

St Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Trinity XXIV
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rmcneely+

Be of good comfort: for thy faith hath made thee whole

Today's Gospel from Matthew
presents a stirring pair of interwoven stories
for our consideration.

Matthew's account is but one of three accounts of these events.
I will draw upon all three of them
in order to try to give full meaning for us.

Jesus is in the second year of His earthly ministry and was actually
at Matthew's home as the events unfold.

It was a good time for them
but Jesus warned them to enjoy it while it lasted
because He was not there to care for the righteous
but for the sinner,
not for the healthy but for the sick.

Then as if on cue,
a man enters summoning Jesus away from the party,
to come to his sick daughter.

The man is Jairus,
a ruler of the synagogue,
who kneels at Jesus' feet
and besought Him to come
saying that his 12 year old daughter lay dying
but that if Jesus would lay His hand on her she would live.

And we begin to see that this would be no ordinary evening.

As Jesus and the apostles left Matthew's house a great crowd enveloped and crushed them
And we learn of an intervening event:
There was a woman in that crowd.
We don't know her name but we know a good deal about her life.
 She was stricken with an issue of blood,
 we believe connected with her menstrual cycle,
 that had devastating consequences for her.
She had been in constant hemorrhage (mensis) for 12 years. The physical consequences of the disorder are obvious but the spiritual and social implications may not be.
Under the Levitic law of the day, she was categorized as unclean.
With our 21st Century eyes,
 we conclude that there is a moral judgment associated with being unclean,
 but in the first century it was simply a status, that was unrelated to morals or behaviour.
But it meant that she could not go to temple,
 she was separated from God
 and could neither worship nor receive the grace of God.
It also meant that anyone she touched
 was also rendered unclean
 and would have to undergo a 7 day purification ritual before he or she could become clean,
 enter the temple or associate with other people.
So for the woman, her physical problem isolated her from God and from mankind.
 And she had been in that shape for 12 years.

She had exhausted all her assets going from one physician to another but none could cure her. But there was this man Jesus.

She knew in her heart, that Jesus could cure her,

restore her to health.
Restore her to God.
If only she could but touch the hem of his garment,
She had absolute faith that He could cure her.

She slid among the crowd from behind Jesus as he walked by
She and bent down
and touched the hem of his garment.
She knew immediately that her life was restored,
she was back from the spiritual dead.

The reaction of our Lord even amazed the Apostles.
Jesus stopped abruptly; whirled around and asked the crowd,
“Who touched me?”
Peter uttered some Aramaic phrase that probably translates
“Holy cow”, you are pressed on all sides
by this throng of hundreds of people
and one person touches you and you ask Who touched me?

Jesus said I perceive that someone touched me and “virtue is gone out of me”.

Of all the people in that crush, He turned,
picked her out of the crowd
and gazed into her very soul.
She advanced trembling and knelt before Him
confessing to all what she had done and why
and that she knew she had been instantly healed.

And you can almost feel Jesus smile as he said these words to her:
“Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace”.

The woman to whom the most learned of the day gave no hope,
had ultimate faith that this man Jesus would heal her.

She knew that if she could but touch

not His hand,

shoulder

or face,

but even the hem of his garment, that she would be healed
and reunited with God. Such was her faith.

We also see something about Jesus here.

There is almost something automatic, cosmic and electric.
He did not exchange words with the woman,
did not even lay eyes on her before she touched His garment.
Yet virtue had gone out of Him
and He knew it but not until the instant that it happened.

His healing,

and if we think of the woman as symbolic of us sinners,

His forgiveness to those of faith

is instant and automatic.

He comes to those of the lowest of conditions

and to those whom mankind has utterly shunned.

And His healing is to those who have exhausted all and come to
Him in Faith.

Ponder that while I take you through the rest of this remarkable
evening.

No sooner had Jesus healed the woman with the issue of blood,
then one of Jairus' servants (remember Jairus?) came up and
announced to Jairus,

never mind, your daughter has died.

We have all known parents who have lost young children,

I don't know of any greater torment in this life

and can only imagine the depth of Jairus' grief
at hearing that their only child, a little girl had died.

Jesus responded: Fear not. Believe only and she shall be made whole.

When He got to the house, Jesus kicked out the mourners and musicians playing their dirge and allowed only the girl's parents Peter, James and John into the place where the dead girl lie.

He said "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

If only ye believe"

Remember that any contact with a corpse rendered one, unclean.
Yet Jesus was without hesitation; He took her by the hand and said
Arise.

The word in the Greek translation referencing resurrection
And the 12 year old girl arose and walked into her parents
arms.

Death is something we all fear.

As Archbishop Provence says:

"none of us are getting out of this alive".

The message from Jesus the Christ is that for Christians, it is but sleep awaiting the time when He shall come to awaken us to the promise of life eternal.

So, why have Matthew, Mark and Luke all given us the story of that evening?

Why did these two seemingly unrelated events become intertwined and come to us as one story?

Are they unrelated?

We have the complete circle of life: the woman who could not produce life for 12 years and the parents who after 12 years faced the loss of the life they had produced.

The two people of faith in this story could not be more dissimilar:

One a woman

The other a man

One excluded from the synagogue

The other a ruler of it

One destitute

The other had great wealth

One without family or friends

The other with wife and daughter

One, the ruler of the law that could not save him,

The other a victim of the law.

However, these two very dissimilar actors

Shared one vital trait, the very point of the evenings events:

They both had strong faith and belief in this man Jesus.

Both were in desperation

The woman after spending all her assets on doctors

To no avail.

And the temple official

after the law and the temple rituals

could not save his daughter.

Yet their faith brought them to Jesus, and they were relieved.

There is so much to the events of this evening. What are we to take with us this day into the world on the other side of those doors?

Know this:

1. Jesus is greater than death. Even His own death upon the Cross

2. Our view of death is tempered by this story.

We mourn the dead,
but not as the world mourns.

For Christians, death may be seen
as a time when the body falls asleep in Jesus
until He returns
and all the dead in Christ
rise to new and everlasting life.

3. Those afflicted in body and in soul:

approach Him in Faith,
asking Him to heal
and to restore us to fullness of life
to bring greater glory to God in this life.

4. Our strong and abiding Faith is the key to the events of this remarkable evening. To those of faith, Jesus gives the promise of Life. He will bring about a whole new creation for those who have faith in Him.

Be of Good Comfort

Thy Faith Hath Made Thee Whole