

“Acceptance in Healing”

Rev. Dr. Scott Paczkowski

Now, Jesus wanted rest. Over and over again, in the New Testament and Gospels, Jesus is looking for a break and he almost never gets one. So when you are crabbing because the kids are up late and you have an extra project in the morning and you are not getting much sleep; Jesus was right there with you.

On a particular moment when Jesus was trying to rest, the crowds came in on him and everybody had a demand on his time. First it was this very wealthy man named Jairus. Not only did he have big bucks, but he was a leader of the temple (and we all know how religious people - especially clergy - can be demanding). Here he was grabbing Jesus and saying, “I need your help.” Like any parent he begged Jesus, because his daughter was gravely ill. Jesus took pity on him and said he [Jesus] would follow.

That is not the real story. The real story is the story within the story, where Jesus goes along the route and feels this woman grab onto his cloak. Jesus feels his power is being taken from him; but rather than be angry, he wanted to know who this woman was who needed him so badly. He turned and I’m sure everyone around him was horrified at who had grabbed Jesus. It was THAT woman. Everybody in that community would have known who THAT woman was. She was the one who God apparently had cursed, because in that day and age, if you had a physical problem that the doctors could not fix, it was a condemnation upon you and you must have done something wrong. So if she had hemorrhages for 12 years it must have been her fault and so she was considered unclean. If you are considered unclean you are not allowed back into the Temple. In other words, you are not allowed back into the presence of God until you are clean. She had not been in the Temple for 12 years.

Not only that. If you happened to touch an unclean person you became unclean for at least seven whole days - which means you miss out on the main part of the presence of the living God. So when this woman had the audacity to grab Jesus, not only was she trying to take his power but she had made Jesus - the Lord - unclean. Most people would have turned and yelled at her. The possibility of her being stoned to death by the other people there was a very real possibility. If any of you have ever been at a place where something so profoundly frustrating has happened to you - that you have been that desperate, that you didn’t care whether you lived or died - then you know what that woman was experiencing in that moment.

Jesus, very possibly, would have been the only religious figure in that community - or in the entire world at that time - who would have turned to her and not cast her away. He turned to her and he began the process of affirming her - not condemning - affirming and loving her again.

Now, when that is going on - first of all that is a shocking resurrection moment for that woman’s life; but think about the dad, Jairus - he is rich and powerful. “What in the world is Jesus doing while my daughter is dying?” He [Jesus] is spending time hanging out with THAT woman. You could just imagine as a dad - and a wealthy dad – [Jairus]

going, “Alright, Jesus, get away from her. Don’t you know you are going to be unclean? Does this mean that God won’t heal my daughter, because that woman touched you? She is talking to you. Oh, my gosh. She took your power. Get away from her.”

And if that didn’t work - and you had money - oh, man, I would be digging in my pocket and saying, “Here. Here, have some money. Just get away from her and get to my daughter.”

Jesus didn’t do either one. He spent the necessary time to not only heal the woman physically, but he took the time to heal her spiritually and emotionally. Only then did he worry about the rich people. The poor person was every bit or more important than the health of the wealthy one.

Then he goes to the wealthy - and they are almost there [to the end of their journey] - and she is dead.

But Jesus called everyone away and he healed her. She had not been resuscitated; she was dead. There were mourners. There were hours upon hours during which her heart had stopped. Jesus wasn’t the first one to be resurrected from the dead. This young woman - 12 years old, the same number of years that the woman had the hemorrhage - this child was alive. She was resurrected before Jesus. Lazarus was also resurrected before Jesus, and then Jesus went on with his ministry; but no one was ever the same.

What is profound about this story within a story is that Jesus goes to and runs toward the need. It doesn’t matter who it is - who is hurting. It doesn’t matter whether they are rich or poor; whether they have influence or they are outcasts. It just matters that there is need and Jesus is drawn to the need.

Now we had kids this week, who learned a great deal. I want to thank their parents, because it isn’t easy when you know you have to drop them off at 9:00 and pick up is at noon. You try to balance which parent is going to drop them off, which to pick them up. OK, grandma can you do it?

Yet, you did because you knew it was important. I want to thank you for that commitment. I hope and pray that what we have done was worth all of that effort, and what the kids learned this week was to run toward the need. When you do you carry the power of Jesus Christ with you. You heard what was said: Trina read it to you. What they learned on the first day was the power to provide. The second day they learned the power of comfort. On the third day, the power to heal. Then, on Thursday the power to forgive and on Friday the power that God has, to love us forever. In all those ways we saw it all worked out with that story-within-a-story between Jairus’ daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage. God calls us through that story. What we were teaching the kids is that God calls each one of those children to run toward the need.

I’m just finishing a book by an ex-CIA official, David Morrell. David Morrell tells two stories in the book that really resonated this morning - both happened on September 11, 2001. The first plane just hit the tower, and the first firemen were on the scene. There was a Chaplain there who was stripping off his collar. His name was Father Michael Judge.

Father Michael stripped off his collar, and was putting on his fireman garb to go into the midst of it to be there, for and with the firemen that are fighting the battle in the building. As he was getting his hose strapped up, Mayor Giuliani came onto the scene and grabbed Father Michael. He [Giuliani] said, "Before you go in, we need you to pray for the city of New York." Father Michael turned to the mayor and said, "I have already done that. I do it all of the time," and ran in.

Just as Father Michael got to the place where the tower was, the first tower collapsed. All of that metal came down on Father Michael Judge and, in an iconic picture that is still with us today, six firemen carried Father Michael's limp body away from the tower. He was the first victim recorded at 9-11. He ran toward the need. At the very same time that Father Michael was being carried away, the airliner hit the Pentagon and it hit the OPS (operations) Center and immediately - in that small section of the OPS Center, 29 of the 30 people in that office died. There was one man named Kevin Severson, a naval officer, a brilliant man - you don't work in the OPS Center unless you have brains - who was blown out of his office, through a wall and into another room.

That was how he was saved. The fire blew so powerfully that it blew him out. He crawled through the broken water pipes with exposed electrical wires sparking against the water and somehow made it to a place where someone could see him.

At the same time that Kevin was moving out, there was another gentleman, an army sergeant, named Steve Workman, who saw the crash as he was walking into the Pentagon. He ran around the side [of the building] because he saw and knew that something horrible had happened. He ran to the need, and saw Kevin who had been burned over 50 percent of his body, with third degree burns. He [Steve] had no clue what to do, but he remembered somewhere that if somebody is in shock, you elevate their legs so it doesn't get worse, putting all of the blood to the head. He elevated his [Kevin's] legs, wondering even where to touch. His skin was - well, there are kids here. His name tag melted off.

He [Steve] stayed with him in the ambulance as they went to Walter Reed Hospital. He went back to see Kevin every day. Kevin was the last person to leave the hospital, from all of the victims from 9-11. Kevin had untold surgeries. Sergeant Steve Workman was with Kevin every step along the way, and if you have ever been with somebody who severely burned - day in and day out - through the pain, the smell and struggle, it is overwhelming. But, when you are that person, you run to the need and you stay until there is healing.

That is what Jesus did. That is what we did this week; attempting, in song and prayer and Scripture and all of the other things, to teach your children what is special about God. It isn't about learning the right doctrine and memorizing the right Scripture. It's moving your heart and mind to be that person who runs toward the need.

That's why it is so important today that the children got the opportunity to see that their older friends - the senior highs - who are going on a mission trip, running to the need of caring for others in Washington State. To watch other people being commissioned to run toward the need in El Salvador. Not worried about how much vacation they were going to

have to take - and not get to go someplace else. Not wondering about this or that responsibility or obligation, or what would be more fun because there is something more important than fun.

Something that few are called to - but all Christians are - to run to the need.

I'm so thrilled that the children had the opportunity to see those commissioned and to be awed by the volunteers who took an entire week - a good chunk of their day - and most had to take vacation time away from work to care for your children - our children. They told them the stories, they played, they set that example, so down the road they [our kids] will be the ones we are commissioning for mission trips here in this country and around the world. They are the ones that in a moment where they have unplanned - unaware of what was going to happen - a crisis occurs, and they will instantly know to run to the need as a representative of Jesus Christ. They will have that power and God will bless and keep them, always.

May we give thanks to God through Jesus Christ who sets the example in all of these wonderful people who have given so much, so that Jesus Christ's love and power will continue tomorrow, next month and for all eternity.

Amen