

Homily for June 26-27
13th Sunday Ordinary Time

The Key to Grace

Jesus performs two shocking miracles of grace and in both cases, the key that released the power of his grace was humility.

Jairus, the synagogue official was humble: he knew that saving his daughter was something beyond his own powers. This is clearly demonstrated by how he approaches Jesus. When he made his way into the Lord's presence, he wasn't aloof, skeptical, and argumentative, like so many Pharisees and Sadducees. Instead, St Mark tells us that he "fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded earnestly with him." The synagogue official was an important person in the town. He was used to being in charge, used to having the right answers and helping other people solve their problems. But faced with the mortal sickness of his child, Jairus remembered that there was a higher power in the universe than him, and he humbled himself before the Lord, and the Lord "went off with him" to work a miracle.

The woman with the hemorrhage was humble too; her sickness had made her so. She was not a powerful leader in society. In fact, her sickness made her an outcast. She was "unclean," according to the Mosaic Law. And she was risking her very life by fighting her way through the crowd, touching all those people, and making them unclean too. Where did she get the strength to overcome those obstacles? From her humility. For twelve years she had been seeking a solution to her chronic, humiliating, and debilitating health issue, paying for all the latest technology and all the most highly recommended doctors. And so she discovered the vast limits of human ingenuity, and turned instead to the limitless mercy of a much higher power. She risked everything just to touch a tassel of the Lord's cloak; and strength far beyond her limited human powers flowed out from him and healed her.

The humility of these two Gospel characters was the key to grace. It opened their hearts to faith in Jesus Christ. And faith unleashed God's saving power in their lives. And God's saving power

1. healed their hopelessness.
2. strengthened their weakness,
3. and enlightened their darkness.

Think of how hopeless both characters in our story must've felt. Jairus cries out in anguish as he appeals to Jesus for his very sick daughter – stating she is at the “point of death”. The woman's condition has regressed year by year as her life has literally been draining away. Now even though their respective position within the society of their time could not have been more different, what unites both Jairus and this woman is their desperate need. By looking to Jesus he healed their hopelessness.

Can you think of a time in your life when you have been at a point of desperation and seeming hopelessness? Perhaps there are some of you here today who resonate with what I am saying..

Your experience is one where you discovered there is no one else to whom I can turn, other than Jesus. In turning to Jesus you discovered like both of our ancestors in the faith strength in your weakness. Notice how persevering they are. Jairus falls at Jesus' feet and pleads with him earnestly, and the woman is persistent. She doesn't want to just brush up against Jesus, like so many in the crowd that day. No, she wants to touch him. This gets to the very essence of their humility. Jairus knows Jesus is the one who is the source of life-giving hope for him and his daughter. The woman's perseverance is such that she is rewarded with the Lord addressing her after she has touched him with words that are reminiscent of Jairus. Jesus calls her, 'daughter', and says her faith has saved her.

Jesus also enlightens their darkness. This is particularly expressed in the story with Jairus where the mourners laugh at Jesus when he says the girl is only sleeping. Does this mean he didn't think she was really dead? Of course he did. But he brings light into the darkest situation. There are only three stories in the Gospel of Jesus raising the dead; Lazarus in John 11; the widow of Nain's son in Luke 7 and Jairus' daughter, here, - these three miracles point to a fundamental truth about death. Death is that final sleep that will give way to the new dawn of eternal life.

And while we all have to face death, for indeed there would have been many people in Jesus' time where twelve year old daughters were not raised from the dead – the raising of this girl is to bring light into the darkness of death. Do you catch Jesus's tenderness with her "Little girl arise", and his concern that she be given food.

This is an anticipation of the words we will all hear when we face the sleep of death. On the morn of that new day beyond the night of the grave we will hear Jesus say: "My son, my daughter arise."

With the woman whose healing anticipates the healing we will know in the fullness of the Resurrection, we will hear Jesus say, "my daughter, my son, your faith has made you well".

In a world like this where so often death does not lead to restoration of life this side of the grave and where people are not healed of their physical infirmities, we are called to be a people of humility. A people of deepening trust in the Lord – this is not easy because as the first reading we heard from Wisdom declares:

Death entered the world because of the devil's envy.

Of what is he envious? That God in Jesus assumed the fullness of our humanity. There is nothing the devil finds more despicable than the incarnation. He envies the closeness with which Jesus relates to us. He envies that now in the fullness of heaven, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity has a glorified body. He despises that the 12 year old girl and the woman with the 12 year flow of blood anticipate the body you and I will have in the Resurrection. Listen to how Wisdom describes this:

for God created man for incorruption,

and made him in the image of his own eternity,¹

Now from our current perspective we cannot always discern this for there seems to be conflicting evidence, namely illness and death that can lead us to conclude we have been made for corruption and mortality, not incorruption and eternity.

However, when we can grow in a humble confidence in Jesus then the key to grace can allow us to grow in believing there is more to the world than meets the eye. These very bodies are images of God's own eternity. Jairus knew this as did the woman, who came to Jesus when faced by corruption and death. They discovered in him healing for their hopelessness, strength in their weakness, and light in their darkness.

I pray the same for you and me as we allow for the key of humility to unlock the grace of Jesus in our lives today.

¹ [The Holy Bible](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Wis 2:23). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.