

Scripture:  
Mark 5:21-43

“Just believe.”

So this morning --- we again find ourselves continuing on in Mark’s gospel.

The last 3 weeks we’ve walked with Mark as he has recounted the early ministry of Jesus Christ --- and today we carry on in that journey.

And in our gospel reading today we see 2 of the things that are so characteristic of Mark’s gospel in general.

More than any of the other gospel writers Mark recounts things in Jesus’ life at a rapid --- almost break neck speed.

Mark doesn’t waste words or use them unnecessarily ---- there’s often a sense of urgency in the way he shares Jesus.

For example we frequently see the words --- “immediately” ---- or “at once” ---- as we see in our reading this morning ----- in verses 30 and 42.

It’s almost as though Mark is in a hurry to share the good news of Jesus Christ and doesn’t want to waste any precious time.

So --- Mark’s first characteristic ---- an almost hurried recounting of the life of Christ.

And his second ---- the importance of the supernatural --- miraculous power of Christ.

Mark shares his gospel --- plainly --- boldly ---- using straightforward language ---- and as he does he stresses the divinity --- the supernatural --- miraculous healing and saving power of Jesus Christ.

And our reading this morning is a prime example of both of these characteristics.

Jesus has disembarked from a boat and there is a large crowd gathered to meet Him.

Including one Jairus ---- a leader in the local synagogue.

And as Jesus approaches ---- Jairus falls at His feet --- and as verse 23 says -- -- “pleaded earnestly with him.” ---- saying ----- “my little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”

And so off Jesus goes to heal this man’s sick young daughter.

And as they go ---- the large crowd follows along ---- pressing in on Jesus.

And as the crowd press in on Him ----- a very sick and desperate woman somehow makes her way close to Him ---- and then suddenly reaches out her hand and makes contact with His coat.

And as verse 29 says ---- after she touches Jesus ---- “Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.”

Imagine ----- this woman must of thought to herself ---- “If I can simply get close enough to reach out and touch the edge of His clothing all will be well and I will finally be healed.”

And this is a woman who according to verse 26 --- “had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all that she had.”

For 12 years she suffered --- she tried this doctor and that doctor --- spending all she had --- and not only this but as verse 26 also says ---- instead of getting better --- “she got worse”.

So her solution is to just drag her tired bloody body close enough to Jesus so that she can reach up and touch His coat as He passes by with a large crowd clustered around Him.

I don’t know about you but as I thought about this ----- it struck me as kind of peculiar and odd.

It almost paints the picture of Jesus as a kind of magic charm ---- touch it --- Him --- and you will be healed.

This is something we haven't seen before --- this idea of simply reaching out and touching Him anonymously in order to be healed.

When Jesus healed --- at least up to this point ---- it was a deliberate act of His will --- **He** reached out and touched and healed.

He was the initiator --- He made first contact.

But that's not what happens here.

This anonymous woman --- reaching out and touching Him --- is different.

It isn't initiated by Jesus at all.

Jesus is on His way to save a young girl from certain death ----- He's about to help a high ranking official of the synagogue --- and on the way --- this very sick --- bloody ---- and very desperate woman ---- somehow finds her way among the large crowd --- and manages to get just close enough so that she can reach up and touch the edge of His clothing.

And of course what happens next is miraculous ---- "At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?""

And remember the woman has already been healed at this point --- "Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering."

The mere touch healed her --- and now Jesus --- in a hurry --- or so it seemed ---- suddenly stops and demands to know who touched Him because He knew that some of His power had left Him.

And His disciples --- full of common sense ---- pipe up saying --- "You see the people crowding against you --- and yet you can ask --- "Who touched me?""

In other words --- “You don’t actually think that with all these people here we’re ever going to figure out which one ---- or ones ---- have managed to touch you now do you?”

And then the next verse --- “But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.”

In other words --- to His disciples --- Jesus says “Well yes!” ----“Yes I do want to know just who it was that touched me just now.”

Imagine how that woman must have felt ---- in an instant she was made well ---- and now Jesus --- unsure of who touched Him --- is calling her to come forward and show herself.

And of course she does.

And Jesus simply replies ---- “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

And before he can even catch His breath --- the next verse --- verse 35 ---- “While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus...”

Jesus isn’t even finished speaking with the woman and they come and announce there’s no point in Him coming to help any more because the girl has now passed away.

And here’s the crux of our passage for today ---- “Overhearing” --- or as some translations suggest ---- “ignoring” ---- what they said ---- Jesus told him ---- “Don’t be afraid; just believe.””

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

That’s precisely what the woman did and she was healed ---- saved even.

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

And then without hesitation --- Jesus continues on to go and see this young girl.

To this young girl who they think has died ---- He simply says ---- “get up.”  
 --- “Talitha koum.” --- “Little girl ---- get up.”

And immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around.

It's a bit of a break neck pace here in this passage.

Typical Mark --- fast paced --- no wasted --- or flowery words ---- and some pretty dramatic miracles recounted amidst the fast paced --- always on the go ministry of Christ.

And so ----- what does this all mean?

Does it simply mean ----- Christ was a very busy man --- always in demand -  
 --- one thing after another --- person after person after person wanting His attention --- people starving for truth.

Does it mean ---- He performed miracles every day --- some obvious dramatic ---- and public --- in front of everyone for all to see ----- and likely far less dramatic ones too ---- off to the side --- in private --- saving people in quiet humbleness --- almost anonymously --- God is at work in the centre and on the periphery.

Both of these are true --- people starve for truth and God is always at work --  
 --- in the centre and in the margins ----- but there's more.

----- some of the more -----

One of the people healed was an “important” person by society's standards.

She was after all the daughter of an official of the synagogue ----- and the other was just the opposite ----- she was an outcast ----- a nobody ---- a ritually unclean woman on the periphery of society.

And then there is the matter of the ages of the healed.

One person was much older than the other.

The young girl was just 12 ----- just entering into womanhood --- eligible for marriage in the Jewish culture at that time --- just reaching the peak of womanhood according to her culture.

And then on the other hand --- there was the much older sick woman ---- who had been ill for at least 12 years ---- a far less “useful” woman in the culture.

And the differences run deeper still ---- one the one hand the older of the two women had tried everything ---- all the doctors possible --- and on the other hand with the young girl it almost seems as though Jesus may have been the very first choice.

One patient has a whole slew of people looking out for her --- and rests in the comfort of home waiting for a healer to come and save her ----- the other has no one --- she’s all alone --- out on the streets fending for herself ----- reaching up amidst the crowds desperately seeking help.

The young girl has others acting on her behalf ---- her father seeks out Jesus.

The bleeding woman --- acts on her own accord --- desperately stretching out her hand.

Two radically different sets of circumstances.

And yet despite all these differences both are healed in an instant.

One by her own personal faith --- the other --- without any apparent reason other than ----- “God loves” ----- and --- “Jesus saves”.

God’s ways are mysterious --- He loves us --- He saves us.

Some of us are blessed with great faith --- like the older woman ---- and work our tail off to meet Christ.

Others of us are blessed in other ways --- like the young girl --- people looking out for her.

Either way --- Christ comes to us in our greatest need.

Whether it be our death bed in the case of this girl ---- or on the treacherous road of life after we've been bounced around around and around for years like the older woman had been ---- Christ comes to us.

So what of these 2 miracles.

Miracles are miracles --- not just because of what happens.

Something that without God otherwise never would have happened.

Something that reason can't role out --- fill in the blanks ---- solve ---- or understand.

Miracles are also miracles because of how they happen.

Like the act of the miracle itself ---- why and to whom they happen are things known only to God.

And like the miracle itself ----- we cannot role out --- fill in the blanks ---- solve --- or understand ----- to whom and why miracles happen.

Part of what we learn form these 2 miraculous stories is that ----- where once there was fear --- there is now faith.

Where once there was fear ----- there is now faith.

Jesus has the power to turn fear into faith.

“Don't be afraid” ---- He says ---- “just believe.”

Don't be afraid; just believe.”

That's what the woman did --- and that's what Jairus did ----- pushed aside fear and believed.

Believed that somehow Christ would make things well.

The resolve of the woman is particularly noteworthy.

She reminds us that ----- when life crowds in with all of its pressures ---- somehow there is still always room for us to draw ourselves into the presence of Christ --- and reach out to Him in faith.

And beyond this ---- she also reminds us that --- in an instant faith can cure where human effort and skill has failed year after year after year --- for 12 years human skill failed this woman --- in an instant Jesus saved her.

Whatever else ----- these 2 healings drive home the point that having faith --- ----- believing that Jesus can heal and save matters most --- not external circumstances ---- explanations --- or cultural practices.

As I was working through this passage --- and its central phrase --- “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

I kept coming back to John’s gospel chapter 3 --- and its central verse --- verse 16 --- “For God so loved the world --- that he gave his one and only Son --- that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

In John 3 --- the word believe or believes --- occurs 7 times.

To believe is all that is required of us ----- to be saved.

To believe --- is what saved both the older bleeding woman and the younger sick girl in Mark’s gospel today.

Not explanation --- or understanding --- but belief.

If we pare down our passage today and look only at what Jesus said ---- this is what we have.

Who touched my clothes?

Who touched me?

Daughter your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.

Don’t be afraid; just believe.

Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.

Talitha koum. --- or --- Little girl --- I say to you get up!

And of course ---- the very heart of these words is ----- “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

And even more simply put and pared down ---- “Just believe.”

To believe --- asks something of us --- to doubt asks nothing of us.

There is no investment in doubt --- it’s flippant --- and all too easily rolls of the tongue without any thought or concern.

Belief --- on the other hand ----- demands of us.

The bleeding woman’s belief cost her a whole lot.

She had to drag herself --- and pull herself around ----- jockey amidst the large crowds just to try to get close enough to Jesus to make contact.

The belief of Jairus cost him something too --- it was a huge risk for him ---- ----- a leader of the synagogue to go to Christ --- and fall at His feet and plead no less.

And of course it cost Jesus something too ----- as verse 40 says ----- they laughed at Him.

“The child is not dead” ---- Jesus said ---- “but sleeping.” --- and the response is laughter.

It cost Jesus something every time He healed ----- “At once Jesus realized that power had gone out of him.” ---- verse 30 says.

Belief ---- faith.

Taking a different stand than that of only ever relying on appearances ---- facts ---- and intellect ---- asks something of us.

Among other things --- the ability to believe --- separates us from animals ---  
--- stones --- and trees.

Fundamentally we either have fear ---- or we have faith.

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.” --- is a profound statement of faith.

There’s a whole lot of commotion in Mark’s gospel today ---- large crowds  
pressing in on Jesus.

A respected city official rushing and falling at His feet.

A very sick woman pushing her way through the crowds in hopes of simply  
touching Jesus.

A young girl in her prime dying suddenly.

People interrupting Jesus and not even letting him finish what He is saying  
before they begin speaking.

People laughing at Jesus.

And yet when all is said and done ---- 2 very sick people were healed.

In a way isn’t this passage a microcosm of life.

There’s a whole lot going on.

People are coming and going.

People are pushing and shoving --- fumbling about forever trying to get  
close to the truth.

People are dying --- literally and figuratively.

Some people ---- are laughing at the truth ---- the truth in their very midst.

And then --- right in the middle of all of this ---- there is Jesus Christ ----  
healing --- reconciling ---- redeeming --- saving ----- always present.

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.” --- He says.

We can either choose fear in life.

Or we can choose to believe.

And Jesus gives very direct counsel in this regard ----- “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

The old bloody woman ---- outcast --- no body ---- worn out by life ----- chose to believe.

The respected leader of the synagogue --- a somebody ----- worried about his young daughter ----- chose to believe.

Tired --- spent ---- desperate --- running out of options ----- exhausted --- a little unsure --- but still willing to try ----- and try hard.

Wherever it is we find ourselves in life ---- God doesn’t ask for perfection --  
- He simply asks us to believe.

“Daughter your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

These very same words are for us too --- if we believe.

Jesus says these exact words to each and every one of us in our lives.

“Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

Amen.