

Pentecost 5 – Wesley 9am - 28th June 2015

Theme: “Healing and hope”

Reading: Mark 5:21-43 ‘The girl raised and the sick woman healed’

Introduction

Today our Gospel reading is a strange mixture of stories. Mark uses an intercalation, that is the sandwich technique, in which he begins telling one story, interrupts himself to tell another story and then comes back to finish the original story. Strange way of doing business, but it has a number of meanings beyond the actual healings which are being taught here. Let’s look at these.

Firstly

The most powerful and loud get all the attention. That seems to be the way of the world and here in Jesus’ story it is a person of importance who comes to Jesus. His position is given before his name. “Then one of the synagogue’s rulers, named Jairus...” Jesus accedes to his request to go and see his daughter and heal her. Off they set with a bustling crowd in tow. In that crowd is a woman of no means, no standing in the community because of her ‘flow of blood’ that has made her ritually unclean and has spent all her money on doctors that have not been able to heal her. This woman has become an outcaste in her own community socially, religiously and financially due to her continuing illness. She sees in Jesus her only hope and simply touches his robes. Jesus senses that some-one has a need and has touched him and in the midst of the crowd and on the way to an important person’s house, he stops and asks twice: “Who has touched my clothes” and “Who has touched me.” Suddenly there is a shift away from position and power and Jesus makes time, for the poor, rejected, dejected and hopeless. Jesus senses the need and meets it. The woman is ‘taboo’ because of her continuing flow of blood. The Hebrew word is ‘*zabah*’ literally translated as ‘*oozer*’ – an horrific situation for this woman. Jesus does not touch her but simply says: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” The poor, the outcaste is healed before the rich and powerful.

Secondly

Jesus continues to Jairus’ home and instead of inviting everyone in to see a second miraculous act he simply takes the family and a few disciples in with him to the girl. Mark records that Jesus spoke in Aramaic to the girl (*this was the local language – ‘Talitha Koum!’*) Literally, ‘*Little girl, I say to you, get up!*’ It is a command and she responds. In both accounts there is immediate healing and neither the

poor nor the wealthy have any discrepancy in the eyes of Jesus. There are needs for individuals and Jesus meets those needs. Jesus is impartial to people's standing within a community and the grace of God is there for all to see and for all to accept.

Thirdly

Neither Jairus nor the unnamed woman articulates any belief in Jesus except both of them come to Jesus in desperation and show incredible audacity, in differing ways, in approaching him. At one level, in both cases there is a 'cure'. The woman stops bleeding and Jairus' daughter gets up and walks around and has something to eat. But Mark's choice of words invites us to think that in both instances this encounter with Jesus has meant more. The woman can now go to the temple and associate in a normal way with her family and neighbours – she can be part of her community again.

This is her salvation. The girl will presumably live to adulthood and have a normal life that without this Jesus encounter would never have happened. God comes anew to both these individuals and their families offering hope for the present and future in and through the gift of his Son, Jesus our Lord and our Saviour.

Teaching for today

1. First and foremost today we need to treat all people with a sense of equality before God. I struggle with our government's stance on refugees. Last week I attended the Canberra Refugee Support group's handing out 38 scholarships to new political asylum seekers and refugees from a variety of countries. It was a joy to see the children and young people from ten differing countries receiving these scholarships to help with their education. I was proud that our parish was one of a few churches that support these scholarships and for me today's Gospel re-inforces our need to be seen supporting those on the fringes of our society, whatever their background.
2. Secondly we need to do all we can to encourage people to take their place fully within our society and where we have the opportunity, to do it in the name of Christ. We do not necessarily know what some outcomes may be, but we are called to faithfully serve Jesus, knowing the power of God at work. Look for faith sharing opportunities. Amen