

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Trinity 4

Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24 Psalm 30 2 Corinthians 8:7-15
Mark 5:21-43

In speaking and listening, writing and reading, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

In our gospel today we have listened to a wonderful piece of story telling. The write of Mark's gospel has interwoven the events of two healing miracles, capturing parallels between them, as the plights of two women are met and transformed by Jesus. Yet, for all the skill of the story teller, I am left with a significant question:

Whose stories are being told?

The two women with whom Jesus has the deepest encounter – who receive his healing ministry are not named.

The father of one of them is named: he is a prominent figure, Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He comes to Jesus to plead for his daughter's healing. It may have been a radical choice – to seek help from the young Nazarene who was splitting the opinion of the religious establishment, but clearly he had decided that it was something he had to try, for the sake of his twelve year old daughter. Concern for her draws him towards Jesus and enables him to ask Jesus to come to his home to help and Jesus responds, setting out with him to provide the help he seeks. A request to Jesus and Jesus' response: Jairus will have a story to tell about his life being changed because he has met Jesus, trusted him and sought his help.

The disciples who accompany Jesus to Jairus' house and who are present even when Jesus restricts the numbers of those in the room when he ministers to the child are named: Peter, James and John. This remarkable miracle, the restoring of a young girl to life – a resurrection miracle – will become part of the amazing story of life with Jesus that will shape the rest of their lives, and fuel their

later mission to share his ministry as they become leaders of the early church.

We are offered a wider cast of characters to fill out the events of the story: the crowd pressing in on Jesus as he makes his way to Jairus' house, the mourners wailing the death of the child, who ridicule the idea that "she is only sleeping", the mother who joins Jairus in the room for her resurrection. No doubt each of those would be able to tell their version of the day's events.

No doubt their stories would have different gossipy elements

- the daring of an unclean woman to come into the crowd in the first place, Jesus knowing she had touched him

- would that make him unclean

- the amazement when she could say that she had been healed of such a long and destructive condition

I wonder what the effect of seeing this happen had on the lives of those in the crowd, how it shaped the story they would tell of the day they spent around Jesus.

What did the mourners make of it?

Perhaps they asked: Was Jesus right, did he really just wake her up from a particularly deep sleep? And did they wonder why he kept them away from the action?

And what did the mother and father experience – that Jesus told them to say nothing about? A quiet story which would stay in the family for ever.

"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease"

"Talitha cum: little girl get up"

We do not know their names, but we know what Jesus said to them – in warm gentle words that brought their healing and changed things for them forever.

The one whom Jesus calls daughter had courageously sought him out for herself after twelve years of deep suffering, the draining debilitation of a haemorrhaging complaint with its additional requirement that as a person losing blood she must absent herself from the community as one unclean.

It is perhaps because her healing needed to be made public for her full return to communal life that Jesus draws from her the whole story. He listens to her speak her truth in her own words and raises her to new dignity with his own response. It is because of this that we hear her voice in the telling of the story:

“If I but touch his clothes I will be made well”

No anticipation of meeting or being noticed, just a desire to come close enough to risk the possibility that he could make her well. Then his full attention: noticing their contact and drawing her into his full view, with her full healing and the blessing of his peace.

The one Jesus calls “little girl” had her own advocate, the father who sought Jesus out. In contrast Jesus makes sure this resurrective healing is private – only making sure those closest to her will meet her on going needs – “give her something to eat”, and perhaps freeing her from becoming the object of speculation as he silences the story telling. She will be the author of her own telling of these events when the time is right.

The stories of the daughter and the little girl reached the gospel writer and have been told compellingly for us, but as we have reflected he tells us only the outside events surrounding the deepest encounters at the heart of each miracle.

Yet even the outside story opens us the wonder of Jesus’ healing and transformative power in a person’s life.

Two unnamed women were healed, yet even at the time so many more were touched by his power and presence in ways that shaped their lives forever, and gave them a story of good news to tell about what happened that day.

Perhaps this tells us something of our own story, and the power of our relationship with Jesus to touch others, even when we cannot not speak of the full extent of our deepest encounter with God.

I wonder how many of us, like the woman in the crowd, do not anticipate or seek to be the centre of Jesus' attention, yet there is something that we would like just the touch of his presence to heal or change. How many of us have a deep but intensely personal faith that we don't have full words for?

Perhaps like the little girl, our encounter with God has been because others have brought him into our lives; or perhaps there our others around us, that we are the advocates for. Perhaps the new life Jesus offers is something we have discovered in the hidden places of our hearts and lives.

If we recognise ourselves and our faith story in the lives of the unnamed central characters of this gospel, let's take heart in recognising that our full openness to God at work in our lives is its own witness. The more we allow God to heal us and renew our life, the more we show God's action in the world, the more others see the power of an encounter with Jesus.

Or maybe we see ourselves more like the disciples, or the parents, mourners, or the wider crowd – experiencing at second hand the transformation that faith brings in someone else's life. If this is so, let's take heart in seeing that we can talk about what God does in other's lives, in the world around us, in the history of our faith even if we don't fully understand it, even if we feel others know about it more deeply. We only have to share what we experience – and we can be telling God's story too.

Put simply: allowing God to work in our lives, and sharing any extent to which we have seen God at work in the world is what we call mission, allowing our story to be God's story, to become gospel: good news of the life giving power of God in the world. Starting where we are today, together we can tell the great story of God in so many different ways in the hope that each begins to hear more fully the words of Jesus spoken in person to individual hearts: Your faith has made you well, go in peace

so beginning of the story for each one, of knowing the love of God at work in ways beyond all telling.

May the gospel of this day be our story too. Amen