

XXIV TRINITY 2015

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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COLOSSIANS 1.3 ST. MATTHEW 9.18

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The human touch...a handshake...a hug...a kiss...actions that reinforce our connection to each other, strengthen our friendships and love for others, and provide powerful support to someone in their time of need.

If the human touch can be so powerful and even provide healing...imagine what the touch of Jesus means in our lives. Imagine the life changing event his touch has on us...just as it had on the people in today's Gospel.

All three of the Synoptic Gospel writers record the raising of the official's daughter and the healing of the woman with severe bleeding. They came from different backgrounds...their paths crossed when they came to Jesus for help.

Matthew identifies the official as an important religious and community leader whose world has been shattered by the death of his young daughter. Luke gives him a name, Jairus, adding a human element to the story. He is no longer a stranger...we know his name.

Both Mark and Luke tell us the woman in the story who suffered from chronic bleeding suffered even more at the hands of doctors who tried but could not help her. Health insurance did not exist and she used what money she had to pay her doctors. Her condition meant she was cut off from her family, friends and community.

Jairus and the unnamed woman saw in Jesus their only hope. Both risked getting unwanted attention by coming to Jesus for help. It was a risk both were willing to take...a distraught father...a desperate woman...sought the one they believed could help restore their lives to wholeness.

Most of Jairus' colleagues would have considered Jesus to be nothing more than an itinerant preacher with a ragtag collection of followers. Jairus' love for his daughter overrode concerns for himself and his status in the community. He may have been an important religious and community leader, but he falls down at Jesus' feet and asks him to heal his daughter.

The woman in the story sneaks up behind Jesus. She does not want to be seen touching Jesus' coat. Mark tells us Jesus turned around and looked at her...her embarrassment and fear of becoming a public spectacle calmed by Jesus' assurance she was healed...her faith in Jesus more powerful than words.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house everyone was crying for the little girl who had just died. But Jesus told them to stop crying, she wasn't dead, she would live again, and everyone laughed at him. Jesus took the little girl by the hand, and told her to get up, and she did. He then told them to give her some food.

God our Father does not like to see people suffer. Jesus wants us to know we do not have to endure suffering alone. Jesus' raised Jairus' daughter and restored wholeness to his family. He healed the unnamed woman of a chronic bleeding condition and restored her to her family, friends and community. Jesus is the Great Restorer...the Compassionate Healer.

Suffering is not something we can avoid during this lifetime. We may ask ourselves why God allows us to suffer in a particular way...we may not get an immediate answer to that question...and we should not ask God for help and guidance only when times get tough. We should let our faith lead us directly to Jesus at all times.

In his Letter to the Colossians, Paul prays for us...it is a very human prayer from one who himself suffered greatly...he prays that we may get strength in knowing that Jesus has suffered and been through everything we have...he prays that we may endure all things with patience...and he instructs us to thank God for rescuing us from the power of darkness and death and leading us into the light and life that is his Son, Jesus.

The human touch is indeed powerful. The touch of Jesus on our lives is ever more powerful. It is life changing and life restoring. We can learn from Jairus and the unnamed woman not to hesitate to ask Jesus for help...and what it means to have our Faith in him make us whole.

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