

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27

Psalm 130

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

Mark 5:21-43

So, we all know what the zero sum game is, right? We know that the zero sum game is that there is a finite amount of something and if everybody has the same thing, by definition, if somebody gets more, somebody else gets less. It's sorta' like a seesaw. So if it's balanced and everybody's got the same, that's fine, but if somebody gets more then somebody else, by definition, gets less. That's the zero sum game. So keep that thought in mind as we take a look at the Gospel this morning.

Now Jesus has ventured across the Sea of Galilee into gentile territory and he has released the Geresene demoniac from the legion of demons. And he gets back in the boat and heads back across the Sea of Galilee to Jewish territory where the story of what he has done in the gentile territory has gotten there ahead of him. So when he shows up, back on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, there are throngs and throngs of people waiting for him. One of the things that we notice about the gospel of Mark is that there are very frequently throngs and throngs of people around Jesus...pushing up against him, crowding in doorways, filling up houses.....everybody wants to be near Jesus, everybody wants to get close to Jesus, everybody wants to be there when something miraculous happens. So this big crowd is waiting for him on the shore and as he steps out of the boat the synagogue leader named Jairus rushes up to him and says, "Please! Come with me. My daughter is dying and you can save her life!" Now obviously, not all of the Jewish leaders in the synagogue were against Jesus. Nicodemus wasn't even though he came to see Jesus in the dead of night and Jairus isn't. He believes that Jesus can heal his sick daughter and he wants Jesus to come with him. Jesus doesn't say anything, he just starts following along behind Jairus.

Through the crowd...they're weaving their way through the crowd. As they're weaving their way through the crowd, there's this woman...this woman who has been hemorrhaging for 12 years...the same amount of time that Jairus daughter has been alive. Twelve years. She's been to every doctor she can find; she's spent every single penny she has; she has been unclean, ritually unclean, for 12 years. She can't live with her family. She can't function in her community. She's an outcast. And she's poor. And she's female. Now no self-respecting female is going to go out in public in a crowd without a male escort from her family. But she can't be with her family because she is ritually unclean. If she touches anyone else, they become unclean as well.

So here she is...in the middle of this crowd...a pariah...and she's going to sneak up behind Jesus and touch the hem of his garment because she knows that if she can just even touch his clothes...not him, but just his clothes...just the hem of his robe, she's going to be healed.

And she does.

And the instant she does, the power of Jesus goes into her and she knows that she has been healed. She feels the difference immediately. But guess what? So does Jesus! And he's looking around and goes, "Who touched me?" And the disciples are looking around and saying to him, "Are you kidding? Everybody around here has touched you! There's no way you can identify who touched you. Everybody here has touched you! Look at this crowd pushed up against you!" Jesus said, "No, somebody touched me! And I want to know who it is"

Now this woman who has just been released from 12 years of agony has a really difficult decision to make. She can get away without identifying herself. Nobody can tell who it was that touched Jesus. And if she confesses, she risks everything. She has broken more social conventions and more taboos than we can shake a stick at. And the fact that she is now healed isn't going to make a darn bit of difference.

So she opens her mouth. And she says, "It was me. I touched you." Now she has risked everything to be honest with Jesus. And the crowd is standing around with their mouths hanging open waiting for Jesus to berate her. "How could you 'steal' power from me? You didn't even ask for it! What are you doing out here in the crowd by yourself? And what are you doing out here in the crowd making everybody you bump into unclean? You have no right!!" They are all waiting for this berating to come from Jesus.

And Jesus just looks at her and says, "Daughter, your faith has healed you! Go in peace."

No berating whatsoever. No chastisement from Jesus for this woman who has broken every rule in the book. And while Jesus is dealing with her, the messengers come from Jairus' house and say, "Your daughter has died."

Zero sum game. The hemorrhaging woman got what she needed. She took Jesus' time and the time that she took from Jesus cost Jairus' daughter her life. Jesus is like....."Don't worry. Just believe." And the messengers are protesting "She's dead! The mourners are already there. There are people standing out in front of the house weeping. She's dead! There's not even any point in you going over there."

Jesus says, "Come on. We're going to go." So he takes James and Peter and John, his reliable witnesses to some of the most important revelations about who he is, with him. He goes with the little girl's mother and father...he goes into her room...and he takes her by the hand. Now she's dead. To touch a dead body is to become unclean yourself. So this is two instances back to back where Jesus has been in a situation where he has been made unclean. He doesn't seem to be at all concerned. He lifts her hand and he says, "Little girl, get up." And she does. Can you imagine the joy in that house? Can you imagine the joy of those parents when that little girl sits up? And then Jesus says, "Give her something to eat."

Unbelievable! This is not a zero sum game. The time that the hemorrhaging woman took from Jesus...that kept him from getting to the little girl...on time...so that she wouldn't die...did not result in the little girl losing out. She got what she needed. She was brought back to life. They both got what they needed. Jesus took away the hemorrhaging from the woman and Jesus gave life to the little girl. It's not a zero sum game when we're dealing with God. There is enough to go around for everybody. Just because one person's problem gets solved does not mean that yours won't.

God knows what we need. God knows better than we do what we need. And in what timing we need it. And with God there is no such thing as 'not enough.' With God there is always abundance. There is always enough to go around....enough of everything. We need to ask for what we need. But we need to remember also that God knows better than we do what we really need. And God knows better than we do in what time we need it. So don't ever think for one minute that just because somebody else has gotten their problem solved means that you are not going to get yours solved. And don't believe that because your prayer was not answered in the way you wanted that God is not answering your prayer or filling your need.

We are dealing with God. We are dealing with Jesus. And when we're dealing with God, there's no such thing as a zero sum game.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN.