

## Lectionary 13 B 2021

Dove of Peace Lutheran Church

Pastor Stephen Springer

June 27, 2021

Mark 5:21-43

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Friends:

This morning, I am going to make a distinction between being cured and being healed. I am going to use the word “cure” to describe what happens when an illness or an injury is eliminated. And I am going to use the word “heal” to describe wholeness. In the Germanic languages, our word “heal” comes from the word for whole. Cure is the narrow term that applies to the fixing, the remedy for a problem. But healing is the larger picture of being made whole.

This distinction is important because part of our mission as God’s people is to bring healing. And so we have prayers for healing. We have entire worship services for healing. When we do those things, we don’t promise a cure. We don’t say “*Send your twenty-five dollar tax-deductible check to Steve Springer television ministries and your cancer will go away.*” We don’t guarantee a fix. We ask God for things, for lots of things. But even those of us who believe in miracles know that the answer isn’t always “Yes.” I actually think that most of us who truly believe in modern-day miracles know especially well that our requests to the Lord are not always answered with a miracle.

As I make this distinction this morning, I want to say that it is possible to be *cured without being healed*. And I want to say that it is possible to be *healed without being cured*. You can take a pill and solve a problem. But you won’t be healed. God himself can cure your disease with a miracle. But you won’t necessarily be healed. And the opposite is true. Some people are never cured. But the journey of their injury or their illness brings them to greater wholeness, and we can say that they found healing. Even though they were not cured.

In today’s gospel, a woman gets cured without prior authorization. This woman tells herself that if she touches Jesus’ cloak, she will be cured. And so without permission, without consent, she walks up to Jesus, she literally sneaks up behind him, and clandestinely touches him. Clandestinely. Furtively. Covertly. She touches his robe. And she’s cured. And she knows it. The text says that she had uncontrolled bleeding for twelve years, and as soon as she touched the backside of Jesus’ robe, the bleeding stopped. In terms of our sermon this morning, she was cured. But that’s not the end of the story.

At the moment that she is cured, there are four things that we know about this woman. She’s bleeding uncontrollably. It seems to be menstrual blood. Anything related to blood and especially to menstruation made her physically untouchable according to her society and her religion. In

the words of the Old Testament, she is unclean. Lepers are unclean. Untouchable. As a woman, she is not supposed to physically touch a man, period. Let alone when she has a health condition which makes her untouchable.

There are four things that we know about this woman. Number one is that she is untouchable, and has been for twelve years. Many of us spent a year or more without basic human contact. Without hugs, without shaking hands, without kisses, without getting close enough to breathe the air that someone else had breathed. She's been living that way for a very long time.

That's the second thing we know about her. Twelve years. The third thing that we know about her is that she has spent all of her money seeking a cure. She has medical bankruptcy. And the fourth thing we know about her is that she suffered under many physicians. So not only have the medical providers taken all of her money, but they have inflicted pain and harm on her. "*She endured much under many physicians.*" So she's had a hell of a time. She's been cut off from society. And the health care system has done more harm than good.

This amazing gospel story today is long. Because her story is sandwiched into a larger story. The larger story is about this man called Jairus. Jairus approaches Jesus in the right way. He gets down on his knees. He pleads desperately with Jesus to come and save his little girl. Jairus is a respected synagogue leader. And there's a very good sermon to be preached about him. I'm Jairus in many ways. But while Jairus is a member of the establishment and approaches Jesus with deference—desperation, but desperation tempered with deference; his urgent need is expressed in good order—while Jairus is like me, this woman is not deferential. She's pure desperation. She has no manners. She does what she does without permission, without decorum, without reverence, without good order.

And she gets her answer. She gets her miracle. She gets her "Yes." Just as Jairus will get his answer. Will get his miracle. Will get his "Yes." But although she gets cured, she has not yet been healed. Jesus begins the healing by finding out who she is. And by calling her daughter. It's powerful that within the story of Jairus and his beloved little daughter, Jesus speaks to this very sick and very isolated woman as a daughter of his own, a daughter of God. Jesus' final words to her are "Go in peace and be healed of your disease." She is *cured*; that happened almost without Jesus. Certainly without his prior consent. But now Jesus is telling her to live into her cure. To be whole. To be restored. To be loved as a daughter of God. To be *healed*.

There are some lessons for us here. As I said before, it's possible to be cured without being healed. It's possible to be healed without being cured. This story of this unnamed woman illuminates that because her cure is separate from, and becomes the beginning of, her becoming whole. And as a church, when we engage in the ministry of healing and when we pray for healing we need to keep our eyes and our hearts focused on wholeness. Not just on miraculous cures.

And second, as the spring months of vaccination become the summer months of life after Covid, we can give thanks for the vaccination, which is sort of the cure. But we have the opportunity

now to rebuild and recreate and refashion our lives and our society in healthier ways, in better ways.

Before Covid, back in 2017, the Surgeon General declared a loneliness epidemic in America. A medical problem. Because it makes human bodies have a heightened inflammatory response. Meaning more dementia, more high blood pressure, more strokes. The A.A.R.P. and Stanford University said that seven billion dollars a year is added to Medicare each year because isolated people go into the hospital sicker and end up staying longer. That's a lot of people who need healing. Who need connection and attention and friendship. Wholeness. "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone.'" In Genesis, God recognized loneliness in Adam. From the beginning, God has been trying to bring us to wholeness.

So as we rebuild and recreate and refashion life after Covid, let's rediscover healing. In our families, in our schools, in our neighborhoods, in our churches, in our national life. Our psalm today says *weeping spends the night, but joy comes in the morning. You have turned my wailing into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.* Let's embrace the moment. Let's embrace the life ahead. Jesus' final words to the woman today were: *Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.* Be healed. Begin to live in wholeness and fullness. Better than before. Amen.