

Gospel & Sermon June 30, 2024
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Jaime Larson-McLoone
“God’s faithfulness is enough.”



How much faith is enough? The Bible shows us, in the Book of Mark, that you get miracles when you believe in Jesus. Or at least, better results than any you’ve had so far. Mark introduces us to Jairus, a respected leader, who begs Jesus to heal his daughter. A woman, with a hemorrhage, who was considered ritually unclean and treated as an outcast, also turns to Jesus for help. Do they have enough faith? Do we?

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 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.” So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ” He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and

trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

Sermon by Pastor Jaime Larson-McLoone

“God’s faithfulness is enough.”

How much faith is enough?

If you could hold it in the palm of your hand or weigh it on your kitchen scale, or your bathroom scale, what would be enough? Or if someone asked you to rank your faith on a scale of one to ten, what would you say? Whatever it is, is that enough? And enough for what?

Enough to get through the next meeting or the next appointment? Enough to get through the next day or the next week? Enough to be made well? Enough to get safely through this life and into the next?

Maybe someone has suggested you don’t have enough faith. Maybe someone has flat-out told you that you don’t have enough. Maybe you secretly fear that it’s true. And maybe you wonder sometimes if that’s why your loved one didn’t recover, or why you live with pain every day, or why the world is the way it is.

How much faith is enough? How much faith is enough for Jairus, the synagogue leader? This must be the most stressful day of his life. His daughter lies near death. Could this Jesus guy help? Some of his colleagues do not trust Jesus. Some of them are plotting against him. But what if?

Jairus has tried everything else. He is an important guy. The local physician wouldn’t hesitate to make a house call, to try every possible treatment. Maybe after exhausting all the options, that doctor pulled Jairus aside and whispered, “You know, there is that healer everyone’s talking about ...”

This is Jairus’ last option. It has to work. He WILL believe.

How would we rank his faith, on a scale of one to ten? Nine? Five? It might dip to one or two when Jesus stops the crowd headed toward Jairus’ home to ask what seems like a

ridiculous question: “Who touched my clothes?” These people are packed tight and pushing past one another like Summerfest crowds who heard a rumor that Taylor Swift might stop by.

Who touched his clothes? Even Jesus’ closest followers are thinking, “Um, everyone. Everyone has touched your clothes, Jesus.” But one woman steps forward out of the crowd and falls at Jesus’ feet. “It was me. I touched your cloak. And this bleeding that has been plaguing me for twelve long years just stopped. Doctors have taken all my money and provided not even an hour of relief. So I had to try, Jesus. I had to try.”

And Jesus looks this woman in the eye and says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

And there’s Jairus, watching, his faith fading by the second. Then his neighbors show up: “Don’t bother waiting around for this Jesus. Your daughter is dead. Coulda told you so.” And Jesus turns his gaze away from the woman and directly to Jairus: “Do not fear, only believe.” And they all keep walking.

The woman gets her well-being back. Jairus gets his daughter back. And what do we know about their faith? Jairus comes to Jesus begging. A last resort. All we know is that he believes Jesus might be able to help his daughter.

The woman has heard about Jesus. That’s it. She hasn’t been following Jesus all along. She hasn’t been confirmed. She hasn’t memorized the Apostles’ Creed or participated in the new member class or pledged her offering. But she believes that Jesus will be able to help her. That seems to be faith enough.

And if you’re wondering whether you even have that much faith, think back to our gospel lesson from last week. Jesus is asleep on a pillow as a dangerous storm threatens to overtake the boat. The disciples panic and wake him. Remember what they said: “Do you not care that we are perishing? Jesus calms the storm and turns to his disciples: “Have you still NO faith?”

These guys have been to all the classes. They have followed Jesus everywhere. They have watched Jesus heal people and cast out demons. But for all that ... “Have you still no faith?”

Well, faith or no faith, Jesus calmed the storm, and they all made it safely to shore. How much faith is enough? What if the faithfulness of Jesus is enough? The disciples will betray Jesus, deny Jesus, and flee in fear. In Mark's gospel, Jesus goes to the cross alone, only the women looking on from a distance. The gospel ends with those women fleeing from the tomb, frightened and rendered speechless by the news of the resurrection. And still, Jesus' Spirit filled and enlivened the early church, and the gospel spread around the world.

Jesus is faithful, even when his followers are not. Jesus is faithful, even when his followers are filled with doubt, or barely believing but desperate. That's the same Jesus who heals and rescues today.

Jesus is faithful on those days when our faith is at an 11 out of 10. And on those days when our faith is hovering between a 0 and a 1. Even when it is swinging back and forth between positive and negative territory. To be sure, we do not always get the healing we want, when we want it. But that doesn't mean we are being punished or wait-listed for our lack of faith.

I read a story this week about a man who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in his 50s. He and his family and his friends prayed and prayed for healing. Just like our community has prayed and prayed for healing. Years later, in the last stages of his disease, he explained to a friend that he had been healed - not healed of Parkinson's, but healed of his fear of Parkinson's.*

Healing comes to us in all kinds of ways. Sometimes it looks like physical healing. The bleeding stops. Sometimes it feels like being raised from the dead. Sometimes it looks more like peace, acceptance, or even joy that defies reality. And healing in all ways is promised to us in the next life. Because our God is faithful.

Faithful to those of us who are rock solid in our faith. Faithful to those trying desperately to patch the cracks before anyone sees them. Faithful to those of us who aren't sure whether what we have is faith, or just nowhere else to turn.

That's why we can sing along with the psalmist: You have turned my wailing into dancing; you have ... clothed me with joy. Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Not because this life is perfect, or because our faith is perfect. But because our God is faithful, and somehow that is more than enough.

Pastor Jaime

**Michael L. Lindvall, in Feasting on the Word: Year B, Volume 3, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition, 442.*

*Presented June 30, 2024 at Bethel Lutheran Church ELCA in Muskego, WI USA
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