

Sermon Notes – June 27, 2021

(Luke 8:40-50)

I want to give you a little background on the two people in our Gospel lesson before we go into the sermon today. Here is a powerful story of the healing of two people – two very different people. You have Jarius, who was a synagogue ruler. He was a prominent person -- well educated, well respected, wealthy, and a family man who cared deeply about his daughter. As a synagogue ruler, he was over the administration, worship supervision, and maintenance of the synagogue. Then, you have this woman on the other side, who may have had some money at one time, but she's spent it all on doctors, magic potions, and herbs to find healing. She was poor, shabbily dressed, and one with no value in their Jewish society. According to their rules, she was not allowed to enter into conversation with a man in public nor to touch him. But, she risked both. Here are two different people -- two healings.

Now, I want you to think about three different things in this story today.

1) Have you ever been put “on hold”? Did you ever call a business and they say, “Punch one for administration, two for the finance office, three for collections, four for ...” and they just go on and on? Finally, you pick the right number, they put music on, and you're still “on hold.” Then a few seconds later, they play that recorded message again, more music, and you're still “on hold.” Don't you just get tired of those calls? ***Do you ever feel like God puts you “on hold” -- that sometimes Jesus is dawdling around and you're praying, but you hear silence at the other end?*** I wonder if that's what Jarius felt that day. He humbled himself as a respected synagogue leader and he went to Jesus because he was desperate to find healing for his daughter. Any of you know that when you have a child and you're worried about them, you would do anything, right? He was desperate. He humbled himself, fell before Jesus, and said, “Please, just go to my home. Just touch my daughter and she will be well and she will live.” Jesus tells him that he will go. He starts towards Jarius' house -- but all of a sudden, Jesus is interrupted! Somebody touched him and Jesus felt power go out of him. Now, can't you imagine, if you were Jarius, saying, “Wait a minute, Jesus. You said

you were going with me. Why are you stopping over here messing with this irksome woman? She doesn't have any value. I need you to take care of my daughter!" Can't you imagine that he's anxious, irritated, agitated, and worried? He probably felt like Jesus put him "on hold." He's over here trying to be nice while Jesus is over there taking care of this woman. Jesus even had the time in all that crowd to say, "Who touched me?" It must have seemed to Jairus like Jesus had put him "on hold."

There's another story in the Bible where Jesus put somebody "on hold." Do you remember the story of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus? Do you remember that Lazarus got sick and Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus to come because he was at the point of death? Do you also remember that Jesus waited for two or three more days before he went? By the time he got there, Lazarus had died. But, Jesus raised him from the dead. When he got there, Martha said, "Lord, if you would have been here, my brother wouldn't have died." Jesus said, "Mary, he will rise again." She said, "I know he will at the end of time - at resurrection day, but I know whatever you tell God and ask him, he will do." Jesus said, "Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. And though they are dead, if they believe in me, they will live -- for I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

When my brother was sick with Parkinson's and Lou Gehrig's disease, there were many times that I wondered why he was "on hold"? I wanted God to heal him and I wanted him to heal him here. But, if he couldn't heal him here, to take him home to heaven - take him out of his pain and his suffering. I couldn't understand why it took so long. There was a lady in this church in the nursing home that kept telling me, when I went to see her, "Miss Peggy, I just want to go home and be with my son and my daughter in heaven. Why won't God let me die yet? I've lived a fruitful life and I'm old; my children are grown and they don't need me anymore. Why won't God take me right now?" I said, "I can't answer that for you. All I know is that God doesn't work on our timetable, and it's in God's hands." ***Sometimes we are put "on hold" and sometimes it's because God wants us to hold on tighter and trust him more. Keep praying, keep holding, keep trusting in his promises.*** His promise says,

“Call me and I will hear and answer. I will be with you wherever you are. I will never leave you nor forsake you.” He wants us to hold on and trust him in a deeper way. Hold on. God’s still there. There’s always hope when you hold on to Jesus Christ. He may not answer in your timetable or in the way you want, but he will hear and answer. Sometimes God is calling us to a deeper level of faith in him.

Something else I want you to notice in our Gospel lesson: The poor woman believed that she could just touch the hem of Jesus’ garment and she would be healed. And she was. She had enough faith and she put her faith into action. Someone once said, “Faith is not faith until you put it in action.” I can say, “I believe that pew will hold me, but until I sit on it, do I really believe it?” Jesus wants us to have an active faith. Jesus told her, “Your faith has healed you.”

I heard an interesting story about a man who worked as an engineer for Boeing when they were making the Boeing-707. He had worked as an engineer on that particular plane; it was already out in circulation; yet, he was on a DC-9 flight with another man. The passenger beside him asked, “What do you do for a living?” He answered, “I’m an engineer for Boeing.” He started telling him about the new plane he worked on, how good of a plane it was, and how it was in circulation. The passenger asked, “Well, have you flown in it yet?” He said, “No. I’m waiting on it to be in circulation a little bit longer.” ***Faith. Do we have faith? God calls us to have faith in him - an active faith.***

I want you to notice something else, and that is Jesus’ compassion. Jesus had compassion wherever and to whomever he met. Dr. Reynolds Price, a Professor of English at Duke University, wrote a book on the gospels a few years ago. Somebody asked him what attracted him to Jesus? He said, “One of the things that stood out in my mind about Jesus was his compassion for everybody he met. He never turned anybody away. He was always gracious and compassionate to anyone in need.” Jesus was gracious and kind to the woman that touched him in public. I want you to think of the scenario of that situation in that day and time. Here was a woman who was touching Jesus. Here was Jesus engaging this woman

in conversation. In those days, a man and a woman didn't talk in public – whether they were husband and wife, or not. They also weren't supposed to physically touch in public. Here is a woman who is ritually unclean, has touched Jesus' garment (which in essence made him unclean, in Jewish law), and he's engaged her in conversation. He did not ridicule or criticize her for touching him. He called her, "daughter" - a term of endearment. "Daughter, your faith has made you well." How many times do we go to help somebody and we kind of ridicule or criticize them? We already pre-judge them on why they need help to begin with. Jesus was always gracious and kind to people in need. He was willing to be interrupted. He was sensitive and responsive to the needs of others.

I wonder if there aren't several lessons in this story -- not just healing of somebody, but maybe it's about us having faith, putting our faith and trust in God, and acting on that faith. Maybe, it's a call for us to be more responsive to the needs of others and to be gracious and kind to the ones we help, rather than criticizing, ridiculing, or putting them down. Maybe, the other is to remember that sometimes, throughout a lifetime of praying, we are going to be put "on hold" in some situation that we're dealing with in life because God's trying to teach us to hold on tighter to his promises and put trust in him, even we don't feel him or sense him. He is always still there, loves us, and cares for us.

Yes, this is a story about healing – two people were healed -- a young girl was raised from the dead and a woman was healed with an issue of blood. But, we also know that not everyone is healed the way that we want it to be. Many years ago, at my church in Concord, I had a woman whose husband had cancer, and he died. The Pastor asked me if I would go by and visit her about a week after her husband was buried. I did and she said, "Miss Peggy, I'm angry at God because God didn't answer my prayer." I said, "What prayer was that?" She said, "I prayed for my husband to be healed and God didn't heal him." I thought, "Lord, please give me the words to say." I was young at the time and wasn't sure what to say. Finally, I said, "But, God did answer your prayer. It just wasn't the way that you and I wanted. You see, we wanted healing on this side of earth - with us. But, God gave him healing and wholeness, made him

well, and took him to be with him. God did hear and answer.”
Sometimes God answers the way we want and sometimes he doesn’t, because God is not a magician. That’s not his job. **God is God and his ways are higher than ours. His thoughts are higher than ours and he works on his timetable.**

What’s the challenge for you and me today? ... To be more gracious, helping, and kind to one another; to put our faith in action and to realize that sometimes God puts us “on hold” just like that phone call. *But, he’s always there and he wants us to trust him more. May God call us to a deeper level of faith and compassion. Amen.*