for a moment, then said, “Steve, you IDIOT! Someone stole our tent!”

This morning I am preaching on healing. Most people who would like to be healed of an illness or a physical condition focus upon healing. Sort of like Tammy who focused on the missing tent. What we learn in this morning’s text is that miraculous healing comes when we focus on Jesus Christ. When we remove from our lives anything that separates us from Jesus, we open ourselves to the Lord’s healing power.

1. The woman with hemorrhages

The woman in the text had had internal bleeding for twelve years. According to Jewish law, if a woman had an issue of blood, she was ceremonially unclean. That meant that anyone who touched her, or her clothes, had to wash their clothes and take a bath. Even after doing so they remained unclean until evening, which meant they could not touch anyone else. For twelve years this woman had had to avoid close contact with family, friends and the general public much of the time.

She didn’t want to ASK Jesus for healing, because she would have had to TELL him the situation and others would have heard and moved away. She didn’t want JESUS to touch her and heal her because then HE would have been unclean. So she decided to simply touch the cloak of Jesus, after which she planned to slip away unnoticed by Jesus and others.

I want to take a few moments to talk about medical healing. God often USES medical professionals to heal us. In this regard, I want to mention two things about current day doctors. I HAVE a doctor, by the way and I see him regularly, so I am in favor of doctors.

However, doctors do NOT heal people. What doctors DO is make it so that your body can heal itself. A doctor puts a splint on a broken arm so your body can knit the bones back together. I just had a shingles vaccine this past week. However it does it, the fluid enables my body to fight the shingles virus, so getting shingles is one thing I don't have to worry about.

The other thing about doctors is that they are NOT God. Most doctors do realize this. In the book *The Gift of Pain* by Drs. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, present the three types of patients as described by Dr. Bernie Seigel.

There are the 15 to 20 percent with a death wish who welcome their illness as a way to die. They resist their doctor's efforts to heal them.

There are also the 60 to 70 percent of patients who rely completely on their doctors to heal them. They rely on their doctors to do all the work and tell them what to do—nothing difficult [mind you]—or, better yet, just operate on what ails them.

Then there are the remaining 15 to 20 percent who are terrible patients. They do not meekly submit but ask for second opinions. They demand their rights. They question procedures. But this demanding group of terrible patients ...are the ones who get well, and who get well quicker.

It is REALLY up to you to LISTEN to your own body and to pray for God's guidance about your physical and emotional health. Why? Because
 Sometimes our bodies can heal themselves. Most colds, we just get over.
 Sometimes a doctor can help in the healing process.
 Sometimes only GOD is able to heal us.

And when we listen to our own bodies and pray for guidance, God will show us which path to take.

Does Jesus still heal people today? ...Yes. According to a *Newsweek* poll, 84% of adult Americans say they believe God performs miracles, and 48% report they have experienced or witnessed one. This is from an article in *Newsweek*:

In May 1999, fifteen-year-old Tyler Clarensau shuffled to the alter in Park Crest Assembly of God Church in Springfield, MO., to seek healing. Surgery to correct his malformed knee joints had left him with swelling and terrible pain.

Forty other Pentecostal teenagers encircled him and began to pray. Gradually the whole congregation was raised to a prayerful roar.

Some 45 minutes later silence fell, and one of the church volunteers announced that God had healed Tyler. Tyler shakily stood up, then did deep knee bends—something he hadn't accomplished in years. Now he can run. "I'd heard about people being healed," says Tyler, "and I thought it was pretty cool. But I didn't know for sure until it happened to me." ("Should You Believe in Miracles?" by Kenneth L. Woodward)

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2. The little girl who had died

After Jesus healed the woman, some people came and told Jairus that his daughter had died. He was anxious, of course, fearing that it was too late for Jesus to do anything, but Jesus said, "Do not fear, only believe." The opposite of fear is peace. If you want peace, all you have to do is BELIEVE in Jesus. BELIEVE that Jesus loves you, BELIEVE that Jesus is always with you and BELIEVE that in life and in death you belong to Jesus.

I used to worry about retirement, especially when my mind focused on finances. Worry, by the way, is another word for fear. When I focus on Jesus I know that he will provide in the future as wonderfully as he has provided in the past.

I used to worry about my kids, even though they are adults. Now I pray more and worry less.

I used to worry about what to buy and what not to buy. Now I ask the Lord and do what he tell me to do and I worry a LOT less.

The KEY to peace is exactly what Jesus said to Jairus: "Do not fear, only believe." Peace comes when we refuse to let fear grab hold of our emotions and, instead, we trust that in life and in death we, and those we love, belong to Jesus.

3. Resurrection and resuscitation

The only problem with bringing someone back to life, which Jesus did to that little girl, is that they will, at some point, die again. That is the main difference between resuscitation and resurrection. You can be resuscitated many times but you only need to be resurrected once. Why? Resurrection lasts forever.

What will resurrection be like? In I Corinthians 15 we read:

³⁵But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

⁴²So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Once the disciples actually SAW the resurrected Jesus, once they saw his new eternal body and they saw the joy that filled Jesus, they were willing to die for their faith because they knew the same resurrection was awaiting them. And a glorious resurrection IS what is awaiting each and every person who has faith in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion – The joy God has prepared

Trudy Harris, who lives in Jacksonville, Florida is a Hospice nurse. In a *Guideposts* article (4/10) she explains why:

I knew Hospice was my calling because almost from the day I started, I met people who showed me just how thoroughly I had misunderstood death. I came to understand the joy God has prepared for his children.

Consider one of my patients, Frank, a 68-year-old father dying of lung disease. One day Frank said to me matter-of-factly, "John is here with me now. Can you see him? He's by the chair." He meant his son, John, who'd been killed years before in Vietnam.

Startled, I said I couldn't see John. "What does he look like?" I asked.

"He looks wonderful in his uniform," he said. "He says it's time for me to go."

A few nights later Frank died in his sleep.

Then there was Hank who, the day before he died, told me he'd just had a visit from his son Shawn. Shawn was in prison and couldn't have visited Hank in body. But Hank was adamant. "I needed to tell him I forgave him and loved him," Hank said with perfect lucidity....

Slowly it dawned on me that death is an ending only for those still wrapped up in the story of our own earthly lives. From the perspective of the dying, death is a strange and wonderful beginning, a threshold to some new and beautiful world. "Love must be like this, and it must be good," a patient named Robin once told me. Robin was only 34. As death drew near, he focused ever more on his family gathered around him. He realized their love was a reflection of an even greater love awaiting him. The approach of death opened his eyes.

It opened my eyes too. I remember when my Grandfather was dying. One day we were sitting looking out the window. He turned to me and asked, "Who is that man standing there by the lake?"

"It's a weeping willow tree," I said.

"I see the tree," he said with a smile. "I mean the man standing underneath. Who is he?" I saw no one and in those early days I had no idea what Grandfather might be referring to. That evening though, I told my youngest son what Grandfather had said. "Do you think he saw Jesus?" my son who was 10 asked.

At bedtime, I asked Grandfather if he thought the man was Jesus and he said, "Yes, dear, why?" He died a few hours later.

I believe all who die yearning for God see a wondrous presence as Grandfather did, someone who welcomes them from this life to the next. Thanks to my patients, I've been able to catch glimpses of that man under the willow tree, glimpses of heaven while I'm here on earth. There can be no greater hope than that.

Can we be healed in this life? ...Yes.

WILL you be healed in this life? I don't know but I hope so, for each of you.

But this I DO know, if you have faith in Jesus Christ, you WILL be healed at the resurrection and you will stay healed forever and ever and ever.

And there IS no greater hope than that.

Amen.