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Sermon: "I Get Knocked Down, But I Get Up Again!"

June 30, 2024 at Metairie Ridge Presbyterian Church

Mark 5:21-43

Get up again!

5:21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea.

5:22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet

5:23 and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."

5:24 So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

5:25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years.

5:26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse.

5:27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,

5:28 for she said, "If I touch his clothes, I will be made well."

5:29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

5:30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

5:31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'"

5:32 He looked all around to see who had done it.

5:33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

5:34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

5:35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?"

5:36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

5:37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

5:38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

5:39 When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping."

5:40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.

5:41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"

5:42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.

5:43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

OK - so two stories of healing the daughters of Israel in one text from our boy Mark.

We got a woman bleeding profusely-
And a little girl who is dead.
And then we got a Jesus who heals them both-
Woo-hoo scriptures with happy endings.

Placement of text matters: This text is placed right a famous story of Jesus healing the Gerasene Demeonic and exorcizing a legion of demons into pigs which jump off a cliff and drown themselves, and before that is the story of Christ calming the great storm in the Sea of Galilee that threatened to capsize the boat that held the disciples and fisherman.

So we're kind of in this Markan era of miracles, healings and wonders of Christ's power which is Mark to a T. The Gospel of Mark is really heavily composed of Jesus's parables and the healings and miracles with some of Christ's teachings sprinkled in.

The author of Mark's Gospel throughout the whole text is writing to bear witness to Jesus Christ as the embodiment of the Kingdom of God, and to challenge readers to follow him in anticipation of his final coming as Son of Man.

The Markan Gospel also has some interesting anomalies- a call to silence of the witnesses. "That no one should know this" is a specific Markan trait- one that we get in this passage (upon the revival of Jairus's dead daughter).

So today we're exploring-

The healing of the unclean and hemorrhaging woman,
And the resurrection of the dead child.

Done so simply.

The command Christ gives serve us as lessons to this day

To the sea- *Be Still.*

To the woman who had faith - *your faith has made you well.*

To the child who had died- *get up!*

I love the wisdom in what Jesus says in the Gospels and how these two women are healed by Christ. Jesus loved women. It's so clear in our scripture that this was a gentle prophet amidst a time when women typically were not so raised up and recognized in their communities.

It's no surprise that the two women in today's reading- go without names.

1770 men and 176 women are named in the Bible. Jairus's daughter, and the hemorrhaging woman are 2 out of 600 women unnamed.

More interestingly though- rarely are we able to find the words these women spoke. The words of women account only for 1.1 percent of the total text.

So when we find a sentence attributed to a woman- it's important to take heed.

And we have one:

"Mark 5:28 for she said, "If I touch his clothes, I will be made well."

How uncomfortable are we gonna get if I talk about periods?

It's 2024, and we're pretty progressive socially I'd say. I mean, it's no longer taboo to really speak about certain subjects, but even now in 2024, a woman's monthly isn't something that one brings up in sophisticated society.

So imagine 2030+ years ago, what that would've been like for a woman to be hemorrhaging blood for years on the side of the road, in a society where the Jewish custom was that women removed themselves to the red tents, and needed a ritual bath before they returned to their homes and families.

This was a woman- who was seen as one of the filthiest and dirtiest of their time. The leper-equivalent who was so beyond desperate- she reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' clothing- a man who- was raised up socially from her, surrounded by other people.

"She feels in her body that she is healed of her disease", - her belief is that all she needs is to touch his clothes- it's almost magical.

Jesus pauses- and insists on personal contact with the woman- and the woman- who has been healed, who has insisted on this healing without permission- could easily run away- yet she is brave, and she faces Jesus as he asks who touched him.

It is at this second personal encounter that Christ tells her: Go in peace, your faith has made you well.

We can imagine that this woman perhaps had some form of cancer, or blood clotting disorder that causes her anguish.

But it's an anguish on a limited scale that many of the women here can relate to.

I certainly can-

Back in the nineties and early two thousands, I didn't know what ovarian cysts were.

The words endometriosis.

PCOS.

All completely foreign.

From 14 onward, I spent days during my menstrual cycle in spurts of physical agony - to the point where I would hold my breath and look for ways to knock myself out, rather than stay away while my cramps wreaked their havoc.

We went to countless OBGYNs who all told my parents that this was simply normal. The doctors kept telling me to get up. It's all in my head. Toughen up. Get up and go girl.

It was at 16, with a new doctor from my church suggesting perhaps the pain I was having wasn't simply cramps. Perhaps it was endometriosis. My surgery was scheduled the next month.

80 percent of my reproductive organs were covered in scar tissue and fibroids at only 16 years old. They removed them and it was life changing.

And while I still experience some pain, it is nothing like those first few years and my life is much more manageable now.

And it didn't take an act of complete faith like the hemorrhaging woman.

It just took someone who took the time to believe me and witness my pain for me to be able to *get up*.

And then, I got up and I never looked back.

We are often knocked down on our backs in life,
Like the hemorrhaging woman.

And we just need someone to witness the severity of our obstacles- to help us so we can get up.

Because some things in life aren't meant to be dealt with alone.

Sometimes you need medical treatment- but sometimes you just need a witness- to confirm that you're in over your head.

Like the hemorrhaging woman, I felt like I was able to return to society. I could make plans with friends, I could go to the pool again without fear and embarrassment. It's not the same- but it's a point of empathy. And the woman, after her healing by Christ- was freed of her fear and disease and reintegrated into the life of her community. Christ saved her physically and spiritually. Her life re-started that day.

Similarly, we see Jairus's daughter's life spared- even after she has died.

Christ says Talitha cum- little girl, get up. And she does. Not even after death is it too late to hope for the resurrection of Christ.

What does faith mean?

How do we get up from our own mortality, or the death of others? How do we get back up, when we're bleeding?

The song "Tubthumping" by musical group Chumbawamba has the lyrics that we all know- "I get knocked down, but I get up again, You're never gonna keep me down" reminds me of these two women in the bible.

Knocked down, they still rise- through Christ's mercy.

Unlike Christ's mercy, the hit song was inspired by a less poignant moment. It was inspired by lead guitarist Boff Whalley and his wife while they watched their drunken next door neighbor singing Danny Boy as he struggled profusely to unlock his front door. They felt inspired by his stupid perseverance to get inside. The song was written at a moment of brokenness for the band- where it was looking dismal.

And yet- an unholy moment- a human moment- of watching someone as simple as a drunk trying open their door-

That was the catalyst needed-

To jumpstart Chumbawamba back into the musical scene.

Boff said, "That song changed everything" and the band lasted for 30 years before disbanding in 2012.

You never know where you're gonna find your strength to get back up.

But God sends us help in the form of unlikely angels and messengers.

And the Holy Spirit is around us- always. Urging us forward.

Stagnancy and complacency serve us as a period of catching our breath, but as humans we are not meant to sit forever in these spaces.

We must move forward as we serve God.

But what if it is you-who is facing challenges that are relentless? How might you hear this charge? What if you are facing an uncertain future.

You have to find the pieces of your soul that need healing.

So many people nowadays are emotionally unaware of their spiritual needs. That comes from a lifetime of pushing it deep down, locking your big feels away.

Some things that we face are meant to be felt.

And if you're free to decide whether you can face whatever emotional battles you've long since waved white flags at.

But know that every hard conversation you put aside.

Every reconciliation you ignore.

Every apology you refuse to ask for....

It just contributes to your own spiritual disease.

And I say this because this is my personal and lived experience. I do not say this with judgment, but from a place of knowingness. When we refuse to face the pains in our hearts, it is as if we are pouring fertilizer on the weeds of illnesses, threatening to swallow up every good and nurturing seed we've lovingly sown.

We have to *get up*- and figure out who we're gonna be the rest of the time we have alive.

Like the hemorrhaging woman who believed if she just but touched the cloak of Christ- she would be made well- what is it that you are called to do to be made spiritually well?

And only you know that answer.

I think for myself- if I were to answer this- I would say I spiritually diseased and lost as I discerned my future in ministry, and that served as a catalyst in my life where I reached a breaking point and knew I'd never feel peace unless I went to seminary and tried to get ordained.

And it was hellacious at times. But the peace eventually returned. My headspace came back to me. I felt shalom again. But it took time, it took bravery that I did not possess..

And I know in my heart- that it's only a matter of time before yet another challenge comes- where I will be again in spiritual unrest- and will once again be hemorrhaging energy, or heart ache- until I muster up braveness for whatever it is that must be healed- whatever challenge I must face.

And that is the beauty of our lives.

That is the gift of our humanness.

We scratch, we bleed.

We live and then we die.

And throughout it all, there's some mysterious love divine,

Guiding our paths.

Nurturing our souls.

And sending us messages,

To get back up again.