

***So I Prayed Yesterday. What's The Problem Today?***

***Mark 5:21-43***

***Sunday, June 28, 2009***

**I have heard it said that wherever Jesus is, something gets healed. Bodies, hearts, events, systems. I believe this, and yet at times I get disgruntled or dissatisfied with the thought. I wrestle with it; I don't always get it. Not every woman with a twelve year hemorrhage who asks gets healed. Why this one? Not every child who looks dead is only sleeping. Why Jairus' prayer? Not every asking gets the answer it justly seeks.**

**Yet I have seen miracles. I was once called from a Council of Churches dinner to the hospital to be with a woman who was said to be moments from death. She was wholly eaten with cancer, could neither eat nor drink on her own and could barely speak. But by the time I arrived at her bedside her family had gathered around her and she was sitting up in bed with a look of pure astonishment on her face. This hard working, uncomplaining woman simply had no idea she was so loved. She lived for three more weeks on pure astonishment and died with a gentle smile on her face.**

**Was that not a miracle? Is that not healing? Who knows what secret asking may have gone on in her heart these many years?**

**Where Jesus is, something beyond the skill of experts happens. Perhaps it is cultural imperialism on my part. But for me Jesus is the heart of God, so when I see visible signs of an invisible power at work in the world, power beyond armies or governments or laws – power dispersed and rampant in the hearts of ordinary people rising above their own fear – I thank Jesus. Perhaps you have been riveted as I have by the immense courage of thousands of people in Iran protesting a stolen presidential election. David Brooks of the New York Times had a marvelous description the other day. He said: “The fate of nations {at moments like the one in Iran right now} is determined by glances and chance encounters; by the presence of a spontaneous leader who sets off a chant or a song and with it an emotional contagion; by a captain who either decides to kill his countrymen or not; by a shy woman who**

**emerges from a throng to throw herself on the thugs who are pummeling a kid prone on the sidewalk...The most important changes happen invisibly inside people's heads {hearts}. A nation that had seemed apathetic suddenly mobilizes. People lost in private life suddenly feel their public dignity has been grievously insulted. Webs of authority that had gone unquestioned instantly dissolve, or do not. New social customs spontaneously emerge, like the citizens of Tehran shouting hauntingly from their rooftops at night. Small gestures unify a crowd and symbolize a different future, like the moment when {opposition candidate} Mir Hussein Moussavi held hands with his wife in public."**

**Is *this* not a miracle? The heart of a nation has opened up! What experts predicted such a shift? Does it matter that this is a Muslim nation praying prayers to God through Mohammed? There are many doors to God! I mean no disrespect when I am astonished at what God can do in Iran and I thank Jesus, for Jesus is the way I experience the presence of God. He is the door, the opening, the way. I'm sure God knows how to translate!**

***God never fails us!* I cannot promise you will never face risk, conflict, pain or loss. I cannot promise you that just because you prayed yesterday, today you will see what you prayed for. I cannot promise that when your prayer is answered you won't go, *Huh? This isn't what I asked for!* I cannot promise you that your prayer will pay off like lottery winnings, so much a month for life. I cannot promise you that God will fix the world to look like you think it should – even if you are right!**

**I promise you that God will move mountains inside you if you ask. I promise that if you ask a little, God can do a little for you. If you ask a great deal, and ask and ask and ask, God will not abandon you in your asking, but will give you what you truly need: courage, forgiveness, peace, letting go, and in all things, healing that begins in the heart.**

**What was the woman with the hemorrhage given? Courage not to give up on herself when everyone around her – all the experts – had given up on her. What might happen if you were to pray for twelve years for**

**the courage not to give up on yourself? How about twelve hours? Is that asking a lot?**

**What was Jairus given when he came to Jesus asking for the life of his daughter? Freedom to believe that all the power he has as a Roman official, all the status he has, all the importance he has, pales absolutely and is no use beside what God can do. What might happen if you were to acknowledge that you are not in control – that God is. Is this asking a lot?**

**It is one thing to believe, as we all do here this morning, that there is something beyond us we call God and to thank and praise that God for the gifts and blessings in our lives. There is nothing wrong with that. But it is quite another thing to ask that God to take action in our lives because we believe that even though we do not know what action God will take, God will not fail us! Imagine putting everything you have on the line because you know that God will do something with it that is in accordance with God's power, God's love, God's justice, God's forgiveness, and God's desire to bring whole nations and whole systems into that realm Jesus called the kingdom of God.**

**How do you know God is at work? Ask. What is it you truly need? Ask. What might real healing look like in your life? Ask. Ask and ask and ask. When you are sad, ask. When you ask afraid, ask. When you are annoyed, ask. Whether you are confused or clear, God will show you a way that leads directly from inside your heart!**

**Last evening I drove over to Storrowton Tavern to do a wedding rehearsal. The couple are friends of a member of this church – two men, Tony and David. It is “just” a wedding. What a wonderful thing to be able to say I am doing a wedding between two men who have long loved each other and come a long journey to be able to we each other! What a miracle to be able to now say it's “just” a wedding, no big deal! What prayers brought “just” about!**

**So I pull up to the gate at the Big E and I tell the attendant collecting parking fees that I am a pastor coming to conduct a wedding rehearsal at the gazebo outside the tavern. The attendant is a man about my age**

**who starts to wave me through because, he says, I am a pastor doing the Lord's work and he is a Christian who loves the Lord and he's so happy to see a pastor in these days doing Godly things, when he asks who's getting married. I tell him that two gentlemen from Springfield are getting married. The man's face suddenly freezes and he looks at me and says, *That'll be five dollars.***

**I paid my five dollars and drove on. After all, what's five dollars and a little push back when I get to do a wedding that people have prayed and prayed and asked and asked and asked for?**

**You see, that's my job. It's what I do. I witness miracles.**

**All prayer is, is asking God to be God. When we give God a chance to be God in our *hearts*, the outcome is no longer in our *hands*. That's the point. That's when God can set to work, showing us the breadth and length and height and depth, loving us with the love that surpasses knowledge, and filling us with all God's fullness.**

**That's when we discover that we were meant to move mountains. Beginning with ourselves.**

**Thank you, God, for the asking. To you be the glory in the church and everywhere -- in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**