

His daughter was dying. Jairus stood over her bed and wrestled with his anger and pain. There was nothing he could do. The doctors had done with they could, but they had exhausted all that medicine had to offer. He was looking into the face of death and there was nothing he could do to stop it. He was faced with his human limitations, and as father, there was nothing he wanted more than to protect and save the life of his little daughter. She was only 12 years old. So young to be dealing with so much pain. He was without hope...and yet, a tiny thought nagged at the back of his mind. He had heard of this man coming to town who had reportedly healed people of blindness and lameness, a man who connected with God in a special way. Could this man heal his daughter? But he could not go find out. He was a leader in his congregation and they had decided that this man was a fool, and was leading people astray. No, he could only sit here and pray. He stood there, praying, weeping, as his daughters moaned in her sleep and her breathing became even more labored. His wife collapsed in tears, it was clear it was close to the end. Suddenly he stood, ran out the door no longer concerned with what people would think. He ran until he found the teacher, and then fell to his knees, “come, lay your hands on my daughter, she is dying.” The teacher did not ask any questions, he only went.

The crowds were great that day, people swarming everywhere. One woman in particular was there, struggling to keep up with the group. She had come today, trying to figure out who this man was. She was in pain; she had been suffering for 12 long years. She no longer had money, she no longer had food. Doctors had tried to help her, but she only grew worse. She had no family anymore, no friends. Her constant bleeding made her unclean, and because of that she had been cast out of her former ways of life. She had no hope...but what might happen if she could just get close enough to this teacher.

Can you imagine what this man and this woman felt? The pain they were in, the utter hopelessness they felt? They were at the end of their rope. There was nowhere else they could turn. Like Jairus and the woman, there are multitudes of people that hear of Jesus, and know of his healing, and yet in spite of everything, come only as a last resort.

How often are we like that? We who know Jesus, we who know the healing power of God who have had experience with it, and only turn to him when we are completely broken. We are like the shipwrecked sailors in the opening of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. They know their ship is going down, they know they probably will die. And it is then that they call for prayer, that they see the need for prayer. Prayer was not something they lived with, but rather something they thought to die with.¹ Prayer was their last resort. We are like that, when things begin to go wrong, to get hard, to fall apart, we turn to self-help books, or addictions, or friends, or things that promise to fulfill us or heal us but only last for a moment. And when those things disintegrate, when they fail, then we come to Jesus with the pieces of our life, when the Band-Aids we use have fallen off and nothing can keep the pain at bay any longer.

But what moves us to finally come, whether we come like Jairus and the woman, with all hope lost or if we come because we already know the healing power of Jesus, and long for the peace brought to us when we fall at his feet? It is faith that moves us, even the tiniest bit of faith we can muster. Much like the woman.

She had no experience with this teacher, yet she knew he could heal her. She did not feel worthy to talk to him, but she thought to herself, if only I could touch the corner of his garment, then I will be well. Slowly she reached out, and barely touched the sleeve of his garment. All of the sudden, she knew she was healed. She knew the sickness was no longer in her, just as moments before she had known that nothing in this world could stop it. The teacher stopped in his tracks. Who touched me, he asked. She was awe filled, how did he know? The men with him were asking the same question. Of course someone touched him, everyone was touching him, the crowds were large and everyone wanted to be close to the teacher. But the teacher asked again, who touched me. The woman crept up fearfully, and fell to her knees, confessing that it was she. The teacher looked her deep in the eyes and smiled, she smiled back. There was as much healing in that smile as in the touch of his garment, she thought to herself. He continued to look at

¹ The interpreters Bible commentary, 720

her and said, “daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.”

Can’t you just see it? The joy on her face, the bounce in her step, as she walked away, healed, full of hope. It was her faith that brought that hope to her. It was not her action, it was not magic invoked by her touch to his garment, but it was her tiny fistful of faith. It was that faith that brought her healing, that faith that brought her salvation. She was not the perfect candidate in that society by any means. She was a woman, she was unclean, but she was healed anyway. But Jesus never placed stipulations on faith and salvation, he did not say, come to me all who have performed the right ceremonies and rituals, but rather he said come to me all who are heavy burdened. It is the outpouring of faith, the tentative reaching out by a trembling hand, and the commitment to that faith that brings Jesus’ words to our own souls “go in peace and be healed.”

The woman is walking away, full of hope and faith, but Jairus is losing his hope by the minute. Friends show up with terrible news, his daughter has died, there is nothing that can be done now. They say do not trouble the teacher anymore; they reach for Jairus to lead him home. He stands there, tears in his eyes, about to crumble, when the teacher’s eyes find his. “Do not fear, only believe,” he says. Jairus does. The teacher and three of the disciples continue on to his house. They get there and find commotion; the funeral wailing has already begun. The teacher looks around and asks why are you doing all this, why all the tears, you know the child is only asleep. This gains their attention, they stare at the man who would make such a statement in the midst of grieving parents, and they laugh at his audacity. Then he makes them all leave, taking only the father and mother with him to the child’s bed. He takes her hand and tells her to arise....and she does. She begins walking around. Her mother and father are overcome with amazement. Their little daughter was alive! How could this be? Moments later they are still too shocked to do more than stand in stunned silence, the teacher smiles at them, tells them to give her something to eat and then he silently walks out the door, and continues on his way.

The woman was healed. The daughter was healed. We are healed. Our healing takes different forms. Sometimes our healing is an actual healing from a sickness or from an unhealthy way of life. Sometimes it is a healing from anger, or sometimes a healing from hopelessness. Sometimes it is a healing of broken relationships or sometimes a healing from broken dreams. Our healing may be a physical healing, or our healing may be a healing of the heart. No matter what form our healing takes, whenever we encounter Jesus our lives are transformed .

Our transformation beings with our faith, just as it did with Jairus and with the woman. Their faith came out of a place of desperation, and sometimes ours does too. Sometimes we can do nothing but hold on tightly to our tiny bits of faith, and our tiny bits of hope. And sometimes were overflowing with faith and hope. But no matter what our faith, small or large, whenever we grasp that faith, and fall at Jesus' feet, we hear the words, "go in peace and be healed."