

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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TOUCHING JESUS

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Text of a Sermon preached on the 5th Sunday after Pentecost

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LAMENTATIONS 3:21-33 | PSALM 30
2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-15 | MARK 5:21-43

Jesus said: “Let us go to the other side.” But this time, it was back to where they had started.

Even after he had stilled the storm - even after he had saved a stark raving mad man from his self imposed prison in a grave yard, and sent him home in his right mind - the question that arose in the back of the sinking boat, lingered in the air: “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

They brought that question back home with them. So do we. Dear God: Do you really care about what is happening to us right now?

Give us your testimony. The psalmist boasts: “O Lord my God, I cried out to you, * and you restored me to health. You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead; * you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.”

Indeed, King David reminds God of their special relationship. He could pull up his chair, lean in, lower his voice and demand to know: “What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the Pit? * will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?”

The prophet Jeremiah had a different experience to be sure. What he did not see in his lifetime, he still believed: “This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

But since Jeremiah, in the years of Exile and Return, in the years fighting to establish itself and survive, Israel would ask more and more, “Dear God: Do you really care about what is happening to us right now?”

Jesus stepped on the shore, the crowds pressed around him. The leader of the synagogue came to him. They made way for him. And he fell at Jesus’ feet. Perhaps you can help. Quick. There isn’t much time.

And just when we think we are going to hear a great story, that we are going to get some answers, we are interrupted. Jesus is interrupted.

Do you see that right up to the moment when Jarius is on his knees, it is just the same old story. There is nothing to it. For all we know, the little girl was already dead, or that lazy twelve year old is just sleeping. It hardly matters. We are always dying.

Until Jesus shows up, nothing changes.

To really know, to feel, that God cares, something new will have to come into the world. It is striking that Mark’s gospel has no nativity. He doesn’t bother to start his gospel with how Jesus is connected

to the prophets dreams, or the family tree. All that matters is that Jesus shows up in the wilderness with the John the Baptizer.

Until Jesus shows up, nothing changes.

Jesus' very presence is like a comet suddenly appearing in the sky. A paralyzed boy is lowered down in a stretcher and that is the moment we learn that our sins can be forgiven. The demons know who he is before anyone else is the wiser and plead for him to go away. The wind and the waves obey his command.

Until Jesus shows up, nothing changes.

Jesus' presence is the new thing. That you could walk up and speak to Jesus, that you could reach out and touch him, that is the renewal of everything, the new creation.

And suddenly, the woman who had suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years, who has lost everything, gone through every humiliation, reaches out and touches the hem of his garment. Touches power. The power of creation. The power of faith. The power of honesty. The power of guilt and shame removed, lifted, banished.

Behold the power of Jesus. Behold the faith of a desperate woman. They meet and all is made new. Her potential restored.

At the same time. Almost. Jarius is made new. His daughter's is made new. Wait for it. Jesus will make his way to the house, calm the crowd, throw the family out, bring a few witnesses in to make sure that no one misses anything. But at that moment.

He will reach out, touch a twelve year old girl, claim her as his daughter, and raise her to new life. Her potential restored.

This story within the story changes each story - and ours.

Dear God: Do you care what is happening to us right now? Reach out, the gospel says. Have faith, the good news says. Tell it like it is. Be absolutely honest. And the power of the universe will reach out to you.

Say the name of Jesus and see his hand raise you up, feel his love lift you.

Until Jesus shows up, nothing changes. But when he does!

