

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
June 28, 2015
[Mark 5:21-43](#)

“SOZO(ED)”

My father died 11 years ago this August 15th.
He had pancreatic cancer.

Sometimes when I am visiting people, especially our homebound or those in the hospital, I think of what my sister, an oncological nurse, said about the care my father received in some of the hospitals, from some of the medical staff.

As my sister put it -- they didn't talk to my dad about who he was; they treated his body and they reduced him to his disease

They didn't bother to find out that he had been a veterinarian;
That he had wanted to be an MD when he was 35 but he was told he was too old

The people back then and the nurses and doctors 11 years ago didn't bother to find out that my dad had what Erik called “a mind like a steel trap”

It enabled him to test out of more than a year of college chemistry
It allowed him to be quite the cardsharp even winning at the poker table in Las Vegas which angered the others at the table that figured he was a small town rube out of his league

My dad at 35 would have had no problem becoming a people doctor

But no one bothered to ask, why did you want to be an MD instead of a vet?
Or, what did you do when they told you you couldn't be an MD?

Most of all they didn't bother to know that my father believed his purpose in life was to make other people's lives better – nothing big like changing the state of the universe but that he would brighten up the day of people he interacted with.

So, they treated his disease; attended to his body.
But my father, like all of us, was so much more than these.

One would expect that sort of knowledge that we are more than our bodies to be a modern awareness coming to us through the disciplines of psychology and sociology.

But here it is.

That awareness 2000 years ago in a story about Jesus healing a woman Who had been reduced by and then reduced to her disease.

She had been bleeding for 12 years.

That meant that she had been ritually unclean for 12 years

When a woman had her menstrual cycle she was to remove herself from community because she was considered unclean.

And then when her period was over she would ritually cleanse herself and return to community.

Like kosher meat – have to get rid of all the blood.

Before it can be touched.

So for 12 years she has been untouched.

For 12 years she has been labeled unclean.

For 12 years people have given her a wide berth lest they too become unclean

Or, in their ignorance, fear catching what she had.

For 12 years she has been separated out from religious and social community.

For 12 years we can imagine she prayed for healing.

Some of you have prayed for longer than that.

For 12 years she had gone from physician to physician.

Sounds like she originally was a person of means.

For she had spent all that she had.

Regardless of what we think about Obamacare.

There is the goal and the need of not having people's healthcare drive them

Like this woman into destitution.

To not have illness take away not just health but everything else.

So the woman has heard news of Jesus.
And decides maybe if she just touches his garments,
She will be made well.

I think what's amazing is that she hadn't given up.

Or maybe she HAD given up until she heard about Jesus.
So she pushes her way through the crowd.
This unclean one.
Making everyone she touches unclean in the process.
But she doesn't care.

This is her last chance effort.
She is filled with hope and possibility that this man will heal her.
She, obviously, is afraid to ASK for the help.
So she steals it.

Comes up behind him
And grabs his robe.
He won't touch me; I'm unclean;
he's a holy man
But I can touch at least his robe.

Then power leaves him, enters her, and heals her body.

But Jesus knows that wholeness isn't just about our bodies
But about all of us.
That for healing to be complete it must include the whole of who we are.

It's interesting because the word in Greek for well as in made well is sozo
Which means saved.

Both Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, and the unnamed woman think they
want the healing of disease.
But they both ask to be saved.
Jairus that his daughter be saved.
The woman herself.

So here's what Jesus does.

Jesus who is the hope of both these desperate people.

Jesus who is surrounded by so many people with so many needs.
Jesus who is, in today's parlance, a very busy man
so busy his disciples cannot believe he is stopping to wonder who in the
midst of all these people has touched him.

Jesus stops to discover who has touched his clothing.
Because it's not just about healing; it's about wholeness;
It's about sozo.
Being saved.
He knows that.

He knows we are more than our illnesses
More than our disease.

He stops; this busy man
On his way to an emergency situation
where someone is dying and in need of his intervention.

He stops, this busy man,
Delaying the request of a named, powerful man
A leader in the community
to search the crowds for an unnamed unclean powerless and now poor
woman who has been ostracized from community
maybe even the very community, the synagogue that Jairus leads.

And what does he stop for
This busy man?

He stops to hear . . .
her story
Such a simple act
But it is *the* act that makes her whole.

She falls down before him and tells him the whole truth
Not the whole truth of the universe
Her truth.
Her story.

And when she is done
He names her Daughter
She is no longer isolated

She is connected – if a daughter, then she has a mother
A father
She belongs
She is part of a larger whole.

And notice the FIRST thing he says after she shares her story:
your faith has made you sozo
Your faith has saved you
Your faith has made you whole.

The SECOND thing has to do with her body:
“Go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

There’s a distinction made
The Greek word for healed is our hygienic/health.
Much smaller reality than sozo.

Maybe what Jesus wants us to hear in that line
is that being healed of our disease
is sometimes secondary

Or maybe like my father not something that is going to happen
this side of eternity.

Maybe what Jesus wants us to know
is that in spite of our illnesses
in spite of our disease
we can still be made whole.

Maybe what Jesus wants us to know and remember
is that we are so much more than our disease.

Dan Hall is so much more than his Parkinson’s.
Peggy DeLuca is so much more than her anxiety.
Susie Gooden is so much more than her seizures.
Dan Howe is so much more than his cancer diagnosis.
Clarice Wolf is so much more than her dementia.
My dad was so much more than his pancreatic cancer.

I remember my best friend in college who was born with rheumatoid
arthritis.

She had huge scars on her arms and legs where they had replaced her joints with metal ones.

I've probably shared this but it is worth repeating.

I was hanging out with her in her dorm room
I was at the desk
She was in her wheelchair
And she said, "My cousins are praying for me to be healed."

I blurted out, "What do *you* need to be healed of?"

Then I said, "Oh, Cheryl, I am so sorry; how stupid was that. I didn't mean to be so insensitive."

But then she taught me for the umpteenth time something new
Something I needed to learn and hold onto

She said, "Noooo, thank you, I'm glad you don't see me as someone in need of being healed. You see me, not my disease; not my disability."

Does that mean we don't pray for healing?

Of course not.

We pray every day for cures – for bodily healing.

But then we see each other with the eyes of Christ
As people made whole in him
And we help proclaim/invite that wholeness by taking the time in our busy lives
To stop and listen to another's story
To hear the whole truth.

In those moments
We touch the garments of salvation
In those moments
the power of Jesus is released anew into the world.

Come to the table this morning
Knowing that Christ welcomes our whole selves
Our whole truth names us Daughter and Son

and sends us forth maybe/maybe not healed in our bodies
but made whole made well .sozo in him.

Amen

The Reverend Dianne O. Loufman
June 27, 2015