

XXIV Trinity 2024

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

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Colossians 1.3-11 St. Matthew 9.18-26

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A desperate father whose daughter has died...a desperate woman cut off from her friends and family...both come to Jesus for help. Matthew identifies the man whose daughter has died only as a Jewish official. Mark and Luke give him a name...Jairus.

Jesus and his disciples are in Capernaum. Matthew has left his tax business to follow Jesus and invites him to his home for lunch. Tax collectors and outcasts come to see Jesus. When the Pharisees criticize Jesus for hanging out with the “wrong” kind of people, Jesus says he hasn’t come to call respectable people, but outcasts.

Jairus was not an outcast. He was an important leader in the Synagogue at Capernaum. Matthew tells us he came to Jesus for help because his daughter has just died. He wants Jesus to come and restore her to life. Jesus immediately gets up from the table and follows him. Mark and Luke tell us as they went along there were so many people crowding around them they could hardly move. This must have frustrated Jairus.

The woman who had been bleeding severely for twelve years sneaks up behind Jesus to touch his coat. Her condition made her an outcast. She spent all her money on doctors, her condition only got worse. She says to herself, “If I can only touch his coat, I will be well again.” She tries to be discrete. But as she touches Jesus’ coat, she is found out. She confesses her condition to Jesus. He tells her, “Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well!” Her prayers have been answered. She can now rejoin her family and friends.

Jesus and Jairus continue their walk toward Jairus’ house. When they get there, they find professional mourners and musicians stirring the people up. Jesus tells them to get out of the house, that the girl is not dead but sleeping. Everyone starts to make fun of Jesus. Jesus told the little girl to get up. She gets up and Jesus tells her parents to get her some food. Mark and Luke tell us she was 12 years old.

The Gospel is about the faith of two desperate people from two very different backgrounds; the hope they had Jesus could help them and restore their shattered lives; and the ultimate love and compassion they experienced in having Jesus answer their prayers. The 12 year-old dead girl and the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years would have

been considered “unclean”. The number 12 appears 189 times in the Bible and stands for God’s power and authority, completeness and wholeness. The girl and the woman received more than just physical healing; they received spiritual healing as well.

Paul’s Letter to the Colossians is also about faith, hope and love, a constant in his letters to the churches. The Colossians lived in Asia Minor...present-day Turkey. Paul is happy to learn of their deep faith in Jesus, of the love they share with others, and the hope that comes from hearing the Good News. Saint Paul tells them to keep up the good work. He tells them he will continue to pray for them for their spiritual growth in the good works they do and in the knowledge of God.

The common theme in the Epistle and Gospel is the importance daily prayer has in our lives. Daily prayer gives us the opportunity to share every aspect of our lives with God. Daily prayer gives us the chance to thank God for his many blessings. Daily prayer is the time for us to tell God we’re sorry for doing the things we shouldn’t have done, and to ask for his help to do the things we should be doing, and avoid the things that hurt our relationship with him and others.

The *Book of Common Prayer* gives us many prayers and thanksgivings we can direct toward God. Prayer is conversation with God. Our prayers can be formal. The Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer are good places to begin. Our Prayers can be personal, using our own words, or we can sit quietly and think about the words on Psalm 46.10...“Be still and know that I am God.”

Jairus and the unnamed woman in the Gospel had great faith in Jesus. They were desperate for his help...at their wits end...but they came to him because they believed in their hearts he could help them. Jairus was not going to let the crowd stop Jesus from coming with him. The unnamed woman wasn’t going to run off when she was discovered.

We should always ask God to make our faith as strong as the faith Jairus and the unnamed woman in the Gospel had. We ask God for help in Jesus’ name because we believe he can and will help us. And nothing is too big or too small for us to take to God in prayer and thanksgiving.

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