



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – 6th Sunday in Pentecost – July 1, 2018, Kalaupapa

This morning we have two healing stories. How do they connect? Why do these two people get healed? What about the countless others that don't? And more important than that, if and when our time comes, will you and I be healed? What'll that look like? What'll that mean?

None of us, after all, are perfect and we all have something wrong with us—some of it physical, some of it psychological, some of it spiritual, and some of it interpersonal in our relationships with family, friends—and maybe even church members.

In this morning's gospel Jairus's daughter is healed, but we know of many others in our lives who are not. I think of my brother Jimmy who my father found dead in his crib for no reason at all when he was only three months old. I also think of Prince Albert, the hope of the Hawaiian kingdom, son of Kamehameha the Fourth and Queen Emma, the young boy who died at the age of four. Jairus's daughter was healed. But it seems as if other children are not.

And the hemorrhaging woman, desperate and plagued with illness for years—she gets healed, but equally desperate people who've lived with illnesses for years are not. So, when we ask for healing, we're not asking for a cure. So what does healing really mean?

We don't have to look very far for examples. Think of the people who were conscripted to the Kalaupapa Peninsula with Hanson's Disease. Think about how many of them were faithful and turned to God, even at the ends of their lives when they knew they would succumb to their disease. Did they pray for healing, or did they pray for cures? We don't really know.

But what we do know is that they weren't healed of leprosy, but I suspect that many of them were healed of their fear of leprosy. And if that's what they prayed for, then we know that prayer works, remembering that prayer isn't necessarily a tool for us to use as a vector to bend God's will toward our will, but instead to honor and invite God into whatever is going on with us; be it illness, frustration, desperation, anxiety, powerlessness, happiness, joy, delight. Prayer is paying attention to God as part of our lives.

The hemorrhaging woman gets that. Her story isn't just a story about illness; it's also about desperation, isolation and living in the margins of society, a society who's deemed her unclean. On top of her illness, she also deals with stigmatization and alienation. And she pays attention to God as part of her life in spite of it all and she reaches out for the hem of Jesus's robe—the hem on the robe of God's son.

And isn't it interesting. Others avoid and shun her. They don't want to be unclean like she is. And she goes to Jesus and deliberately touches him when she'd been told all her life that she must keep her distance and not make others unclean, especially other men. But she reaches out to Jesus, a man, and a popular religious figure.

And even more shocking and more audacious, when she throws herself at Jesus's feet, he doesn't pull back and call her unclean. No. He calls her daughter, like Jairus's daughter. Jesus changes the paradigm. He doesn't scold her for her failure to honor social norms. He praises her faith. He

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doesn't get angry. He tells her to go in peace. He calls her daughter. Then he heals yet another daughter. He's compassionate. He's kind.

And that's how you and I are called to treat one another—our family, our friends, our fellow church members, and those who may make us a little nervous, a little uncomfortable – the homeless, the alcoholic and drug addict, the mentally ill.

I wonder how many of their prayers for healing would be answered if we just allowed ourselves to live into our yearning for connection with other people.

Look, for example, at what Father Damien and Mother Marianne Cope did for the people of Kalaupapa. They didn't cure them. But they helped to heal them. They made themselves vulnerable and entered into the pain of their lives to minister to them and treat them not as objects, but as human beings. And if ever anyone in the history of our islands honored the tenet of our Baptismal Covenant to respect the dignity of every human being, it was Father Damien and Mother Marianne Cope. They met the desire in others and in themselves for one simple thing—connection.

And they followed the example of Christ by not allowing others be cut off from human relationships the way the powers that be during their time did. They touched others, both physically and spiritually. They saw them as fellow humans. They strived to be in relationship. They gave people love and affection. They had connection.

And what does that say to you and me over a hundred years later? In both of these stories this morning, Jesus experiences touch with both the little girl and the hemorrhaging woman. Maybe even more than physical healing, acceptance, and intimacy, just the simple act of touch, human physical contact, that touch can make us whole and give us peace. And that helps us to remember that we're designed by God to be in relationship and community with other people and because of that we strive to belong. And if that's the case, the surest way to go against the will of God is to isolate, marginalize, and exclude others.

Connection is God's will. And if we want to pay attention to God as a part of our lives, the best way to do that is through our relationships with others – not only church members, coworkers, family, friends; but also the sick, the friendless, the needy.

Our relationships, after all, aren't added to our lives for distraction or entertainment. They are a part of our lives, making us who we are. And they help us stretch and grow. None of us, after all, would be complete as human beings if we lived in total isolation. And when we pay attention to God as part of our lives, we remember the admonition of Jesus that it's not just one, but where two or three who gather in God's name that God is found in their midst.

I think this is all summed up in our Eucharist.

Wonder with me for a minute.

When we hold up the host, we break it up into little pieces. The bread is broken. The body is broken. But then when we walk away from the paten and chalice and out the door, we are one community, the body of Christ, and we go forth to love and serve the Lord – by connecting and being in relationship and once again, we make the host (the body) whole.

So come forth for the bread, the body of Christ. Take it into the core of your being and feel the presence of God's son coursing through your veins. And then go in peace to love and serve the Lord, by connecting with others, the very best way to pay attention to God as part of our lives.

Amen.