

June 27, 2021

Mark 5:21-43

“Desperate Hope!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Ave.
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Desperation is a loss of hope and a surrender to despair. It comes when you can no longer see or find a solution to a given problem. Desperation begins to find relief when there is hope of a viable solution. It disappears when the solution is finally applied and works.

The theme for today's message is **Desperate Hope!** Those two words - desperate and hope - really don't go together very well. Still, we sometimes put them together to capture an "in-between moment" in our lives. Our gospel lesson for this morning tells us about two very different, but intertwined accounts: a parent *desperately* trying to save his daughter, and an unnamed woman *desperately* trying to reach Jesus to touch him. They are not, as we might say, "at their wits end," that is, completely puzzled and perplexed, not knowing what to do. Rather, they are anticipating that Jesus is the viable solution. They are full of hope. He is capable of saving the dying daughter and healing the woman. Their desperation is all about getting to Jesus before it is too late. So both of them have **Desperate Hope!**

What we see in our lesson can be a description of how we as Christians feel when it comes to living our lives down here. We live in an in-between moment. I personally refer to this in-between moment as "living life in the meantime." We are desperate to reach Jesus because we know who he is and anticipate all that he gives. Nevertheless, we live in the meantime of what we might figuratively say are "daughters who are dying and bodies that are bleeding." I hear it frequently: "I just wish that Jesus would come back and bring it all to an end." That is extremely close to a parent begging Jesus to heal his dying daughter or trying to touch his garment so that all may be well. We also live in **Desperate Hope!**

So, how does Jesus deal with those who are desperate to reach him, who live in the meantime while anticipating all that he ultimately gives? Before we answer that question, it might be comforting to know that Jesus is available for all people, regardless of who they are and the suffering they endure. The parent and the woman in our gospel lesson are very different from one another. He is named. She is not. He is an important religious leader. She is unimportant and would have been considered unclean by the law due to her condition. He is very wealthy. She has spent everything on failed cures. He formally asks Jesus for help. She pushes her way forward and does not ask for permission. Nevertheless, Jesus will attend to both of them and save.

There is a connecting point that we do not want to miss here. And it is important to see it in order to make the necessary observations that answer how Jesus deals with those who are desperate to reach him. Here it is. The woman has been bleeding now for 12 years and is in the sunset of adult life with her best years behind her. The daughter of Jairus is 12 years old and is in the sunrise of her life with everything before her. Both are dying. When Jesus is confronted by the woman, who is bleeding, he is touched by what is unclean and he himself becomes unclean. When Jesus enters the room and touches the hand of the dead girl, our Savior again touches what is unclean and becomes unclean. He takes their uncleanness. Jesus heals the woman and raises the girl from the dead. It can now be said that both girls are truly clean by the touch of Jesus the Savior.

Let's ask the question again. How does Jesus deal with those who are desperate to reach him, who live in the meantime while anticipating all that he ultimately gives? The first thing and most important thing to realize is that Jesus touches the source of all our woes. He absorbs into himself our uncleanness to take it away. He becomes the fullness of uncleanness on the cross where he not only absorbs into himself the uncleanness of the world, but all of the consequences that go with it. We just cannot understand how it can be, but Jesus absorbs it all. Every sin of everyone who has ever been or will be he calls as his own sin. Every consequence of sin that is experienced in this earth he calls his own. Every consequence of sin that is eternal he calls his own. He does this so that we may become whole and live forever. Yes. This is the first and most important thing to realize. Whoever believes in him is clean.

The second thing that we may glean from our lesson for this morning is that the path to becoming whole does require a journey through this in-between state of life down here. We see that in several ways. Can you imagine what it must have been like for the bleeding woman to see the crowd pressing around Jesus while wondering how in the world she was going to reach him? Yet she did. Can you imagine the inward frustration and impatience of Jairus when Jesus stopped and took the precious time to find the bleeding woman who had touched him? With fear and trembling the woman falls down before Jesus. And what was it like for Jairus to hear the words, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" Yet he will see his daughter alive again very soon.

We all must exist in the in-between state. We live in the meantime between one thing and what we ultimately want. But the point is that both were saved by Jesus. And hidden under their maladies was the reality of uncleanness that had to be faced. All of this points to a very important thought. Even in the waiting Jesus is kind. Even in the meantime, Jesus is working for the end. And this is what we are bid to trust so that while we may wish to go and be with Jesus right now, we are able to say with Paul in Philippians 1:23-24, "I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." Keep in mind that the stopping of the bleeding and the rising of the girl was also in the meantime before they finally left this world behind for good. It was only a foreshadowing of what is to come.

With those things in mind, we are brought to a conclusion. Maybe this in-between state is important for us and for others. We may want to depart, but Paul fully embraced being here. And being here was still important for the woman who was healed and the girl who was raised. All of this takes us to the truth that God's purpose for us is higher than what we may think. And if his purpose is for others to know the truth and be set free as we have, then who are we to moan and groan? We should take that moaning and groaning and replace it with speaking and singing of Jesus.

Hannah Kerr, in her song titled *In the Meantime*, writes: "Here in the waiting, my hope remains. Here in this place, my heart finds strength. Here in the waiting, my hope remains. Here in this place, my heart finds strength." She says it twice, almost as if to convince herself. No doubt the healed woman in our gospel lesson had to confront this very thing when she saw the pressing crowds around Jesus and when she had to come forward and say that she was the one who touched him. No doubt, Jairus had to confront the issues of waiting, hope, and the place of strength when he was told that his precious daughter was dead.

Should we not also then have to confront such realities in the meantime? We as Lutheran Christians know exactly the place where our hearts find strength. We know where hope remains in the waiting. The place to rest is wherever we find Jesus. And we know that we find Jesus and his gracious presence among us in his voice found in the apostolic Scripture, in our ongoing washing which is a real participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and in his very body and blood offered and shed for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This is where our waiting, impatience, and frustrations must die while our anticipation of what is to come grows and grows.

One day our bleeding will forever stop. One day Jesus will command us to rise and we will live with him in forever love and bliss. Until then, we have our work to do. Wherever God has placed us in this life, and whatever goes with it, we are bid to embrace him even when it feels that we can't reach him. In the words of Hannah Kerr:

I will praise You
You see every season of my life
I will trust You
You're using every moment by design
In between expecting
In between receiving
Before I know the answer
Before I see the reason
You're moving in the meantime

We live in **Desperate Hope!** And the hope that we have comes from faith in Jesus and that he will do what he says. We really want to get there soon. But in the meantime, may we trust and embrace our being here for the spread of the gospel, and encourage one another as we see the Day approaching! We must rest in the gifts of his Spirit, water, and blood until the day comes when we see him in the beauty of his glory!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/desperation>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4wATOAS0Lk> [While I quote *In the Meantime* by Hannah Kerr, I do not endorse all of her songs or lyrics, nor do I endorse Contemporary styles of Worship]