

SHE TOLD THE WHOLE TRUTH

God of inclusive love, who knows us each by name: we thank you for the woman who stood out of the crowd and defied her "uncleanness" to connect with you; we praise you for the leader of the synagogue who faced the mockery of others to give his daughter hope; may the flowing power of Christ bring healing and acceptance to the rejected and abused; through Jesus Christ, giver of life.

from Prayers for an Inclusive Church, Steven Shakespeare

JUNE 27, 2021

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24, Psalm 30, Mark 4:35-41

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

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MAY I SPEAK AND MAY WE HEAR FROM THE HEART OF THE LIVING GOD
WHO IS CREATING, REDEEMING, AND SANCTIFYING US.

Imagine the backbiting after this encounter.

Which is to say people don't get crucified on a whim. There's always a buildup.

Here is Jesus in a crush of people – one can assume many or most of them somehow good, upstanding people – what the elites might have thought of as "our kind" – probably most of them men expecting to get what they wanted from Jesus – like Jairus, the synagogue official who wanted Jesus to heal his daughter.

And the one person he looks for, the one person he listens to is a woman with a hemorrhage – someone the religious authorities categorized as "unclean." So he

would have been better off, in their view, if Jesus had just moved on – didn't acknowledge her, didn't get identified with her.

She wasn't just struggling with a disability, she was dealing with dishonor, devalued. Both because of her medical condition and also because she was a woman in a patriarchal culture where only the men mattered. (Thank goodness we've gotten past that!)

I have two, maybe three things I like most about this story that is in front of us.

But before I get to them, let me just take a moment to point out the obvious – this isn't just a story – not just this woman's story in this Bible passage. This is a story that is

being lived out over and over and over again from age to age to age – and most definitely in our age. If we didn't see it during Covid, we weren't paying attention.... a "second-class" human not worthy of getting the care she needed – and kicked while she was down.

So my favorite things about this passage:

First, the obvious, **she got her healing...** that flow of her life-blood away from her stopped. And in this case we're given to see it was actual blood and everything it means to any human – but think of anytime your essence, who you are is being dissipated, flowing away, leaving you without the basics of life-energy you need to be who you are and do your commitments... So she could go on living – and maybe living more from her heart... but she needed concern, she needed access to care.

Second, **I love that of all the people where Jesus was he was looking for her.**

Third, I love, love, love where it says **"she... told him the whole truth."** Not just "I've got a problem," but "this is what my life is like, this is what life is like for a lot of people...."

Fourth, **Jesus was listening.** Don't we often have a sense that robot Jesus knew all, all the time, didn't need to listen to anyone? Especially didn't need to listen to people who were different

from him? Didn't need to listen to the "dregs" of the culture? But he knew he was human and as a human being needed to listen to the voice of the other, wanted to listen, did listen. AND, again, counter to what we may think, let what he heard change him, change his mind and heart – as we see repeatedly in stories about Jesus, stories about God with us.... I hope we're listening to others – especially these days – like Jesus listened to "the other."

Fifth, I love that **he didn't get caught up in the thanks and honor the woman was showing him** ("all in a day's work" or whatever false humility we might have offered). What did he say to her? He said: **"your faith has saved you...."** What God was saying to her and says to us is we have, thanks be to God, within us, God-given life and power and commitment and resilience, and, even when we feel we have completely flowed out, we have what we need to come back to the Life, the Reality that is Life, that is Reality. Jesus wasn't clambering up on any pedestal. It says to us to avoid looking for the people on pedestals to make much of a difference for us – or for people like her. We can do that healing work. God gives us all grace for that. God gives that grace even to the least, the lost, the left out.... **do you ever think about how some people**

even survive? Could you survive in their conditions? They must have faith that saves them like the woman in the story.

It's Pride Day today, anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising in New York City in 1969 – there are obvious implications in this gospel reading for today's observance and for the LGBTQIA+ community – so I won't spell them out – and if they're not obvious, I'm still not going spell them out. But if they aren't obvious, why not?

And in the last part of this gospel reading, in the part about raising the little girl – Jairus's daughter, I love that **Jesus saw life where everyone else just saw death.**

But how the tongues must have wagged after this encounter in the crowd. Jesus very publicly and unapologetically standing with, someone who "should" have been overlooked. And doing that while keeping Jairus, the Very Important Person waiting. But he didn't change course to be more likeable. Nor would he change course to avoid the cross.

Who do we want to be? How do we want to act? What future do we want to live? Who are we listening to? Who are we avoiding hearing? How are we changing? Who do we want as our companions?

And, as my teacher Jim Finley asks: **"All things considered, what is the most loving thing we can do right now?"**

Jesus knew the answer to that question.

So do we.



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