

XXIV TRINITY 2018

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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ST. MATTHEW 9.18-26



"Reach out and touch someone"... was the slogan used by a well-known phone company in a highly successful ad campaign during the 1980s. The slogan originated in the 1920s and tugged at the hearts of consumers...*"Reach out and touch someone!"*

Today's Gospel is all about reaching out and touching someone. An important leader in the community whose daughter has just died reaches out to Jesus for help. A desperate woman with chronic severe bleeding touched Jesus for healing.

Matthew identifies the community leader as a Jewish official...Luke identifies him by name...Jairus. He was likely a man of some importance at the local synagogue. He took a risk coming to Jesus for help...he could have been removed from his position at the synagogue and been ostracized by his family and friends. His faith was strong...it drove him to reach out and ask Jesus to raise his daughter from the dead.

The woman who came to Jesus for help also took a risk. She had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years. She was already cut off from the life of the community and her family and friends...but her faith convinced her all she needed to do was touch Jesus' coat...she would get well.

Mark and Luke both have Jesus asking who it was who touched him. Our impulsive friend Peter told Jesus to look at the crowd around him...a lot of people were touching him...why would he even ask the question. But Jesus said, "Someone touched me", for I knew it when power went out of me."

Jesus knew very well who had touched him and why. He wanted the woman set her fear of public embarrassment aside. In front of Jesus and the entire crowd...she told her story...she reached out and touched Jesus...and was healed. Now she could go in peace and rejoin the community...and reconnect with her family and friends...and they would reach out and touch her...welcoming her back...she was no longer someone to be avoided.

Jesus now turns his attention to Jairus. When Jesus arrived at the house everyone was crying for the little girl who had just died. "Do not worry", he said, "she will be well again, only believe." Jesus told everyone to stop crying, she wasn't dead...she would live again. They didn't believe him and laughed at him. But Jesus had the last laugh...he reached out and 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.

The Gospels are full of accounts of Jesus reaching out and touching people's lives...teaching, preaching and healing. It is his healing miracles that are most compelling and reassuring. He didn't always heal by touch...sometimes he healed from a distance..."just say the word and we are healed"...our hearts, minds and soul renewed and made whole again.

God our Father does not like to see people suffer. Jesus wants us to know he can restore us to both spiritual and physical wholeness. Jesus is the Great Restorer. Why then do we continue to see suffering in the world and in our own lives? Why does God allow suffering to continue?

Several years ago a friend told me he had talked extensively with someone whose brother had just died after a particularly long illness. My friend told him that while seeing someone hurt is never pleasant...we learn there is healing in death. For the man whose brother died...it was a life-changing event...as he came to realize the faith his brother had while he was alive...would now sustain him for the rest of his life. The faith his brother had now reach out and touched him in an unexpected and wonderful way.

Let's think about how has Jesus has reached out and touched our lives and made them better. Soon he will reach out and touch us by giving us his life-giving and life-sustaining Body and Blood.

"Reach out and touch someone"... is more than a catchy slogan. When Jesus reaches out and touches our lives it is a life-changing event and lets us reach out and touch the lives of others...in more ways than we can imagine.

