



Sermon for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, June 2024

Got faith?

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene The Rev. Glenda Empsall, Deacon

https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp8_RCL.html

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27, Psalm 130, 2 Corinthians 8:7-15, Mark 5:21-43

God of grace, speak to us through these scriptures, and help us respond in good faith to the cares of our neighbors, as Jesus would have us do. Amen.

What a joy it is to be home in CdA and at St Luke's! and a big "Thank you" to Fr. David for offering me a place in the preaching rotation. Before launching into the Gospel reading today, I'd like to tell you about the author of the Gospel according to Mark and why this gospel is so different when compared to the others.

- It is the oldest and shortest of the four gospels, meaning that every detail is important. When Matthew or Luke borrow a story from Mark, they usually shorten it.¹
- Mark is likely the earliest transition from oral recitation to the written word.
- According to the Oxford Annotated Bible, [the one the School of Theology at the University of the South recommended for those of us starting our 4-year course of Education for Ministry (EfM)] "ancient tradition may well be correct in ascribing this gospel to John Mark² who composed it as a summary of the Apostle Peter's teachings."
- John Mark grew up in Jerusalem in what may have been the first "house church" where followers of Jesus gathered for prayer and worship. He did not know Jesus, but he was the cousin of Barnabas 'the encourager,' a follower of Jesus and a leader of the early church.
- He traveled with Barnabas and Paul, and was a devoted companion of Peter, who in his letters affectionately called John Mark, "my son." Hearing Mark's gospel is like "sitting at the feet of Peter, Jesus' closest earthly companion."³

In today's Gospel reading there are two miracles with one story sandwiched in the middle of the other. This is also a characteristic of Mark's writing style. It begins with Jesus disembarking from a boat "on the other side." Jesus has crossed to the other side of the lake so many times that it's hard for us to keep up with him – but the crowds are always there, waiting! Jesus is likely in

¹ Compare versions of this story 'borrowed' from Mark (22 verses) as written by Luke 8:40-56 (16 verses), and Matthew 9:18-26 (8 verses).

² Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39. Colossians 4:10, 2 Tim 4:11, Philemon 23-24, 1 Peter 5:13(?).

³ Michael Card. Mark: The Gospel of Passion (Intervarsity Press, 2012), 17-19.

Capernaum, where a man named Jairus was “one of the leaders of the synagogue.”

There were particular requirements for a leader of the synagogue. Jairus would have had expertise for leading the prayers in a particular synagogue, and perhaps musical training as a cantor. He was an important man. But this day, Jairus’ mission was that of a desperate father; to find Jesus, fall prostrate before him, and publicly beg Jesus to heal his 12 year old daughter. Of course Jesus agreed to go home with Jairus.

The saga of Jairus’ dying daughter was interrupted by a woman with a 12-year-long hemorrhage. She spent all that she had on doctors and treatments; but her condition only worsened. The cause of her shame was not that the bleeding made her ritually unclean; but her resulting infertility.⁴ This unnamed woman was also desperate. She knew Jesus’ reputation as a healer and she had nothing left to lose. Imagine her, hunched over, threading her way through the crowd, stealthily approaching Jesus from behind, quickly touching the tassel of his robe. As she made her escape, “Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.” [‘Immediately’ is another word Mark uses often.]

Just as immediately, Jesus felt a pulse of power leaving him and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” With the jostling crowd surrounding Jesus on every side, how could he possibly know someone had touched his clothes? Jesus’ disciples didn’t yet know him very well and they were dismissive, but the woman heard, returned to Jesus “in fear and trembling, fell down before Jesus, and told him [and everyone listening] the whole truth.” Jesus’ response to her was affirming – and confusing. “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” If “her hemorrhage stopped...” I wonder what disease remained to be healed? Perhaps, although she was physically healed, she needed to address her emotional wounds? Maybe share her story to help others find hope and healing? Mark leaves it for us to ponder.

People came from Jairus’ house to tell him his daughter had died, and he shouldn’t bother Jesus anymore. They seem to have believed that Jesus could heal. They couldn’t imagine that Jesus could raise the dead. Jesus reassured Jairus, “Do not fear, only believe.” [In Luke’s account, the daughter was dead when Jairus initially sought Jesus. Talk about believing!]

The paid mourners were busy keening in the courtyard of Jairus’ house. They laughed when Jesus said the girl was only asleep, but they would be out of a job.

⁴ Matthew Thiessen. *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels’ Portrayal of Ritual Impurity within First-Century Judaism* (Baker Academic, 2020), 69–79.

Presence at the raising of Jairus' daughter was by invitation only; Peter, James, John; Jairus and the girl's mother. Speaking in his native Aramaic (another characteristic of Mark's gospel), Jesus took the little girl by the hand and told her to get up. She walked around and everyone was astounded! Jesus "strictly ordered them that no one should know, and told them to give her something to eat."⁵

Mark's gospel tells us about the emotional Jesus, the Jesus who cared. A central theme, prominent in today's reading, is Jesus' desire for people to overcome their fears. Believe, and have faith. Jesus doesn't ask for proof of need before he heals someone, and he never says "my powers healed you" – even though we know they do... Yes, Jesus gives healing. He also gives of himself.

May the power of God surround us, the unconditional love of Jesus enfold us; the fire of the Holy Spirit burn in our hearts, shine forth in our lives, and may we be fearless in caring, believing and proclaiming our faith. Amen.

⁵ After Jesus was raised from the dead, the disciples recognized him/believed it was Jesus when food was involved;

Lk 24:30-31 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Lk 24:41-43, While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Jn 21:13-14, Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.