

## Deepening Faith

Here is an easy one: raise your hand if you have ever been sick. It isn't fun, is it? As we get older, sometimes we are more susceptible to various things. Maybe our immune system weakens or something has caused it to be that way. The last two times that I have been sick have been Covid-related. Luckily, it did not involve having to go to the doctor or having to take extra medication. It came, it hit for a bit and went away when it had run its course. However, that is not the case for every illness or diagnosis.

Some people, and even some of us present today, suffer from long or chronic illnesses or injuries. Some people have cancer, chronic back pain, stomach ailments, arthritis, or even a combination of the aforementioned. In 2024, we have many different ways of dealing with chronic illness or pain, some of which may be drug-related.

The medical knowledge we have now versus 2,000 years ago would simply be unfathomable to the original hearers of this Gospel. Their methods were rudimentary at best with unorthodox and often time life-ending practices. Most often if you were sick, you were going to

die. Things just couldn't be explained. They knew something was wrong but didn't have the terminology that we have or the knowledge to treat it.

This is what makes our Gospel lesson today so fascinating. While they tell us that woman with the flow had tried various procedures, nothing worked for her. She was left to her own faith that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, could heal her. Undeterred by the crowds, she made her way to him because she knew that she only had to touch him to be healed. That was her faith.

Could her faith be a faith of desperation? Sometimes that happens to us. We don't know what else to do so we pray and ask for healing. But, on the other hand, man of have so many people and institutions to help us when we become ill or incapacitated. If we have a toothache, we can go to the dentist. Tylenol, Motrin, and Aleve are all "wonder drugs" but we have also learned that we must take them as directed, lest they cause our bodily organs to fail. It does get complicated, even in 2024. We can have things repaired through surgery, take anti-biotics so that

things don't become infected and kill us. We put our faith in the practice of medicine.

There is nothing wrong with putting our faith in medicine. I believe that people are given gifts and talents from God. They put would they know into what they continue to learn as they continue to practice medicine. We allow them to use their knowledge and gifts that they have received from the Almighty and give them the opportunity to minister to us. Maybe because I am an ordained minister, but I have had some fascinating conversations with my physicians.

As these physicians practice medicine, many of them are also practicing their faith. Sometimes even they pray before meeting with a family with bad news. Some pray as they scrub for surgery. They won't always admit that, but they do. I know for a fact that nurses pray and they will actually partner with hospital chaplains to help their patients. Faith and medicine seem to go hand in hand.

Most of us are not physicians, some gathered here today have worked in hospitals or even have a doctorate in nursing. We are gathered here today—hopefully not just for hamburgers, hot dogs, and

salads—to hear the word of God and strengthen our faith. For many of us, it could be related to simply “getting on the boat” that we talked about last week.

Last week, Jesus and his disciples boarded boats to get away from the crowds but, surprise, the crowds on the other side knew of his wonders. Their faith was deepening. The woman knew to touch him, Jairus knew that Jesus could help his daughter. The people in Ephesus knew that their faith required them to participate in stewardship.

We know that we have to be a people of faith. We are aware of what it takes to run our churches and how to be good stewards of what we have. We call upon God—Father/Mother, Son, Holy Spirit—to be with us in our time of need. So many of us have come together to assist where things are needed, not just to pull off a cook-out after church, but to feed those in need when others failed to do so, to befriend those who are lonely, to allow others to minister to us to deepen THEIR faith, to give clothes away to those without. Many of us take time out each day to give thanks to God for what they have.

This summer, let us continue to be a people of faith. Let us be companions on this faith journey as we not only get in the faith boat to “get to the other side” but to see what is needed of us once we get there. Deepening faith can be scary but the rewards are great. We can work and pray together, and for each other, for the gift of deepening faith. We can be healers and we can be healed. Amen!