

## Healing2

Mark 5:21-43

It seems natural that someone who studied nursing is also interested in healing. In fact, I was interested enough about the healing miracles that I bought a book about it several years ago. So, I was drawn to this reading.

These stories from Mark's gospel are just full of elements to ponder. One resource called this group of verses a "two-for-one deal." Apparently, Mark's writing a second story into the middle of the first story is common enough that it has a name: a "Markan sandwich."

I confess I got distracted when doing some reading about these verses. There are a lot of "compare and contrast" elements in these stories: both were about women being healed; the time of 12 years featured in both stories. Death figured literally or figuratively in both stories: one could consider the unnamed woman experience a "living death," as did their being called "daughter." Both females were to all intents and purposes "unclean" – the unnamed woman was a social outcast on account of her persistent bleeding and Jairus's daughter because she was dead. Jesus made these females clean, rather than becoming unclean himself.

On the other hand, Jairus was an important man – sort of the CEO of the local temple – and he was referred to four times by name, while the woman was unnamed and of no local importance – except perhaps as someone to be avoided. Jairus approached Jesus directly, while the woman hoped not to be noticed.

There were also other less directly related interesting topics: in Palestine, due to the weather and lack of refrigeration, bodies were buried as soon as possible, yet not before the ritual of mourning (which seems to have commenced at Jairus's house before he and Jesus arrived). The mourning ritual apparently included several expectations: there was much crying and wailing – often with professional mourners. There should be two flutes, and there was a set of instructions for rending of clothes, including which category of mourner should tear where, when to rend inner vs outer garments, and how soon you could roughly sew up the tear, and how much longer until you could properly mend the torn bit (a month).

That the woman, reported to have touched the hem of Jesus's garment, probably actually touched one of the four tassels attached to the type of robe that devout Jewish men wore. And that the usual treatment at the time for bleeding in women were two concoctions of various exotic plants, bruised or boiled, then given in wine – the second one given only if the first didn't work. The final resort if neither of these should stop the "flux": "Set her in a place where two ways meet, and let her hold a cup of wine in her hand; and let somebody come behind and affright her, and say "Arise from thy flux."

And there is some speculation that Mark heard these particular stories directly from Peter: Greek was the language spoken by Gentiles in Palestine – and

the language in which the scriptures were first written, but as a Jew Jesus would have spoken his command to Jairus's daughter in Aramaic – “Talitha Koum”, and Mark quotes him speaking in Aramaic – as he may have heard Peter recount.

As interested as I am in the historical and health-related aspects, it seems to me these stories are about healing in all contexts, including spiritual and emotional healing. And faith. The fact that Jairus left his dying daughter, accompanied by household members who were happy to encourage him to not proceed, spoke of his enormous faith that Jesus could heal his daughter, as well as his unwillingness to be dissuaded by his friends. And that the woman had such faith in Jesus's healing abilities, that she knew she was healed even by just touching his clothing. Jesus's use of the address “daughter” reflects warmth and acceptance, a healing word for someone who's been on the outside for so long

It's clear from Mark's stories that Jesus wants us to be whole and wants only for us to ask with faith. Some lessons we can take from these stories:

- As Jairus experienced, we have to have faith—even desperate faith -- when we ask for what we want, and be prepared to wait,
- Our faith may not be mature, nor complete, or even necessarily correct faith,
- We may have to forget our pride and humble ourselves,
- If/when we humble ourself, as Jairus did, Jesus will walk with us,
- We may have to refuse to be deterred by what others think,
- In some instances we may have to think twice about what may seem like common sense,
- Jesus says that when we have faith, we can abandon our fears.
- The unnamed woman came to touch Jesus's robe because she had heard about Jesus — we never know who might want to know more about Jesus because of something they heard, maybe from one of us.