

From the Pulpit of Trinitarian Congregational Church...

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Where is the Miracle?

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At first reading, we see we have a story here of women in Crisis – Daughters of Abraham – subject to the taboos and customs of their time. Bleeding women, dead girls – (Blood=life, no breath=death) very much to be avoided.

But we know, too, that Jesus was frequently found where it was not considered “proper” to go. Jesus was “taboo man.” Ministry in the margins - that was his calling. He refused to “keep himself away from those who were declared unclean by religious authorities” (UCC website/”sermon seeds”).

We also see some numerology. The number twelve figures prominently in the Jewish tradition: 12 tribes, 12 apostles, 12 years, - There’s a symmetry that could go easily unnoticed. (There are symmetries in our lives that go unnoticed; all those “coincidences”.)

Imagine bleeding for twelve years. Imagine the weakness, the fatigue, and the hope draining out of you. Blood is life don’t forget. Blood is significant in the history of our faith. We perhaps should not obliterate it because it’s “creepy.” Our blood is our life “flow.” This woman’s life had been draining out of her to the point of near death.

Our young girl is twelve years old...the age of the onset of womanhood. She has no life left in her. An older woman held on for twelve years. A young woman is not able to bloom into full womanhood. It doesn’t matter what your age, our story seems to say. You can be dead at a very young age. You can be full of youth well into old age. The stories in scripture turn everything upside down.

Focus for a moment on the mind of the older sister: If I can just get near him. If I can just touch him. If I can just hold onto something, even the hem of his garment. I might be all right. I might be healed. I might come alive again.

These women (like many women in the Bible) had no name. They had no prominence in Jewish society. But, as disciples, they (especially the older woman), they provide us with insight as to how to live, (more importantly) how to be truly alive.

If I can just touch the hem of his garment... This woman did not dream of going from place to place with Jesus, like the twelve disciples. She did not want an hour to herself with Jesus, a private counseling session. She did not require that he know her name or even see her up close. If I can just touch the hem of his garment... As sick as she must have been, she understood that healing could come from only a small encounter with the Son of God. She knew deep down that this power that can come only from God is so potent, so promising and so transformative, that a tiny touch could provide relief. Just a slight brush. Like concentrated perfume, it only takes a very, very small amount.

In our faith tradition's disciplines of prayer, praise, fasting, giving, and serving, in many different ways, we seek to get a glimpse of the power of God. No matter our condition, our circumstances or what we have done or not done, we know deep down that if we can just get a little touch, we will be revived. We will have new perspective. Our life will no longer be drained out of us, but we will be infused with new life. The life of a young one, maybe the hope and innocence of a twelve-year old...the usual age of baptism and confirmation.

Where is the miracle here? Is it that the woman stopped bleeding, or that she was given a new chance to live fully? Is it that the little girl was brought back to life? Or is it that God can restore even those of us who are dead in spirit, back to the land of the living?

I wish everyone could get what they wished and prayed for in their moment of trial. I wish there were no cancers, no Alzheimer's disease, no Diabetes, no debilitating neurological conditions. But even Jesus did not get his wish in the end. ("Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.) Birth, life, death, new life, this is the cycle of our existence.

But, where is the miracle? Maybe the miracle is hiding in plain sight. Poet and Rumi translator Coleman Barks paraphrases the 13th century poet Rumi as saying, "Just to be conscious is rapture." Just to be conscious is rapture.

Just being here, alive, together, able to sing and pray, smile and give thanks. I say, that's a miracle. That you and I can forgive, serve, love, confess, begin again...that's a miracle.

Maybe the miracle is just being here. We act like living is old stuff. But it's not. It's new stuff; it's actually amazing just to laugh and cry and appreciate one another. (When I used to watch westerns and gangster movies I wondered at when someone

got shot, how very much they wanted to live—when moments before, they seemed so unhappy, so cynical.)

Here's my hunch: when you and I can touch the "hem of his garment" (KJV), that is, when you and I can tap into the inside of our being, where God resides, when you and I can wake up to the miracle of this life, this precious world and all its inhabitants, WE WILL WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO TOUCH AND HEAL EVERYONE. We will not mind being interrupted (as Jesus did not mind). We will forgive quickly and move on, looking for opportunities to love and serve. Joy is our inheritance. Love is our natural mode of being. Healing is available, even in cases where there is no cure. A return to God's mind and God's heart is the healing, the miracle, no matter who you are, or what your physical condition may be.

Because to be aware of the miracle of this life is to know God's hand on our own life and to be and do as Jesus did.

To relieve suffering. To see that all little girls and little boys are fed and educated and nurtured and kept safe. To love all and respect all. To understand that the problems of the world, the problems of hunger and poverty and illness and suffering, are not someone else's problems "way over there." Those are our problems. And like those in the house of Jairus, we are justified in our weeping, our sorrow and our concern. But when love walks through the door, new life is not far behind.

Everyone look around you. Let your eyes meet. You are the miracle. We are the miracle. This life...is the miracle. And whether we get what we want or what we would prefer is not perhaps the miracle at all. Just to be here, just to know God, just to touch the hem of his garment. That's it. Now what will we do with our new life?