

WHOLENESS (Mark 5:21-43)

Pastor Hubert Den Draak, Pinegrove, June 28 2015.



It's the talk of the town: Jairus' daughter is ill. She can't get out of bed, and hasn't been seen in public for days. Jairus has used all his influence and his wealth to make sure she received the best possible medical care. But so far, nothing seems to help. In fact, it's getting clear that, unless some miracle were to happen, death would come soon.

Being the famous daughter of such a prominent community leader, her situation is being closely followed by everyone. She's twelve years old, the age when society starts paying attention, the age at which a girl makes the transition from childhood to adulthood.

She's the perfect age, her dad is a "celebrity" of sort who has done everything he could to help his little girl, but nothing works. Death seems only days, perhaps even hours, away. He is desperate. All his money and power are of no use now.

Like everybody else Jairus has heard about Jesus. He's heard rumors of his miraculous healings, but he knows from experience that rumours should never be trusted. But then a trusted friend told Jairus that he saw first-hand a miracle in which Jesus healed a man who had been paralyzed for years, but after he met Jesus, he could walk freely!

At the time, Jairus had been skeptical, and he told him that there was no way this healing could have happened. But so many people seemed to be convinced, including his trusted friend. Could the rumors be true...?

But how would it look for a highly respected synagogue leader to humble himself, to beg for help from this Jesus? Oh, wouldn't the people just love that! How much respect and influence would he lose if he humiliated himself that way? He couldn't do that; he just couldn't go to Jesus and humiliate himself that way - could he? One look at his daughter was all it took for him to know that, yes, he could.

He finds Jesus down by the lakeshore, with an enormous crowd gathered around him. "Oh, great," thought Jairus. "Just great. So much for being inconspicuous." He picks his way through the crowd, feeling their eyes watching him. When he reaches Jesus, Jairus falls at his feet and begs him: "My daughter is about to die. Come, lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." As he says these words, his situation finally sinks in. His little girl was dying. He feels numb, cold. The crowd no longer matters. All that matters is his daughter.

Jesus says nothing. He just gets up and begins to follow Jairus, the crowd trailing behind them. They're excited, everyone is pressed in together, pushing and shoving, jockeying for the best position. Kinda like the crowd at the gates of Disneyland on a Saturday morning, one minute before opening time.

But one person in the midst of this huge crowd is not pushing; a woman who has been having hemorrhages for twelve years. In fact, she remembers the day it all started: it was the day as the birth of Jairus' daughter, twelve years ago...

Like Jairus' daughter, she, too, has been seen by many doctors. However, she did *not* have the money and the influence that Jairus has, and all of her medical treatments had left her broke. The worst part of it all is that nothing had worked, the hemorrhaging has only grown worse.

Her condition has kept her from being a part of society. Her bleeding makes her unclean and as a result she is an untouchable. Jewish regulations prohibit her from having contact with anyone, which meant that she's been living in seclusion for the past twelve years.

For twelve years, society had waited for Jairus' daughter to come-of-age and take her place in society; and for twelve years, this woman had also been waiting; waiting to reclaim *her* place in society.

She knew she shouldn't be there, she is "unclean", and if found out, could be outcast, even killed for it. Nevertheless, she sneaks through the crowd toward Jesus, thinking to herself, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be made well. I won't bother anyone; no one needs to know."

When she gets to Jesus, she reaches out and touches his cloak. Immediately, her hemorrhage stopped. She could feel in her body that she is healed of her disease.

Jesus stops in his tracks. "Who touched me?" he says. Well, *everyone* was touching him, pushing and pressing in on him; everyone was jostling one another. It was like the crowd leaving the Toronto Sky Dome after a Blue Jays game. Jairus is one of them, even grabbing Jesus by the hand to lead him as quickly as possible to his dying daughter. Didn't Jesus realize how urgent this was?



But Jesus won't not budge. He looks around. The crowd goes silent... Terrified, the woman falls at Jesus' feet, terrified that she has been found out, terrified that she

would now be cast out of society forever for what she had done, maybe even killed. "It was me," she blurts out. "I touched you; I know I shouldn't have."

But Jesus does not condemn her. Instead, he *welcomes* her by taking her seriously, using a word that signifies respect, and a close relationship: "Daughter," he says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

Those powerful words are still hanging in the air when some people arrive from Jairus' house. By the looks on their faces, Jairus knows why they have come, even before they speak those awful, horrible words: "Your daughter has died."

Don't you find it... odd that the announcement of his daughter's death came at the exact same moment of the older woman's healing?

And isn't it odd that the woman's illness began twelve years ago, at the exact same time the girl was born?

What is this mysterious connection between these two lives...?

If the story were to end here, it would be easy to jump to the conclusion that God's preference is for the poor, the lonely, the outcast - people like the bleeding woman; she was healed - the rich and quite possibly spoiled daughter was dead. The poor woman who deserved healing is healed; the pampered daughter who lived a life of unearned privileges - is dead. Pretty clear message, right?

Except - this story isn't over yet. When the news comes of the girl's death, Jesus says to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; only believe. Have faith"

They leave the crowd behind, only to arrive at another crowd: the house is packed with friends, family, and the professional mourners that are a part of the ritual that surrounds the death of any prominent Jew in those days. They're making quite a racket, weeping and wailing, pressing in together, pushing and shoving for room. (I imagine it was just like the crowd that will be gathering later this morning to meet our Presbytery reps over lunch - right...?)

Jesus takes one look around and says, "What's with all this commotion?" He dismisses whole circus, sending them outside, "Make you noise there". When things have calmed down in the house, he simply takes the girl by the hand... and he heals her. Both the woman and the girl are made well.

When the scriptures speak of healing, they're not just talking about the body, about physical healing only like we do now. In the Bible, healing always involves more than the body alone. When a person gets healed, s/he becomes the person God intended to her/him be. A better word might be "being restored" - to God *and* community. Some translations say "being saved".

Salvation. Healing. Wholeness. That's what was missing from the lives of both the dying girl and the hemorrhaging woman. The stories of how they received *wholeness* - the stories of how they were restored to what God intended them to be - these two stories are nestled inside one another; you cannot tell one story without telling the other. The healing of one depends upon the healing of the other.

This powerful story tells us we're all in this together. We're *all* broken in some way. We're all in search of healing and wholeness. The girl's healing was connected to the woman's healing, and vice versa. This story tells us that the healing of one is connected to the healing of all.

Their stories cannot be separated. *Our* stories cannot be separated. My healing depends on the healing of us all.

It is only in community with God and each other that we find healing and wholeness. That is why we continue gathering here, week after week. To find wholeness in community with God - and each other. We are not alone.

Amen.