

## XXIV TRINITY 2016

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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**COLOSSIANS 1.3 St. MATTHEW 9.18**



FAITH...HOPE...LOVE...PERSISTENT PRAYER  
...action items for our friend Saint Paul...and  
for us!

This morning's Epistle is Paul's personal thanksgiving prayer for the way the Colossian Church exercised the gifts of faith, hope and love. We can learn much from their example.

What kept the Colossian church strong was persistence in prayer in good and bad times...even when things looked really bad...the Colossians remained firm in their commitment to the Good News about Jesus.

We are supposed to be persistent in prayer...it shows we believe God really hears our prayers. Jesus experienced everything we experience...good times and bad times...he knows first hand what it means to thank God for the good times...and ask for his help in bad times.

Jesus became a human being like us, he understands the pain and sickness we sometimes experience. He understands human suffering. He can also heal and repair broken connections...just as he does in today's Gospel.

The Jewish official in the Gospel is a man with all the right connections. He is an important person who shows great humility...kneeling at Jesus' feet. He also took a risk coming to see Jesus. His love for his daughter who has just died cancels out any fears he has at losing all his connections. His prayer is simple...he wants Jesus to heal his daughter. He wants healing and restoration. He wants his daughter back. Jesus restores her life and his family's wholeness.

The woman in today's Gospel has been bleeding for twelve years. Not only is her pain and suffering severe...she has no connections at all...completely cut off from family and friends afraid of being contaminated by her illness. She sneaks up behind Jesus and says to herself she only has to touch his coat and she will be healed. She does not want to get caught. But she is...Jesus turns and looks at her and heals her and gives her words of encouragement.

The man and the woman in the Gospel come from very different social circles. Their paths cross as they both look to Jesus for help. One comes to Jesus openly; the other comes to him secretly. Both risked exposure for showing their faith in Jesus. Both saw in Jesus the answer to their prayers.

God doesn't like to see us suffer. Jesus wants us to know he can and does reach out and restore us to both spiritual and physical wholeness. He is the Great Restorer and Compassionate Healer. He restored a young girl's life and gave her back to her family and made it whole again. He healed a frightened woman of a painful bleeding condition and gave her back to her family and friends and community.

Suffering is something we cannot avoid during this lifetime, but we don't have to deal with it alone. Saint Paul prays for us...he prays that we may get strength from knowing that Jesus has suffered and been through everything we have, and that we may endure all things with patience. He asks us to then thank God for rescuing us from the power of darkness and death and leading us into the light and life we get through his son, Jesus. Those are words of strength and comfort we can apply to our lives now.

We shouldn't wait until things get really bad to ask Jesus for help. We must let our faith lead us directly to Jesus at all times, and believe that he can and will heal us and restore our minds, bodies and souls to wholeness. Like the woman in the Gospel, we must never give up or get discouraged. Saint Paul reminds us we must always be persistent in prayer.

Our prayer today is to ask God to increase in us the gifts of faith, hope and love. And not just when things aren't going as well as we would like. But when things are going very well...because those are the times we are likely to forget to thank God for his blessings.

FAITH...HOPE...LOVE...PERSISTENT  
PRAYER...action items for us to put into  
practice...in good times and bad  
times...today...and every day.

