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## **“Spiritual Triage”**

Psalm 130

Mark 5:21-43

This has been quite a week, hasn't it?

In the last 10 or so days, a white supremacist murdered 9 people at a bible study; the Supreme Court released decisions on same-sex marriage, health care, and housing justice; four more Black churches across the South were burned by arsonists; and terrorists attacked in Tunisia, Kuwait, and France on the same day. President Obama, even, went from making a celebratory speech on the Supreme Court decision straight to the funeral of Rev. Senator Clementa Pinckney, where he delivered a eulogy full of grief, anger, and resolve.

It's almost too much. And meanwhile, our own lives go on, full of daily needs, mundane things and beautiful things; happiness and sorrow and frustration and gratitude.

It's been a rough week for me personally, as my relationships with two people who are dear to me feel like they're ripping apart at the seams, both at the same time. There were a few days when I wanted to wail with the Psalmist, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!”

And then, you know, just to top it all off, yesterday I spilled boiling hot coffee on my foot and all over the counter on my way out the door.

This week I can sort of resonate with Jesus walking through the crowd by the sea – coming straight from the madness of one healing in the country of the Gerasenes right into Jairus' need for his daughter's healing; while the crowd continues to press in on him with their own needs, their own hopes, their own pains, their own longing for a messiah. The muchness is so great that he can't even finish one miracle without being interrupted by more desperation!

Weeks like this one, I think we're all that crowd pushing in: with rejoicing and mourning and confusion and anger and tentative happiness and grief and fear and maybe some more feelings we don't even want to acknowledge yet. Probably some of us are looking for healing, like the people we meet in this passage, but all of us are looking for something.

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Mark tells these healing stories together to make a point, or more probably several points. It's a fast-paced gospel, and these two woven-together healings drive the narrative forward, picking up speed along with the urgency of Jesus' mission and the assembling crowds.

But these two characters belong together for other reasons, too. They are a dramatic pair, this young girl who has grown up in a wealthy important house, together with this woman who has lost all the status she might have had because of her disease, declared unclean and therefore unable to worship, be in her family's house, or even to be touched. She has spent all the money she had, trying to stop this bleeding that has continued as long as the girl has been alive. One has an influential father who can stride right up to Jesus on her behalf, while the other is so filled with shame that it takes all her courage to approach him unnoticed.

It seems to me that if we were to transplant this story to our place and time, Jairus and his daughter would probably have white skin like ours, and the unnamed woman would more than likely have brown or black skin. Right?

Jesus knows all this, too, about the women who need his healing, and so he knows just how shocking it will be when he stops following Jairus and says "Wait! I have to find this person." Really?! That could have been anyone or no one, Jairus is thinking, and you're going to take the time to find *her* while my daughter is dying?!?

Yes, Jesus would say, except he's too busy now taking this woman's hand, looking into her eyes, and hearing her story. Daughter, he calls her, you who had no family left are my family, and your faith has made you well. Your outlandish hope when you had no reason to have any more hope at all has finally healed you. For her it means not just a physical healing, but also a social restoration – you who had been cast out are welcomed back with love and healing touch.

And then Mark cuts back in and barely lets this lovely moment finish before word comes that Jairus' daughter has died. But again, Jesus tells them that their faith is what matters. And this girl does not need the same kind of social restoration that the woman did, but she does need some pretty big healing!

And then, for all the social implications of these juxtaposed healings, the girl is just as tenderly healed. Jesus takes her hand, with all the ritual uncleanliness that implies now that she is dead, and she gets up and she walks and she eats.

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Now I don't know that I have a neat packaged message about these stories – because healing is messy and complicated, and why *does* healing seem to come so fast in some cases and take so long in others? If it is faith that makes us well, then why are so many good and faithful people suffering with disease and debilitation?

So I ask, how are we bleeding? What are the places in you that are crying out for healing? What is it for which you would throw yourself down at Jesus' feet?

Who are the people around us who bleed, and what can we do about it?

Following in Jesus' steps means that we might still need healing as much as anyone else, but we also are called to notice where hurting people have been kept out – and then to stop what we're doing to take their hand and start to heal the wounds of exclusion.

And we do that not because we've never been wounded ourselves, but precisely because we have. In the midst of all these needs – all these conflicting emotions and joy in the midst of sorrow in the midst of hope – our strength comes from those places where we were hurt but have started to heal. And in those very scars we can see where others are still bleeding around us.

In those scars, in those places we may have felt cast out but now have been brought back by the healing love of friends, of family, of God, we can follow in those holy steps and search out the ones who need healing so badly they might slip through a crowd unnoticed, following their last hope.

Make no mistake, there are hurting people in this country, and the wounds cut deep. The events of these past weeks make that abundantly clear if it wasn't already. And if we say we follow Jesus – prophet, messiah, and healer of wounded people – that *must* matter to us.

The sin of racism is woven deeply into our lives all over this country – and if we think it's not our problem, then it most certainly *is* our problem. We who are white have a very particular responsibility at this time, and that is to start listening to the voices of hurt that we have tuned out or avoided or just disbelieved.

We are caught up in our own lives and our own swirls of emotion and hurt and need, and that is okay. But we have to notice when Jesus might take time out of helping us to turn to someone with an even deeper need, and would keep us waiting because theirs is the hurt that needs to be attended to right now.

And, you know, so much of Jesus' healings was the social and communal reconnection that went along with the physical healing. We may not be able to raise people from the dead, but we surely do have the strength to begin to heal social wounds.

Our genuine connection with others will be healing for all of us, whether we know it yet or not. It is in our relationships where we find the greatest, holiest joy, along with all the difficulties and annoyance and pain. And that is true not just for our relationships with people we've decided are "like us," but it is especially true when we're able to make real connections with people who are different.

It is messy and complicated and hard, like so much of life if we're honest. But we proclaim a God who does not give up on us, no matter how broken we are or what kind of mess we've gotten ourselves into, no matter how little breath is left in us or no breath at all: God does not give up on us. If there is one thing we can say about the healing love of God, it is that each and every one of us can trust it. Even when we are in the deepest pain, or grief, or loss, God's healing comes through our faith and through the people around us.

In all the confusion of these weeks like all weeks, Jesus is there cutting a path through the crowd. Stick with him and somehow, we will *all* be healed.