

“I Have Redeemed Your Life and Still Do!”
B Pentecost 5, Mark 5:21-43
June 27, 2021; 10:00 am
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

BEFORE WORSHIP –HAVE YOU BEEN REDEEMED?

Psalm 103:4-6

⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
⁵ who satisfies you with good as long as you live^[a]
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

Not just a “one-time conversion moment” when we “got saved” or prayed the 4-step prayer accepting Jesus into our hearts at youth camp or VBS. God is a God of redemption—of saving us over and over again. Of making all things new—even us. Of taking the broken things and places in us and our lives and communities, and working all things together for good. Where and when have you and your life—body and soul—been redeemed?

God says to us: “I Have Redeemed Your Life and Still Do! Everyday” Let us worship.

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat^[a] to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She

had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” ³⁶ But overhearing^[b] what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.

⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

HEALING SANDWICH

Scholars call it an “intercalation.” Mark’s use of this rhetorical device. We might call it a “miracle sandwich.” There’s your “biblical scholarship trivia learning for the day!”

Jairus, the Top Dog of the Synagogue, comes running to Jesus—a radical, itinerant, nomad Teacher, who is roaming the Galilee, reaching out to people and helping them. Healing and restoring them. Jairus is taking a big risk to kibbutz with these “Others”—like Jesus—not part of the establishment. But he is desperate. For his beloved daughter—just 12 years of age—is on the brink of death. This father would do anything! Even cross cultural, social and religious boundaries to find *any* kind of help.

And, in the middle of that story—as Jesus responds, giving Jairus hope, and turns toward his home and his daughter’s bedside, another story inserts itself on Jesus’ path. Again a pause. An interruption—almost unnoticed. A woman who has been sick and bleeding for twelve long years touches him—bumps up against him—not accidentally, but very intentionally, and stops Jesus in his tracks.

And, after that holy interruption, Jesus carries on, back to his journey to Jairus’ daughter. Isn’t that how life goes? Full of interruptions, stops along the way, potentially frustrating redirecting of our path and schedule? Yet, isn’t that how love and ministry happen—all the time? In the interruptions?

WHAT THE STORIES TELL US

These are stories—this healing sandwich—about life, love, healing and restoring to wholeness. They are also about faith, touch, trust and reaching out in desperation mixed with hope. We learn of the difference between Curing and Healing. The woman was “cured” when he touched her and the bleeding stopped, and she knew it. But then, a little after that, she was restored to wholeness. To Community. Resurrected in a sense. A most important and life-giving sense. When Jesus stops in his tracks—calls her “Daughter”—that is the true healing—far beyond the curing of her physical malady and shame.

Jesus, by calling out to her and acknowledging her value and worth, restores her to fullness of life. Declares her clean and included in the community once again.

Note what faith ISN’T. It’s not “having enough faith”—a quantitative matter—if she had enough faith, she could get healed. Same with Jairus’ daughter.

Look how Jesus responds. This reaching out—by both the characters in this story—is an act of desperation. It’s far more a “last ditch effort” than a declared testimony of confident faith. Yet, Jesus doesn’t care. He doesn’t care how MUCH faith Jairus or the woman have. He doesn’t care that the woman’s grasping interruption might be deemed rude or at least audacious and “not fit for proper society.”

He calls it Faith. Responds to the reaching out—doesn’t care what the backstory is. Jesus responds to the need and deems desperate reaching out when all hope is gone to be the most faithful act of all.

We learn of the power of touch in these stories as well. Jesus recognizes the woman’s touch. He knows that her trust is coursing through that touch. That touch is powerful. We have learned that in spades in this time of pandemic, have we not? We need human touch. Whether we’re feeling doubt, uncertainty, desperation; or surety, confidence or trust.

Karoline Lewis says, “We locate faith in answers and certainties.” But, what if it’s just a very uncertain reaching out? The woman tells her own truth, and crossed from death to life, because Jesus accepts and embraces her—as she is. He doesn’t ask her to change! She then, because of Jesus deeming her whole and worthy, is able to live into a new truth—from that day forward. No longer an outcast. Restored fully to the community and to her life.

HEALING INCLUSION

Healing of all kinds—in our hearts and souls as much as our bodies. But our bodies may be even more important than we think. For those with gender fluidity, it can mean everything.

Note how the woman has *agency*. She reaches out to Jesus. She is not a passive player, being saved or rescued by another. She is taking steps herself, and that becomes part of the healing. Now, this does not mean that healing was *conditional*. That she had to “believe enough. Have enough faith,” or have enough power of positive thinking, or any “technique” like that.

She becomes a part of her own healing, because she knows her own body. She knows, deep down inside, that she has prayed long and hard, and helped herself in every way imaginable.

LGBTQIA folx, people on the margins of many kinds, individuals who are “differently-abled” know this to be true as well. They have often been told they are “not whole.” Not normal. Not whole or “OKAY” just as they are—beloved of God. Folx have found healing inside themselves, when they’ve reached out to touch the hem of Jesus garment—and this is not dependent on what anyone in the crowd thinks!

It’s in the reaching out in faith; in the deeply personal knowing of our own worth; our own innate sense of the Imago Dei within each one of us. No Matter What! No matter what others may say, how they might pass judgment; how laws might even be passed in our supposed democracy, that deny the full personhood of “others.”

Many souls of all shapes and sizes, orientations, genders, walks of life and faith experiences, have found healing—by first knowing inside themselves we are worthy to be called sons and daughters of God because God said so, and by reaching out—reaching out in faith but also even in doubt, seeking Jesus’ power and presence in our lives.

Many stories have come down through the ages—especially out of the Christian Church that Jesus gave individuals courage, strength and an innate sense of value and worth—enough to resist. To counter the messages of exclusion; to just say no! This is not the Way of Christ—this hypocrisy—we are all truly created in the Image of God. Every last one of us.

Rev. Heather Haginduff:

“I’ve said this many times to many kinds of people. I’ll say it again for those in the back pews.

QUEER CHRISTIANS ARE THE BEST CHRISTIANS TO HAVE IN THE CHURCH!!

Imagine being rejected, being told that your love is sinful, being kicked out of your family and out of churches. Imagine being told that who you are is wrong. Imagine being told that your belonging is denied.

And yet, also imagine that you cannot seem to shake the love of God, your devotion to Christ and your thirst for the Word, no matter what you do or how hard you try. Imagine that even though you are politicized in a culture war, God sees you and loves you madly and you feel this in your bones. The fact that we darken the door of the Church is a miracle in itself. We want to belong.

The Church is missing the miracles, people. And so-called Christians are missing the opportunity to be converted by the faith of people whose conviction is so strong that they risk more pain by walking into your churches. Walk the talk, Folx. I’ll be over here asking the God that loves me as I am to heal LGBTQIA+ folx of spiritual trauma.”

Another story comes from a friend and colleague I have just met. Heath is the pastor at Kingsbury UCC in Utah. He has been writing brilliant and authentic sermons and submitting them to Sermon Central—an inter-denominational agency that shares sermons all over the world. He wrote recently about the “Two Spirits” tradition in Native communities that fully embraces gender diversity and fluidity, seeing the expansive expressions of human souls as a gift from the Creator. Heath shared the painful experience he had recently of being told he was “not made in the Image of God.”

Hello Rebecca, (from Heath)

Thank you for reaching out to me! I am a pretty open book and don't mind you sharing at all. Brene Brown says vulnerability is

"the birthplace of innovation and change." I agree. I am done hiding. I am over being quiet about it.

The 1st four sermons were approved by Sermon Central—the last was not. Guess they did not understand when I told the story of the 'One Sheep' was gay and it was God who promoted me, telling me I was loved, I was **enough**. To be a vessel for this message was unbelievable for me, I feel so blessed, it touched me deeply and much healing came from it. It was quite the spring, and a very enlightening and spiritual experience. Here is the 'rejected' notes for sermon central... Again, thanks for reaching out, and God Bless! Heath

Greetings, K. Heath,

The Sermon Central team would like to sincerely thank you for the content you have contributed! Unfortunately, some of the content contained in this sermon cannot be approved at this time due to the following concerns.

There are a few things we are concerned about in this message but perhaps the one worth focusing on is the promotion of the LGBTQ2IA community. However, both the Scriptures and Sermon Central do not promote such a lifestyle. Though we want all people to be saved no matter their background, we cannot affirm lifestyles of sin. We also would not affirm a lifestyle of murder, rape, stealing, etc.

Another issue in the sermon was about the promoting of the five gender roles in Native American society. Both biology and the Scriptures are clear that there are only two genders. This is the orthodox position from the evangelical church abroad.

If you would like to dialogue about this further, or feel that you have been misunderstood, please email me.
God bless you, K. Heath.

Your brother in Christ, Nicki Imperato
Sermon Reviewer at SermonCentral

REACHING OUT TO JESUS

No matter who we are or where we are on life's Journey, we can reach out to Jesus. For healing, for wholeness of body AND soul. For confirmation of our holiness—that innate seed that is planted in each one of us even before birth—Imago Dei. The Image of God.

We can reach out to Jesus on behalf of others, too! Just like Jairus did—deep in distress, concern and love for his young daughter. This was profoundly moving—especially in such a patriarchal society where daughters were not as fully valued as sons—usually, anyway! But, Jairus sure seems to buck that tide—to go against the flow of the times—and he reaches out; steps out in faith and into the street—to go and find the One he believes can help and heal his family—body and soul.

Sometimes in our day, we might find folks trying to “reach out to Jesus” on our behalf in a coercive way, and that makes us uncomfortable. This is not an altar call moment! An attempt at conversion to a particular understanding of a particular faith. When I “reach out to Jesus” out of my concern and love for you, or promise to “pray for you” for healing of body and soul—it is NOT with an agenda of any kind!

But, is done in the spirit of Jairus, out of deep love for his young daughter. Unlike the woman bumping up against Jesus in the crowd, Jairus' daughter was not able to go out, to reach out and touch, of her own agency. For she was too sick—nearing death—and needed a loving companion to reach out on her behalf.

How often can we do this for others? Perhaps we need to even more? We can be “afraid to get involved” but “there is no fear in love.” Reaching out to Jesus on behalf of others who need healing and love is a holy thing. Surround them in love and light, with your prayers. Take them to Jesus. And so, we sing.

Let's sing for ourselves AND for others. Reach out to Jesus. Where we, in our own souls, are longing for wholeness—

looking for Jesus to touch the broken places in us. And,
reaching out FOR others. TO others—like us and different.

Bumping up against Jesus' divine power and love, filling
ourselves with that healing energy and taking it out into the
streets. Running to Jesus on the Way—kneeling before him and
praying he come and heal ALL our daughters and sons—
restoring us all to life, health and wholeness—together—in
community. So be it, Amen.

Reach Out to Jesus

BY: Ralph Carmichael (Recorded by Elvis Presley)

*Is your burden heavy as you bear it all alone?
Does the road you travel, harbor dangers yet unknown?*

*Are you growin' weary in the struggle of it all?
Jesus will help you when on his name you call*

*He is always there hearing every prayer, faithful and true
Walking by our side, in his love we hide all the day through*

*When you get discouraged just remember what to do
Reach out to Jesus, he's reaching out to you*

*Is the life you're living filled with sorrow and despair?
Does the future press you with its worry and its scare?*

*Are you tired and jealous, have you almost your way?
Jesus will help you, just talk to him today*