

Sermon 28th June 2015

We hear of two healings today in Mark's Gospel, one of which appears to be secondary to the other. Imagine yourself as Jairus, whose dearly beloved daughter has become critically ill. He loves his daughter so much that he risks the disapproval of his community in which he is a leading figure, and also puts aside his own doubts and fears about healing and Jesus' power because, there is a faint chance, just a faint chance, Jesus might help her. And then, when time is of the essence, somebody, a mere woman, and an outcast at that, interrupts their progress.

And now, let's change characters. The woman, who unlike Jairus is unnamed, thinks she will never be well again, she has spent all her money on doctors to no avail, she is classed as unclean so has none of her normal support networks, and all of this has gone on for 12 long years. Unlike Jairus, she is not an authority figure, so has no intention of asking for help, she knows better than to approach a man, but she is desperate. So she fights her way through the crowd, and seizes her chance to touch Jesus' garment as it billows out with the speed of his walking. Surely she didn't intend to become the centre of attention, she had thought no one would notice, but Jesus knew someone had needed healing. Frightened, the woman admitted what she had done. Jairus was probably

impatient, the crowd were wanting to see the outcome from the main story, but Jesus showed love and kindness and her faith healed her.

Then came the worst of news for Jairus, his daughter had died, had the delay over the woman cost his daughter's life? At the house the process of mourning had begun, and they doubted Jesus' ability to raise this girl from the dead, but Jesus told Jairus not to fear, only to believe and went, with a select few to her room.

Is the fact that Jairus' daughter is 12 and the woman had been ill for 12 years significant? What is the significance of Jesus words "Talitha cum" remaining in Aramaic?

And what of Jesus in these stories? As so often, he is in the middle of a crowd, probably noisy, probably too close, all wanting his attention. Is he teaching? Is he healing? Is he tired? We're not told. What we are shown is his kindness, when asked by Jairus for help he goes, no questions, no delay until he feels power leave him. This is the first time we are told of the physical effect Jesus' healing ministry has on him. What did it cost him then to heal the child?

Yes these stories are about healing, healing that even in Jesus' day some received and some did not and that remains true today as anyone who is in a ministry of healing would say. Jesus demonstrates that faith could mean something as simple as belief that he has the power to heal. But we remain human, the woman and Jairus' daughter died eventually, physical healing, in this life is only temporary. Curing a physical infirmity and healing our souls are different things. Jesus died and we were healed with the promise of eternal life with the Father where there is no more death or pain or suffering. We will all die, but for those who believe, that is a change of state from earth to heaven, whatever that looks like.

More importantly these stories are about Jesus having time and love enough for everyone. Whether you are rich or poor, male or female, famous or an outcast, Jesus is there with love, mercy and compassion if you approach him. They demonstrate that there are different ways to go about approaching him; from public displays to creeping up trying to fade into the background, from words to gestures, from lots of faith, to just a little.

God's love is big enough for all, I remember singing and doing actions to: " It's so high you can't get over it, so low you can't get under it, so low you can't get under it, so wide you can't get round it, O wonderful love" with children and adults. Turn to God, creep up to Jesus, noisily

or quietly, you have nothing to lose only infinite love to gain.