

XXIV Trinity 2021
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

Colossians 1.3-14 St. Matthew 9.18-26

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Two people from vastly different backgrounds came to Jesus for help. One was a Jewish official whose daughter had just died. He was bold and daring and asked Jesus directly to come and raise his daughter to life. The other was a woman who suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years. Ostracized from her family and community...she approaches Jesus in stealth mode. The common element in the story: God's touch...and the human touch.

It was almost two years ago we first heard the word pandemic. We were told not to touch each other. Common things that reinforce our connection to each other: shaking hands, a friendly hug, a kiss, were off limits. We may have had our human touch limited...we have always had God's touch reminding us we are not alone even now.

All three of the Synoptic Gospels record the raising of the official's daughter and the healing of the woman with severe bleeding. Matthew identifies the official as an important religious and community leader and a Pharisee...whose world has been torn apart by the death of his young daughter. Luke gives him a name, Jairus, adding a personal human element to the story.

Jairus and the unnamed woman have something else in common...they are both alone when they come to Jesus for help. None of Jairus' Pharisee friends came with him. They hated Jesus and would not have supported Jairus' going to see him. Our unnamed woman...a stranger to us...would have been cut off from her family and friends and community. Her chronic bleeding would have made her unclean and someone to be avoided.

Jairus and the unnamed woman saw in Jesus their only hope. They both risked receiving unwanted attention. We see in them a strong faith, determination, and courage, that propelled them forward...regardless of what people thought of them.

The Gospels tells us the unnamed woman said to herself all she had to do was touch Jesus' coat and she would get well. Mark and

Luke tell us when she touched Jesus' coat, he turned around and asked who touched him. He knew power (to heal) had gone out of him...God's power to heal just from touching Jesus' coat. The woman confessed it was she who touched his coat and told her whole story. Jesus told her to go in peace and she was healed.

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 something to eat

God 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 and friends. He healed the unnamed woman of a chronic bleeding condition and restored her to her family, friends and community. Jesus told the people not to tell anyone what happened. They didn't listen to him. They had a story to tell...so do we!

Paul's prayer for us in his Letter to the Colossians adds another human dimension to the story. It is a very personal prayer from the heart of one who suffered greatly. He prays that we may get strength in our own suffering, 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.

We're still living through a pandemic that has touched our lives in many ways. Our faith has kept us strong and we have hope things will continue to get better. In the meantime, we're reacquainting ourselves with the human touch after Mass. At the same time, we continue to take precautions that make sense for the Parish.

We learn from Jarius we can be bold and daring when asking God for help. We learn from the unnamed woman how to be courageous...and we don't have to approach God in stealth mode. The human touch is indeed powerful. The touch of Jesus on our lives is ever more powerful.

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