

## **Jeff's reflection- June 27**

Today's scripture reading is one that reminds us of what it means to be human and what it means to be a child of God.

In today's scripture reading, Jesus encounters a woman who lives with physical trauma. We are told that this woman, who is not named in the story, had been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years.

The laws included in the book of Leviticus say that a woman is ceremonially unclean for seven days after her menstrual period, anyone who touches her shall be unclean, anything she sits upon will be unclean.

This woman had experienced bleeding for 12 years! That meant that for 12 years she experienced not only physical discomfort and the weakness of blood loss, but also social stigma and isolation.

This story is placed in the midst of another story.

As Jesus makes his way through a crowd, a man named Jairus approaches him. Jairus is one of the leaders of the local synagogue. He is a person of position, respect, authority in this community. Jairus is upset. He kneels on the ground in front of Jesus and says that his daughter is dying, and he implores Jesus to come to his house and to heal his daughter.

As Jesus begins to follow Jairus, the crowd moves with him. It is at this moment that the woman manages to get near Jesus.

We are told that this woman has spent all her money going to physicians to seek help and she was "no better, but rather grew worse." Some biblical scholars say that it was not uncommon for self-proclaimed physicians to exploit the ill and the desperate by promising useless cures ...for a price. She not only suffered physically, but others had exploited her pain and now she also suffered as one who was economically poor.

The woman manages to push her way through the people around Jesus. She approaches him from behind – she doesn't want to be seen, she doesn't want Jesus to see her, she doesn't want to risk being rejected or becoming a public spectacle.

She believes though...she trusts...she hopes... Jesus is a healer, a holy person...so, if she can just touch him, maybe some of that holiness, some of that healing, will transfer from him to her, and she will be healed. It was not uncommon to believe that if someone had the power to heal, then just coming in contact with a piece of that person's clothing, or a bit of their hair, or something they had touched, could heal you, because now some of that person's power was retained in the item they had touched.

She reaches out, reaches past the few people still between herself and Jesus, reaches

towards Jesus is following the important leader from the synagogue.

She reaches out, and she touches, just lightly touches the back of Jesus, her fingers resting only momentarily on Jesus' tunic.

And something happens. She stands there, her hand still outstretched, as Jesus moves away from her, as people begin to move past her to follow Jesus.

She feels her body, her body tells her, something has happened, the hemorrhaging has stopped, the blood no longer is seeping out of her. As the gospel, the good news story says, she is healed of her disease.

But the other story continues...the story of Jesus and Jairus, the important leader of the synagogue, and the crowd following Jesus.

Except, something has happened not only to the woman. Something has happened to Jesus. His body tells him something has happened. His soul tells him something has happened. Power has gone forth from him. Something of who he is has been touched and has responded.

And he stops. The woman becomes aware that the crowd is no longer moving, people are no longer trying to move past her. Jesus has stopped. Not only stopped, but now Jesus has turned. Looking into the crowd of people who are now in front of her, between her and Jesus.

Jesus speaks, "Who touched my clothes?"

What an odd statement. For his disciples, for the people in the crowd, for Jairus, the important leader from the synagogue, this must be an odd moment. Jesus is on his way to save the child of the important person. Why does he suddenly stop to ask about someone touching his clothes?

His disciples think it an odd thing to say. They say to Jesus, "We're surrounded by a crowd. Everyone is touching everyone else. Why are you asking who touched you? Everyone around you has touched you!"

But Jesus looks around...because he knows that something has happened, that, in the words of Mark's Gospel, "power had gone forth from him". Jesus knows that, while many people were touching him, only one person had touched him, had reached out to him trusting that something would happen when she reached out to touch Jesus.

The woman, after years of feeling ostracized and ritually unclean, is scared, scared of how the crowd might react to her for having interrupted Jesus on his way to help the important person; but her faith that was courageous enough to reach out to Jesus, is now courageous enough to trust him again. She comes forward, she sinks to the ground

before him, and she tells him what she has done, and she tells him what she has experienced.

Having been freed of her bleeding, the woman is now freed of her fear; she is freed to claim a new identity – no longer the outcast.

Jesus' words free her. Jesus says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

This woman may not be given a name in this story, but she is given an identity – she is daughter, she is family, she is daughter/child of God.

'Your faith has made you well': Jesus does not claim to have healed her, he totally validates her faith, her action – her faith, her willingness to trust that the one who comes from God will welcome her, will share power with her.

Her courage, her 'refusal to accept herself' as unclean, as unwanted, as diseased leads her to act as a daughter of God, as one who can reach out and touch the son of God.

She has been welcomed again into the human family. She has been welcomed as one of God's family.

While Jesus speaks to the daughter of God, people arrive to say that Jairus' daughter has died, and that he should no longer bother Jesus. But Jesus, having just commended the faith of the daughter, tells them to also have faith...and Jesus goes to the house of Jairus, where Jesus will reach out to this daughter, will touch her, take her hand and call her back to life.

It is a moving story of a person who comes to Jesus, who comes to the one in whom she trusts she will experience God's presence.

It is a story that assures us that God welcomes everyone. The person of privilege, of position of importance has, in the eyes of God, no more privilege, position or importance than the person who suffers, the person who is poor, the person who is nameless in a society that does not want to acknowledge her existence.

It is a story that tells us that we come to the Christ because we trust that we will encounter healing.

It is a story that tells us that we who would be disciples of Christ should be perceived as people of healing, people who welcome everyone, people in whose presence others feel welcomed, listened to, cared for, affirmed. In our presence, others can touch the presence of God's love.

It is a story that tells us that it is God who names us, God who gives us our identity as

daughters, sons, children of God.

It is a story that tells us that faith consists in trusting that we are not defined by any stigma, label or category given by other people or institutions or profiles. We are defined by the love of God.

It is a story that says faith consists of trusting that when we reach out to touch God, we will touch and be touched by the power of new life; that we will know the healing of belonging to God and belonging as part of God's creation.

It is a story of courageous faith that finds healing as we touch the love of God that moves amongst us.

Having heard this story, may we live as people of courageous faith, who trust that when we touch the Christ we will be welcomed as daughter, son, beloved.

May we be people who so embody God's love that others will trust that when they reach out to us, they will be welcomed as God's daughter, son and beloved, and God's healing love will be released again into this world.

May we be God's children, now and always. AMEN

**For Reflection:**

Can you identify with any of the people in this story – the disciples, the crowd, Jairus, the woman, Jesus?

Are their people in your life whose presence you experience as 'healing', 'welcoming' or 'affirming'.

Are there times you think other people have reached out to you, trusting that you will listen to them and welcome them?

What does It mean to you to be called a daughter or a son of God?