

Sermon
Rev. Richard Dietrich
July 1, 2018

Do you remember last week's gospel lesson? - Jesus stilled the storm at sea. This is what happens next, according to Mark:

Mark 5:23-46

The sermon has one other text, from Revelation 3:20:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me. I will sup with her, and she with me.

After Jesus said "Shhh" and the storm slipped quietly away, the disciples found they had already crossed over - they were on the other side of the lake.

And even as they pulled the boat to shore, they saw a crowd gathering. Someone said to Jesus, "We're here to learn what you mean by the good news." And Jesus began to explain. For there was nothing more important than the good news.

Until a man came Jairus came and made his way *through* the crowd - or a man named Jairus came and the crowd made way for him, because he was a man of standing.

But the man of standing kneels. And he says over and over again - to Jesus: "My daughter, my daughter. My daughter." For his daughter is dying; but if Jesus comes with him and puts his hands on her, she may be made well. She may not die; surely she will live.

Jesus stops - Jesus stops *preaching the good news* - and he goes with Jairus, because there is nothing more important than this man's daughter.

Immediately! Mark says. The crowd, too. All of them seem to be going along. They surround Jesus, they hem him in, they push up against him.

The disciples are saying, "Make way, make way," because Jairus is an important man, and his daughter is *dying*. They are even getting a little testy about it.

Especially when a woman

About this woman we know a great deal. (I want you to stop a moment and wonder how and why that is so.)

She has been suffering from hemorrhage for years. Years! Sometimes the bleeding would stop for a bit *but* then it would start again and nothing would stop it. She's gone from doctor to doctor; she's spent down to her last penny on a cure. But there is no cure. She's only gotten worse.

Now she is inching her way through the crowd: "Excuse me. Please. If I . . . Please." She is thinking, "I may be that if I can touch him, the bleeding will stop." And she does. She touches Jesus. And it does: The bleeding stops.

And Jesus stops. And turns around. "Who's touch me?" he says.

The disciples want him to keep going. Jairus daughter is dying. Peter takes his (Jesus') arm. John says to him "What do you mean? Everyone pushing against everyone else? Sixty people touched you in the last six steps."

"We need to keep going," Peter says. He sees Jairus looking back, forlornly impatient. "We need to keep going." He grasps Jesus arm more firmly.

"No.

"Wait." Jesus says again. "Who's touched me?" He looks around. He waits. John starts up, "We need"

When the woman steps out of the crowd. She is shaking with fear - and joy - and she is sobbing. And she kneels. Looking up at him (Jesus) she . . . doesn't know what to say. Looking down at her . . . She sees him looking down at her; he is holding out his hand to help her up.

And she says . . . *everything*. She tells him her story. ALL of it because he wants to hear it all.

- how she started bleeding one day and it didn't stop and then it did and then it started again and it stopped and started and stopped and started and each time it stop the time was less and each time it started the time was more, and now even when it stopped, it didn't really; and she had been to doctors, and she named several of them.

"Twelve years," she says. And now, suddenly, it has stopped, completely, for good.

Jesus listens, because there is nothing more important than the story the woman is telling him.

So, Jesus listens. Peter lets go of his arm. John takes his hand of his shoulder. Jesus listens.

Until the woman finishes her story, he listens.

I imagine she is still shaking. He takes *her* shoulder; he holds it firmly until the shaking stops, slipping out of her as the storm slipped away from the sea. He calls her “daughter,” as if in the touching and the being made well, and especially in the long, shaky story, she has become his child.

“Daughter,” he says. “Now you are better.” She nods. The shaking *has* stopped. Tears still run down her cheeks but the sobbing has stopped. “Good,” Jesus says. “Then you don’t need to be afraid. *Don’t be afraid.*”

Sometime in the middle of all this, some of Jairus’ people arrive. They tell him, “Too late.

“She’s dead. Too late. Come home.”

I imagine Jairus wants to go home. But . . . she’s dead. There’s nothing he can do now.

When he gets home, he will follow the example of David, when his son of Bathsheba dies: he will wash, anoint himself, change his clothes, and have something to eat.

But now, he has to tell Jesus. “She’s dead.”

But Jesus says to *him*, “Don’t be afraid.”

“I’m coming,” he says.

The crowd has fallen away. Jesus tells the ten to wait. He motions to Peter and John and they follow. (And, as always, James follows John.)

Soon they come to the gate to the courtyard to Jairus’ great house. Another crowd is beginning to gather there, a *tumult* of mourners (like a gaggle of geese, or a herd of cattle, a swarm of flies, a pride of lions - a *tumult* of mourners. They have come to fill the house, to weep, to wail, to keen, to be somewhere someone has died.

Jesus stops again! There is nothing more important than saying to these people, “Why are you here? The child isn’t dead. Only sleeping.”

They laugh, because *they* know she's dead.

"Make them leave," Jesus tells Jairus. "Go outside - at least - " Jairus says. They do. Only he remains and the girl's mother, who takes Jesus into her daughter's room.

Jesus takes the little girl's hand (as he took the woman by the shoulder). He holds it in both of his. And he says, "Wake up."

And she does. She wakes up.

Jesus helps her stand up. And he tells her mother, "She should eat something."

Does he also say (?) - "I'll have something to eat, too.

"Let's sit down together."

And they do, they sit down to *sup*, and they eat and talk and eat and sit silent and eat and talk some more until the night falls.

"If you hear me knocking," Jesus says somewhere else, "come to the door. I'll come in, and we'll eat and drink and talk until we fall asleep at the table."

Why do you and I love Jesus? (Why do we believe - know! - that in him we see what love is.) Because this is it. He stops!

He stops to talk to those that want to learn about the good news, he stops telling the good news to follow a distressed father. He stops because a woman has touched him and he needs to hear her story. He stops to comfort a mocking tumult of mourners, whether they want to listen to him or not, he stops to heal a girl who is beyond healing.

He stops for a meal and an entire evening. He stops.

He stops for me. And he stops for you. He stops for anyone in the world as if anyone in the world were worth stopping for.

He stops for anyone in the world as if anyone in the world were worth stopping for.

So, he loves you and me. So he loves us. Do we love him enough to follow? More, do we love him enough to stop?